Clinical Highlights

Dr. Paul Gellhaus, Assistant Professor of Urology, and Dr. Brad Erickson, Associate Professor of Urology, performed the first robotic Y-V bladder neck repair for recalcitrant BNC after open simple prostatectomy at the University of Iowa.

Bladder neck contracture (BNC) or vesicourethral stenosis is one possible complication when removing part or all of the prostate such as after transurethral resection of the prostate (TURP) and prostatectomy. BNC occurs when scar tissue forms in the bladder neck, the area where the bladder and urethra are joined after a prostate is removed. Robotic dissection and suturing are utilized to localize the bladder neck. A Y-V plasty repair technique is then used for reconstruction, which is typically very challenging with an open approach. Minimally invasive techniques like this allow for a definitive repair with shorter length-of-stay and less postoperative pain in patients who fail multiple endoscopic attempts.

Research Highlights

Dr. Amy Pearman, Assistant Professor of Urology and Director of Men’s Health, is studying a variety of men’s health-related conditions. She currently leads a team of 27 trainees that include urology residents and students currently working towards their medical, undergraduate, masters, and doctoral degrees. The team is working closely on collaborative projects with pelvic floor physical therapy, otolaryngology, sleep medicine, neurology, hematology/oncology, gynecology oncology, medical anthropology, exercise physiology, psychology, and internal medicine. The team is also working in conjunction with the University of Miami and the Mayo Clinic on multi-institutional studies focusing on sexual health.

Dr. Michael A. O’Donnell, Professor of Urology and Richard D. Williams Chair, will begin a combined prospective (outcomes focused) and retrospective (exposure focused) genomic analysis. Dr. O’Donnell’s team seeks to identify biomarkers that will predict the response rate for people who receive the Gemcitabine-Docetaxel treatment. The goal is to identify a “signature” in the tumor genetic blueprint (DNA and RNA) that will predict tumors more likely to respond to the gemcitabine-docetaxel bladder therapy.

Additionally, Dr. O’Donnell’s team is developing a test whereby cancer cells from the bladder will be checked directly for sensitivity to these drugs. Collectively, those that have an unfavorable signature or chemosensitivity test can then be referred for two other bladder chemotherapy treatments that Dr. O’Donnell has developed. Currently, these treatments are reserved for patients who have already failed gemcitabine-docetaxel. Remarkably, these two new treatments still provide between a 50-80% chance of success although at a slightly higher risk of side effects. Dr. O’Donnell and his team hope this will evolve into a multi-site prospective treatment trial.

Education Highlights

The current COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the training of future healthcare professionals. Now, medical schools are finding creative ways to educate and reach out to students and prospective residents. In the Department of Urology, Dr. Chad Tracy, Professor of Urology and Clerkship Director and Vice Chair of Education, was early to develop resources to keep our medical students on track in lieu of suspensions of patient contact, restrictions on clinics and surgical procedures, and shortages of personal protective equipment (PPE) nationwide. While some medical programs cancelled rotations for MD students, Dr. Chad Tracy put together a widely shared clerkship with simulations, live surgeries, and small group sessions delivered via Zoom, Skype, and restricted in-person sessions that allowed for social distancing.

The program has received overwhelmingly positive feedback on Dr. Tracy’s curriculum, which has been an enthusiastic collaboration among department faculty and residents.

One popular aspect of our virtual curriculum has been Dr. Amy Pearman’s Toastmaster-style workshop, Uro-Master of Introductions. Dr. Pearman, Assistant Professor of Urology and Director of Men’s Health, is now offering this 1-hour, small group session to students outside of the University of Iowa to help prepare them for upcoming urology residency interviews. Participants receive feedback on presentation and delivery style and brainstorm answers to commonly asked interview questions. Dr. Pearman says this seminar has “allowed me to interact with students in a way I’d always hoped but never knew possible, focusing on humility (what we say) and confidence (how we say it).” Currently, 84 people across the country are signed up.

Additionally, the department will be launching virtual electives for advanced medical students interested in urology. Prior to applying for residencies, medical students often participate in rotations outside of their home institutions. These ‘away-electives’ have always been important for would-be residents to get to know the programs to which they apply and get additional experience and references for residency applications. In May, Dr. Tracy and third-year medical student Austín Kazarian, who has been conducting a multi-institutional study on the future of virtual education in urology, held the webinar Navigating the World of Virtual Electives. Over 100 participants joined our faculty, residents, and medical students to discuss the possibilities of virtual offerings in urology. This month, our residents will hold an inaugural virtual open house for prospective applicants to meet with our residents and outgoing chiefs, hear about resident life at the University of Iowa, and learn about living in the Iowa City area. With face-to-face interviews cancelled nationwide, efforts such as this virtual open house will be an important part of the application process.

