

Sylvester Leukemia Symposium Brings Together Experts from Boston to Buenos Aires

World-renowned leaders in the field of leukemia research presented their latest findings, including groundbreaking work that has yet to be published, at the 2nd Biennial Miami Leukemia Symposium hosted by Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center.

“We assembled the cream of the crop for this symposium,” said Sylvester Director Stephen D. Nimer, M.D. “Getting so many experts together and giving them time to present the latest data and their thoughts on future directions for our field is

most exciting, and very productive.”



From left, Dr. Stephen Nimer, Dr. Timothy Ley, Dr. Maria Figueroa, and Dr. Justin Watts.

Justin Watts, M.D., recipient of the Pap Corps Endowed Professorship in Leukemia, and Maria E. Figueroa, M.D., co-leader of Sylvester’s Cancer Epigenetics Program, were the course directors for the four-day symposium.

Presentations began on Friday, February 21, with plenary speaker Timothy Ley, M.D., from Washington University School of Medicine, who sequenced the first human cancer genome more than a decade ago. He spoke on the “Genomics of Myeloid Malignancies.”

“I was able to bring a few new things from the lab that we’ve been working on lately, that we’ve been interested in for a long time, the molecular heterogeneity of acute myeloid

leukemia: where does AML come from, why do patients' diseases respond so differently when we treat them with the same drugs?" Dr. Ley said after his presentation.

More than 30 speakers from top cancer centers across the country, Argentina, and Brazil discussed a wide range of topics, including the newest advances in the treatment and management of acute and chronic leukemias and myelodysplastic syndromes, as well as the genetic and epigenetic landscape of various blood cancers.

St. Jude Comprehensive Cancer Center Deputy Director Charles Mullighan, MBBS (Hons), M.Sc., M.D., presented new therapeutic approaches in development for some of the challenging acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL) subtypes.

"Large-scale genome sequencing of large cohorts of ALL across the age spectrum have really provided a completely new understanding of the different subtypes of ALL, the different genetic alterations that drive them, both inherited and somatic, and how they influence the outcome of treatment opportunities," said Dr. Mullighan.

"The great thing about this symposium is the idea that laboratory and clinical investigators and trainees are getting together, showing all of their new and most exciting unpublished data, and getting in a robust dialogue about the emerging themes," said Ross Levine, M.D., director of the Center for Hematologic Malignancies at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center.

Post-presentation discussions and breaks between sessions provided valuable opportunities for the 160 in attendance to

ask questions and engage in conversations with some of the leaders in leukemia research.