



Leaders' Update

A message from Director Gordon Ginder

Dear colleagues,

Happy New Year! As we start a new calendar year, I would like to take this opportunity to reflect on some of the accomplishments made at Massey Cancer Center in 2017.

For the 42nd year, Massey renewed its designation from the National Cancer Institute and was awarded the best evaluation and largest level of funding – \$11 million through 2022 – we have ever received for a NCI Cancer Center Support Grant.

Massey research members were also awarded nearly \$2 million in new National Institutes of Health cancer-related grants to support their research last year.

Additionally, we welcomed 17 new research members to the cancer center. These new members are senior and junior investigators with diverse research interests and scientific backgrounds from a variety of departments at VCU.

Massey also welcomed new leaders, including a new associate director for administration as well as division and section chairs, directors and chiefs in gynecologic oncology, colon and rectal surgery, breast surgery and cardio-oncology.

We increased our focus and effort last year on enhancing the research training and cancer education environment at Massey. Devanand Sarkar, Massey's inaugural associate director for education, formed a new Cancer Education Steering Committee, which works to develop and implement high-impact educational programs at all training levels. The Committee's priorities are to increase the number of training grants and funded trainee positions, work with the Development Office to secure sustained donor funding for pre- and postdoctoral trainees, enhance mentoring programs for junior investigators in each of the cancer center's research programs, and work with School of Medicine colleagues to build upon the academics of the hematology/oncology fellowship program. Additionally, in partnership with other Virginia universities, Massey helped to launch the first Annual Commonwealth of Virginia Cancer Research Conference at University of Virginia in September, which was well attended by cancer researchers across the state and allowed trainees to present their research and have an opportunity to learn, interact and build collaborative relationships.

Another major accomplishment for Massey was the development of a new pancreas and biliary neoplasms program with a clinic at Stony Point that has a one-of-a-kind model in Richmond. The clinic was announced last January and was designed so that patients see all of the necessary specialists in one day at one location instead of having to coordinate multiple appointments. Patients are guided by a nurse navigator through imaging and lab tests in the morning as well as consultations with a nutritionist and social worker, if necessary. During lunch, a multidisciplinary team of surgeons, gastroenterologists, pathologists, genetic counselors and radiation and medical oncologists meet to evaluate the patient's test results and medical history and determine a suggested treatment plan. After lunch, the patient consults with the appropriate specialists about the next steps of their care.

The Massey breast health team soft-launched a similar type of clinic at Stony Point for breast cancer patients in October. They plan to extend the model downtown to the Dalton Oncology Clinic in early spring and to publicly announce the clinics at that time.

Massey opened another clinic unique to the area: a lung cancer screening clinic. A comprehensive approach to lung health featuring a dedicated pulmonologist, nurse navigator, informed and shared decision making and smoking cessation counseling sets the clinic apart from other screening programs in the region.

Finally, Massey physicians were the first in the world to successfully implant a bio-absorbable, internal radiation device known as CivaSheet to treat early stage pancreatic cancer. The device is the first ever brachytherapy treatment for pancreatic cancer and is a flat, flexible membrane that is placed in a patient during surgery. It contains a radioactive isotope and provides localized, unidirectional radiation therapy to a targeted area while shielding healthy tissue in the opposite direction.

More information about each of these achievements is available on the [Massey news blog](#).

Thank you for your many important contributions to Massey's progress and for helping Massey advance cancer research, deliver life-saving cancer care and provide cancer education and training. I look forward to continuing our success this year.

Wishing you all the best in 2018,

Gordon D. Ginder, M.D.
Director