Sylvester Researchers Present Findings at ASCO20

Researchers at Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center, part of the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine, co-authored more than three dozen abstracts and posters selected for the annual meeting of the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO). The ASCO20 Virtual Scientific Program, which took place online May 29 to June 1, attracted a record-breaking 42,750 attendees representing 138 countries.

A late-breaking abstract from the COVID-19 and Cancer Consortium provided groundbreaking findings about effects of the novel coronavirus on patients with cancer. Sylvester was one of the founding institutions participating in this registry to quickly collect data. Gilberto Lopes, M.D., Sylvester’s associate director of global oncology is one of the co-authors of this trailblazing research, also published in The Lancet.

“Our study shows that patients with cancer are at higher risk of dying if they develop COVID-19. Older patients, men and those for whom their cancer was not controlled were more likely to die from COVID19. Our study supports that we should
continue treating our patients’ cancers during the pandemic, while taking every measure possible to prevent infection by SARS-Cov2,” said Dr. Lopes, a professor of medicine.

Dr. Lopes is also the co-author of several abstracts on non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC), including one led by researchers from Sylvester’s Department of Radiation Oncology and published in the *Journal of Clinical Oncology*. They found checkpoint-inhibitor pneumonitis in patients treated with nivolumab was underreported, and radiomics features can help identify more cases.

In the sarcoma session, first-year fellow Andrea Espejo-Freire, M.D., presented a poster on the genomic landscape of angiosarcoma: a targeted and immunotherapy biomarker analysis of 143 patients. Sylvester’s sarcoma team collaborated with other centers that are part of the Precision Oncology Alliance, to pinpoint the most common mutations in this highly aggressive type of sarcoma.

Dr. Espejo-Freire was also first author on an abstract by Sylvester’s multi-disciplinary sarcoma team that was a 10-year review of the clinical behavior and treatment outcomes in angiosarcoma.

Neuro-oncologist Macarena de la Fuente, M.D., made an oral presentation on a phase Ib/II study of olutasidenib in patients with relapsed or refractory IDH1 mutant gliomas. The multi-institutional clinical trial led by Dr. de la Fuente was selected for the ASCO Annual Meeting Central Nervous Tumors Highlights.

“In this heavily pretreated population with predominantly
enhancing, recurrent disease, olutasidenib, an IDH1 mutant inhibitor, is well-tolerated and demonstrates a preliminary disease control rate of 50 percent. These findings support ongoing and future trials with IDH inhibitors to further characterize the role of these drugs in the recurrent and upfront setting,” Dr. de la Fuente explained.

From Jaime Merchan, M.D., presenting on an oncolytic virus in patients with refractory solid tumors to A. Craig Lockhart, M.D., with the final results of a phase II trial of first-line FOLFIRINOX for advanced gastroesophageal cancer and a host of other studies too numerous to mention, Sylvester contributed in a significant way to the advances presented at the world’s largest clinical cancer research meeting.

“The quality as well as the depth and breadth of our research at Sylvester is attracting national and international attention that is unprecedented for an institution in South Florida,” said Stephen D. Nimer, M.D., Sylvester’s director.