Chair’s Message

As healthcare providers worldwide continue to do, the Department of Urology has been adapting to the new normal. I am grateful to all in the department who have volunteered for temporary labor pools at UIHC, worked quickly to implement telehealth options for our patients, and contributed to virtual education efforts for our students, residents, and staff.

Since our last newsletter, the department has developed and grown its social media efforts, and these have been particularly successful in this moment of social distancing as a means of highlighting the clinical, research, and education efforts of which we are so proud and of fostering timely professional conversations and connections. This month, reconstructive urology fellow Jason Sandberg completes his tenure, and the department welcomes a new reconstructive fellow and our inaugural endourology urology fellow. I would also like to congratulate our outgoing Chief Residents and welcome our three first-year residents and three new faculty in pediatrics, oncology, and endourology.

Karl. J. Kreder, MD
Professor and Department Executive Officer, Rubin H. Flocks Chair

Awards and Accomplishments

- Dr. Yi Lou, Professor of Urology, received a 2019/2020 CCOM Innovation Research Grant Program Award ($10,000) for the study “Identification of Biomarkers for Chronic Cystitis and Symptoms by Next-Generation RNA Sequencing.”
• The department congratulates our outgoing Chief Residents: Dr. Joey Guidos will be joining Kansas City Urology Care in Kansas City, Missouri; Dr. Christopher Meier is joining Yakima Urology Associates PLLC, in Yakima, Washington; and Dr. Conrad Tobert is joining Michigan State and Spectrum Health Medical Group.

• Outgoing M4 student Maggie Long was awarded the department’s Alcock Award, named in honor of Dr. Nathaniel Alcock, founder and first Department Chair of Urology at the University of Iowa. Ms. Long will begin her residency in Obstetrics and Gynecology at the University of Iowa.

**Publication Spotlight**

**Purpose:** Rescue intravesical therapies for patients with bacillus Calmette-Guerin failure nonmuscle invasive bladder cancer remain a critical focus of ongoing research. Sequential intravesical gemcitabine and docetaxel therapy has shown safety and efficacy in 2 retrospective, single-institution cohorts. This double-blind, randomized clinical trial is the first to test this sequential sequence in multiple institutions. We report the results of a multiinstitutional evaluation of gemcitabine and docetaxel.

**Materials and Methods:** Each institution retrospectively reviewed all records of patients treated with intravesical gemcitabine and docetaxel for nonmuscle invasive bladder cancer for the months of June 2009 and May 2010. Only patients with recurrent nonmuscle invasive bladder cancer and a history of bacillus Calmette-Guerin treatment were included in the analysis. If patients were disease-free after induction, maintenance was instituted at the treating physician's discretion. Posttreatment surveillance followed American Urologic Association guidelines. Survival analysis was performed using the Kaplan-Meier method and risk factors for treatment failure were assessed with Cox regression models.

**Results:** Overall 237 patients median age 72 years, 60% and 36% and high and high recurrence-free survival rates were 65% and 52%, respectively. Ten patients (5%) had disease progression to treatment-related resistance. Forty-three patients (18.0%) went on to cytectomy (median 11 months from induction), of which 11 (4.3%) had progression to muscle invasion. Analysis identified no patient, disease or prior treatment related factors associated with gemcitabine or docetaxel failure.

**Conclusion:** Intravesical gemcitabine and docetaxel therapy is well tolerated and effective, providing a durable response in patients with recurrent nonmuscle invasive bladder cancer after bacillus Calmette-Guerin failure. Further prospective study is warranted.

**Key Words:** urinary bladder neoplasms; administration, intravesical; docetaxel; gemcitabine; salvage therapy


This newsletter highlights work praised at this year’s American Society of Clinical Oncology-Genitourinary Cancers Symposium as some of the most significant new developments in bladder cancer. In this 9-year study published in the Journal of Urology, Dr. Michael A. O’Donnell and a multi-institutional team studied Intravesical gemcitabine and docetaxel therapy for patients with non-muscle invasive bladder cancer (NMIBC). At this stage, cancer is located in the bladder wall and has not reached the muscle layer. The gemcitabine-docetaxel therapy provided 52% two-year disease-free rate for high-risk disease for patients, which is 2.5 x higher than the recent FDA-approved Pembrozolumab for BCG unresponsive patients with NMIBC. The treatment also works for NMIBC patients who have not received BCG. BCG is an intravesical immunotherapy, meaning the drug is inserted directly into the bladder, and it is the most common for treating early-stage bladder cancer. Currently, there is a global shortage of BCG, including to the U. S.

**Presentation Spotlight**

The following faculty, residents, and fellow were scheduled for podium or poster presentations at the May 2020 Annual Meeting of the American Urological Association in Washington DC. The AUA arranged virtual alternative presentation venues in May and June (*Presenter). A special recognition goes to resident Kevin Flynn, awarded best poster for DEVELOPMENT AND VALIDATION OF A URETHRAL STRICURE CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM.


