



Sylvester Stands Out at ASCO's 2022 Annual Meeting in Chicago

Leading doctors and researchers from Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine participated in the 2022 American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) Annual Meeting in Chicago June 3-7, joining more than 40,000 attendees from 138 countries who joined in person and online.

The meeting was an opportunity for Sylvester members to connect with one of the largest, most diverse audiences in global cancer care to discuss, share, and learn about new clinical advances in every area of cancer research.



Led by Director Stephen D. Nimer, M.D., Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center researchers and physicians made an impressive showing at the ASCO annual conference.



“There is a large amount of research underway on immunotherapy – CAR T-cells and other treatment options that improve precision medicine – so that each patient with cancer receives personalized treatment,” said Stephen D. Nimer, M.D., director of Sylvester, holder of the Oscar de la Renta Endowed Chair in Cancer Research, and executive dean for research at the Miller School.

Attending the conference along with Dr. Nimer were Sylvester’s global leaders in specific cancer types, who presented posters and participated in oral presentations and educational sessions.

Carmen Calfa, M.D., breast medical oncologist, medical co-director for the survivorship program at Sylvester, and associate director of community outreach, participated in a poster and oral presentation representing TAPUR – the Targeted Agent and Profiling Utilization Registry study – which was the first clinical trial by ASCO, launched in 2016. The trial tests the use of FDA-approved drugs that target specific tumor gene abnormalities in people with advanced-stage cancer.

More recently, following a year as the chair-elect, Dr. Calfa assumed the role of chair of the TAPUR Steering Group of ASCO.

“I am so proud of the resilience and the work being done despite the challenges we have faced over the last two years,” Dr. Calfa said. “It is about people loving to work together to beat cancer, to conquer cancer; that is what we are here for.”



Gilberto de Lima Lopes Jr., M.D., M.B.A., medical director for international programs and associate director for global oncology at Sylvester, spoke on the conference theme, “Advancing Equitable Cancer Care Through Innovation.”

Advancing Equitable Care

The 2022 conference program theme was “Advancing Equitable Cancer Care Through Innovation.” Gilberto de Lima Lopes Jr., M.D., M.B.A., medical director for international programs and associate director for global oncology at Sylvester, spoke on the topic on several occasions over the course of the meeting.

In addition to the global impact of his work through Sylvester, Dr. Lopes, co-leader of the Lung Cancer Site Disease Group at Sylvester, has taken on a leadership role with Access to Oncology Medicines (ATOM), a global partnership of which Sylvester is a founding member that launched in late May.



“ATOM partners have begun working to expand access to essential cancer medicines in low- and lower middle-income countries, and to increase those countries’ sustainable diagnostic and pathology capabilities,” said Dr. Lopes, who serves as ATOM’s technical chair. “At present, Sylvester is the only academic cancer center participating in this multisectoral coalition, which aims to meet the needs of cancer patients and provide lifesaving cancer care in underserved nations.”

Dr. Lopes also serves as the editor-in-chief of JCO Global Oncology, a high-impact ASCO journal focused on cancer care, research, and care delivery issues unique to countries and settings with limited health care resources.

Francis Hornicek, M.D., Ph.D., director of orthopaedic oncology at Sylvester and chair of the Miller School’s Department of Orthopaedics, participated in an ASCO case-based panel discussion titled “Surgical Considerations for Locally Aggressive Mesenchymal Neoplasms.”

Key Importance of Clinical Trials

“Most of the data that is reviewed has to do with clinical trials, and those clinical trials are important to advance our abilities to treat patients,” Dr. Hornicek said. “It is an incredible opportunity to grow our clinical trial portfolio to be able to manage not only common diseases like breast, lung, prostate, and kidney cancers, but also rare diseases like sarcoma, which are bone and soft tissue tumors, for those that are benign and malignant.”



From left: Francis Hornicek, M.D., Ph.D., and Jonathan Trent, M.D., Ph.D., speak with a colleague post-session.

Steve Bialick, D.O., hematology/oncology fellow at Sylvester, presented “KIT Resistance Mutations Identified by Circulating Tumor DNA and Treatment Outcomes in Advanced Gastrointestinal Stromal Tumor.”

“This study is laying a foundation and emphasizing the importance of mutational analysis in patients with GIST and the significance of precision medicine in cancer, particularly in sarcomas. We are hopeful that studies like ours will pave the way for clinical trials that can lead investigators to choose known treatments that may work better or develop novel agents that ultimately lead to a cure,” Dr. Bialick said.

“At events like ASCO, our Sylvester sarcoma community has a platform to share our findings with the cancer family at large, and to network with other researchers in effort to come together and collaborate, with the same end goal in mind: amplifying patient care and keeping hope alive,” he said.



HRAS Mutations

Sylvester researchers also presented on HRAS mutations in patients with head and neck cancers. Up to four percent of the head and neck cancer population can have HRAS mutations, which have been known to confer a poorer prognosis.

“For our project, we sought to understand the clinicopathological characteristics of HRAS mutant patients compared to the general cohort of patients with head and neck malignancies,” said Coral Olazagasti, M.D., a Sylvester researcher and assistant professor of medical oncology. “Interestingly, we found that patients with HRAS mutations had higher immunogenicity, which is promising because it can possibly translate into increased treatment responses to immunotherapies.

“This discovery from our data opens future investigative opportunities assessing prospectively the use of immunotherapy in this patient population,” Dr. Olazagasti said.

Cutting-Edge Research

Among other Sylvester members sharing cutting-edge cancer research at the premier global oncology event was Samuel Kareff, M.D., M.P.H., a hematology/oncology fellow. At the Breast Cancer-Local/Regional/Adjuvant session, Dr. Kareff presented a poster titled “Molecular Characteristics and Clinical Outcomes of Breast Cancer with HRAS Mutations.” His hope is to identify new molecular targets for patients with breast cancer.

Juan P. Alderuccio, M.D., assistant professor of clinical medicine in the Division of Hematology and principal investigator of the ROSEWOOD randomized phase II study,



discussed clinical trials in follicular lymphoma.

“This is the first study demonstrating a survival benefit of BTK inhibitors in follicular lymphoma, with an acceptable safety profile,” said Dr. Alderuccio. “Future studies should compare this combination to standard therapies, to understand where this combination fits in the current landscape of follicular lymphoma.”



The well-attended “Miami Nights” reception was held at Chicago's VU Rooftop.

Fostering Connection and Collaboration

Sylvester also hosted the popular “Miami Nights” reception during the conference at VU Rooftop in Chicago, to create additional opportunities for leading doctors and researchers to connect with other eminent oncology experts from around the world.

The more than 200 people in attendance also celebrated recent Sylvester-led accomplishments and advances in cancer research,



fostered by a culture rooted in connectivity and collaboration among members, which is central to Dr. Nimer's core values.

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