

The Brain Stem

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FROEDTERT
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OF WISCONSIN

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Welcome

Jennifer Connelly, MD, Medical College of Wisconsin Neuro-oncologist

**We hope you enjoy
our new endeavor
and form a better
connection
with our team.**

On behalf of the Brain and Spine Tumor Program team at Froedtert & The Medical College of Wisconsin, welcome to our first issue of *The Brain Stem*, a quarterly newsletter for our patients and their families.

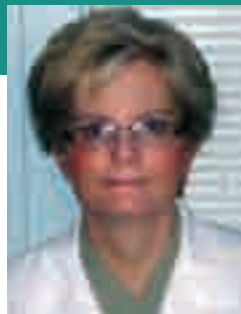
Each issue will present a feature article focusing on a different topic that relates to the care and treatment of our patients. This issue highlights the exciting research on advanced MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) techniques that we hope will lead to better assessment of cancer treatment.

Because our team is comprised of individuals, each focusing on a different aspect of patient care or research, we will introduce various members each issue through profile articles, demonstrating how their expertise fits within the team concept of our care.

We will also have a section containing various important dates and other useful information.

We hope you enjoy our new endeavor and form a stronger connection with our team. ■

STAFF PROFILES



Judeen Richlen, RN

My name is Judeen Richlen and I am a cancer research nurse for the Brain and Spine Tumor Program. I have worked in research for the past eight years and am certified

through the Association of Clinical Research Professionals as a clinical cancer research coordinator. I coordinate research studies for Mark Malkin, MD, and Jennifer Connelly, MD. My responsibilities include ensuring that our clinical trials follow guidelines set forth by the Food and Drug Administration. I also work with patients to help them understand research studies and their rights and responsibilities as research participants. The most rewarding part about my day is knowing our efforts may help improve the prognosis for people diagnosed with brain tumors.



Gerri Parente

I am the new patient coordinator for the Brain and Spine Tumor Program, and have been part of this multidisciplinary team for the past two years. I am the first point of

contact for any new cancer patients referred to or interested in seeing our team. I also work very closely with the neurosurgery team to help facilitate comprehensive care.

My role is to conduct the new patient intake, which includes making appointments, scheduling any necessary pre-appointment testing, gathering essential medical information and ensuring that your physician has all the important information available to make your first visit go smoothly.

The most rewarding part of my job is working with patients and their families to help make a difficult situation just a little easier. I have dealt with cancer on a personal family level and can truly empathize with my patients and their families and what they are going through. I am here to help you!

What is a Tumor Board?

Tiffany Marbach, RN, BSN, Clinical Coordinator, Brain and Spine Tumor Program

The neuro-oncology tumor board (also known as a team conference) is a comprehensive, multidisciplinary meeting of physicians and other experts of the Froedtert & The Medical College of Wisconsin Brain and Spine Tumor Program. Physicians who specialize in diagnosing and treating these types of tumors gather weekly to discuss patient cases and form optimal treatment plans. Physicians and staff who attend tumor board regularly include experts in: neuro-oncology, radiation oncology, pathology, radiology, neurosurgery, psychology and other pertinent areas. Treating brain and spinal cord tumors requires a variety of input and knowledge from all of these disciplines, and the weekly tumor board gives experts time to gather and focus on current diagnosis and treatment options available.

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During tumor board, cases are presented to team members for input on best treatment options and care for each individual. X-rays, imaging and pathology slides are usually reviewed collectively, and recommendations are made based on team consensus. The combined expertise and collaboration among team members gives the opportunity for the best patient outcomes.

Tumor boards are important for a variety of reasons. They enhance patient care by bringing the experience and unique perspective of many specialists together to discuss individual patient cases. This assures coordinated care, which is essential when treating complex diseases such as brain and spine tumors.

Tumor board also gives physicians and staff a chance to learn about and understand the latest research and treatments available for optimal patient outcomes. Since Froedtert & The Medical College are part of an academic medical center, it is important that residents and fellows learn from physicians, so they can provide the best possible care to their future patients.

Another important component of tumor board is review of clinical trials. The team reviews each patient's eligibility for clinical trials that might provide an added benefit to current treatment.

Finally, as part of an accredited American College of Surgeons cancer center, we are required to meet and uphold certain standards, including holding weekly tumor conferences that provide a forum for patient and physician discussion and education. ■

PHYSICIAN PROFILE

David Sabsevit, PhD

Medical College of Wisconsin Neuropsychologist



As a neuropsychologist, I see all sorts of patients with neurological disorders and diseases; however, my main interest is cancer and brain tumors. I am the acting director of the Neuro-Oncology Cognitive Clinic, where I see patients with brain tumors before treatment to evaluate the impact of their tumors on their thinking and emotional well-being. I also follow these patients during and after treatment to monitor for possible changes in thinking related to treatment and tumor status. If changes are detected,

I work with the treatment team to develop appropriate interventions to help improve patients' thinking and quality of life. I am also very interested in research — in particular, the effects of cancer and brain tumor treatments on the brain and cognition. The most rewarding part about my job is working with the amazing patients we see at our Clinical Cancer Center and knowing I am here to educate, counsel and if possible, treat cognitive changes if they occur, with the goal of improving quality of life. ■

David Sabsevit, PhD, is a Medical College of Wisconsin neuropsychologist practicing at Froedtert & The Medical College of Wisconsin. He earned his bachelors degree from Pennsylvania State University and completed masters and doctorate degrees at Chicago Medical School. He completed a residency at Long Island Jewish Medical Center and a post-doctoral fellowship at the Medical College of Wisconsin. Dr. Sabsevit joined Froedtert & The Medical College of Wisconsin in 2005.