**MP34-03 UNDERSTANDING THE PROGRESSION OF BLADDER CANCER AND MISSED OPPORTUNITIES FOR EARLIER DIAGNOSIS. Justin Drobish*, Aaron Miller, Alan Arakkal, Philip Polgreen, Paul Gellhaus, and Bradley Erickson**

**MP58-15 UNDERSTANDING THE PROGRESSION OF FOURNIER’S GANGRENE AND MISSED OPPORTUNITIES FOR EARLIER DIAGNOSIS. Justin Drobish*, Aaron Miller, Scott Koemen, Philip Polgreen, and Bradley Erickson**

**MP60-13 DEVELOPMENT AND VALIDATION OF A URETHRAL STRICURE CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM. Kevin Flynn*, Justin Drobish, Katherine Cotter, Amy Hahn, Nejd Alsikafi, Benjamin Breyer, Joshua Broghammer, Jill Buckley, Sean Elliott, Jeremy Myers, Andrew Peterson, Keith Rourke, Thomas Smith, Alex Vanni, Bryan Voelzke, Lee Zhao, and Bradley Erickson**

**MP60-14 VALIDATING THE CLINICAL UTILITY OF THE LSE URETHRAL STRICTURE CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM. Justin Drobish*, Shawn Grove, Nejd Alsikafi, Benjamin Breyer, Joshua Broghammer, Jill Buckley, Sean Elliott, Jeremy Myers, Andrew Peterson, Keith Rourke, Thomas Smith, Alex Vanni, Bryan Voelzke, Lee Zhao, and Bradley Erickson**

**MP60-15 5-YEAR LONGTIDUAL OUTCOMES AFTER ANTERIOR URETHROPLASTY: CLINICAL VALIDATION OF THE LSE CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM. Justin Drobish*, Shawn Grove, Benjamin Breyer, Joshua Broghammer, Sean Elliott, Alex Vanni, Lee Zhao, and Bradley Erickson**

**MP75-13 DO PATIENTS UNDERGOING SUCCESSIVE PROSTATE BIOPSIES OVER TIME NEED REPEAT RECTAL SWAB? Justin Drobish*, Shawn Sexton, Mark Bevill, Paul Gellhaus, and Chad Tracy**

**MP79-15 PREDICTORS OF HEALTH-RELATED QUALITY OF LIFE IN PATIENTS ON ANDROGEN DEPRIVATION THERAPY FOR METASTATIC PROSTATE CANCER. Morgan Schubbe*, Conrad Tobert, Sarah Bell, Rohan Garje, Bradley Erickson, and Paul Gellhaus**

**PD46-07 EARLY GENITAL RECONSTRUCTION AFTER DEBRIDEMENT OF FOURNIER’S GANGRENE IS SAFE AND EFFECTIVE. Jason Sandberg*, Shawn Sexton, and Bradley Erickson**

**Welcome**

The following faculty, fellows, and residents will begin in the Department of Urology in the coming months:

**FACULTY**

- Angelena B. Edwards, M.D.  
  M.D.: University of Louisville School of Medicine  
  General Surgery Internship: University of Louisville, Department of General Surgery  
  Urology Residency: University of Louisville Department of Urology  
  Fellowship in Pediatric Urology: Children’s Medical Center and University of Texas Southwestern, Dallas, TX

- Vignesh Packiam, M.D.  
  M.D.: University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine  
  Urology Residency: University of Chicago, Department of Surgery  
  Postdoctoral Research Certificate: Mayo Clinic, Center for Clinical and Translational Science  
  Urologic Oncology Fellowship: Mayo Clinic, Department of Urology

- Ryan L. Steinberg, M.D.  
  M.D.: Rush University Medical Center  
  Urology Residency: University of Iowa Hospitals & Clinics Department of Urology  
  Fellowship in Endourology and Minimally Invasive Surgery: University of Texas Southwestern, Dallas, TX

**FELLOWS**

- Kyle A. Gillis, M.D.,  
  University of California, San Diego  
  General Surgery Internship: Oregon Health & Science University

- Mohammed Said, M.D.,  
  Northwestern Feinberg School of Medicine  
  Urology Residency: Emory University School of Medicine

**RESIDENTS**

- Ilana Bergelson, M.D.  
  University of Cincinnati

- Jordan Richards, M.D.  
  Creighton University

- Charles Schlaepfer, M.D.  
  Washington University, St. Louis

**Dr. Karl J. Kreder, Professor, DEO, and Rubin H. Flocks Chair in Urology, joins fellow medical program chairs in a recent banner campaign, which can be seen on Hawkins Drive in Iowa City.**