Award-winning imaging research helping improve survival and quality of life

Ben Ellingson, PhD, Fellow, Translational Brain Tumor Research Program, Medical College of Wisconsin

International, award-winning advances in patient-specific diagnostic imaging are occurring as part of the research efforts within the *Translational Brain Tumor Research Program* at the Medical College of Wisconsin. The *Translational Brain Tumor Research Program* is a group of scientists and clinicians with various areas of expertise, including: radiology, neuro-oncology, neurosurgery, psychology, nursing, pathology and physics.

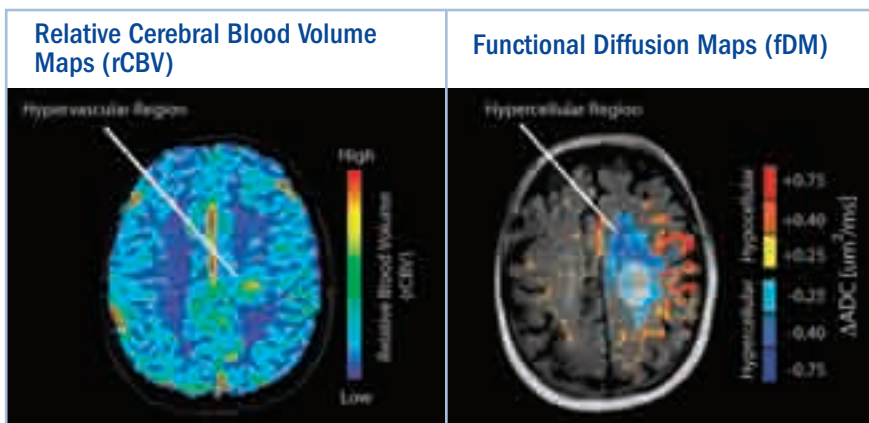
A long-standing ongoing study taking place at Froedtert & The Medical College of Wisconsin, is the “rCBV” (relative cerebral blood volume) study, which has led to development of advanced magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) methods that depict the degree and location of blood vessels within tumors. The imaging of tumor blood vessels provides more information about tumor

biology than standard imaging; therefore, it can be a useful addition in understanding how aggressive a tumor might be or whether it is responding to treatments.

Among newer imaging techniques in development are *functional diffusion maps (fDMs)*. The fDMs employ a series of magnetic resonance images (MRI) collected over time from the same patient to identify tumor cells that may not be visible on standard MRIs. The *Translational Brain Tumor Research Program* is also exploring the beneficial effects of various treatment combinations using preclinical tumor models and advanced imaging biomarkers on high-strength research MRI systems.

... new imaging technologies are providing Medical College of Wisconsin clinicians with important information ... how new drugs work and how to customize treatment plans for each patient.

These new imaging technologies are providing Medical College of Wisconsin clinicians with important information regarding if and how new drugs work and how to customize treatment plans for each patient. The ultimate hope is that the studies will lead to improvement in overall survival and quality of life for patients with brain tumors. ■





Support Groups and Events

Froedtert & The Medical College of Wisconsin offer support groups and sponsor events of interest to brain tumor patients and their families.

STRAIN FOR THE BRAIN

This annual 5K walk/run supports brain tumor research and raises awareness of brain tumors and their impact on those affected by them. Olympic speed skater Bonnie Blair will be master of ceremonies this year. Scott Dolphin from FM106's "Moo Crew" hosts the event. Proceeds benefit local brain tumor research programs through the Froedtert Hospital Foundation Brain Tumor Fund. A smaller portion supports national and international brain tumor research through the American Brain Tumor Association.

BRAIN TUMOR SUPPORT GROUP

The Brain Tumor Support Group is for patients and family members who are looking for information and encouragement. Meetings are designed for open discussion of concerns related to brain tumors, with many sessions featuring speakers who focus on a variety of topics specific to this disease.

NEW! CANCER CAREGIVERS SUPPORT GROUP

This support group is for family members or others caring for people with cancer. It promotes open communication of feelings, as well as providing relaxation and stress relief through optional basket weaving (no experience required).

Free chair massages provided by Lakeside School of Massage. This support group is made possible by generous donations to the Froedtert Hospital Foundation.

CALENDAR

Cancer Caregivers Support Group

Fourth Tuesday of each month,
5:30 pm – 7:00 pm
Clinical Cancer Center,
Conference Room J, Lobby Level

Strain for the Brain

Saturday, May 8, Veteran's Park
8:00 am – Check in and Registration
9:45 am – Run Begins
10:00 am – Walk Begins
More information: strainforthebrain.org

Brain Tumor Support Group

Third Tuesday of each month, 6:30 pm – 8:00 pm
Support group 6:30 pm – 7:00 pm
(featured speaker, 7:00 pm – 8:00 pm)
Boardroom, 2nd floor, East Clinics Building

May 18

Supplements and Cancer Nutrition

Kara Sonntag, RD, Registered Dietician
Food and Nutritional Services

June 15

New Imaging Methods

Kathleen Schmainda, PhD, Medical College of Wisconsin Medical Physicist (specialist in brain tumor imaging)

July 20

Open forum for discussion

For more information about our support groups, please visit froedtert.com or call 414-805-3666 or 800-272-3666.

THE BRAIN STEM VIA EMAIL

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