

## **Albert Koong, M.D., Ph.D., joins as Chair of Radiation Oncology at MD Anderson**

We are pleased to announce the exciting news that Albert Koong, M.D., Ph.D., has decided to join MD Anderson as Chair of the Department of Radiation Oncology. Dr. Koong is the Sue and Bob McCollum Professor in the Department of Radiation Oncology at Stanford University School of Medicine and serves as the Associate Chair and Medical Director of the Radiation Oncology Clinics.

Dr. Koong's selection followed an extensive international search that included an impressive slate of internal and external candidates. We want to thank the search committee, chaired by Drs. Cathy Eng and Wayne Hofstetter, for their service and diligence.

Dr. Koong begins his vital leadership role on Aug. 1, and he will work closely with Dr. Stephen Hahn over the next several months to ensure a smooth and efficient transition.

Dr. Koong earned his Ph.D. in Cancer Biology from Stanford University. During that time he was the recipient of a National Institutes of Health Fellowship. He then earned his M.D. from Northwestern University Medical School. He did his Internal Medicine internship at Kaiser Permanente in Santa Clara, CA, and completed his residency in Radiation Oncology from Stanford University Medical Center, where he served as Chief Resident in his final year.

Dr. Koong has spent his academic career at Stanford, joining their faculty as Assistant Professor of Radiation Oncology in 2001. He was promoted to Associate Professor in 2009 and to Professor in 2014. Since 2011, Dr. Koong has served in two leadership roles at Stanford: Associate Chair and Director of Clinical Operations for Radiation Oncology.

His clinical research interest focuses on the development of advanced radiotherapy techniques for the treatment of gastrointestinal malignancies, including helping to develop many of the image-guided and stereotactic radiotherapy techniques necessary to treat pancreatic and liver tumors. Following Phase I and II studies,

Dr. Koong completed a multi-center Phase II trial demonstrating the efficacy of stereotactic body radiotherapy (SBRT) integrated with chemotherapy in pancreatic cancer. Because of the potential for SBRT to change the standard of care in pancreatic cancer, Dr. Koong has initiated a definitive, randomized Phase III study.

In addition, he leads a laboratory research program focused on understanding the role of the tumor microenvironment on tumor growth and metastases. His team has studied the unfolded protein response (UPR) signaling pathway in cancer, and they were the first to identify that the IRE1-XBP1 branch of the UPR mediated survival under hypoxia and was essential for tumor growth. They developed a high-throughput screening strategy and have identified several classes of compounds that specifically and potently inhibit IRE1 in cell lines, tumor xenografts and patient-derived specimens. More recently, they completed a whole genome siRNA screen to identify other genes that regulate this pathway with the overall goal of finding other therapeutic targets in cancer.

To date, Dr. Koong has authored more than 200 peer-reviewed research articles and book chapters. He has received many honors for his work, including being selected as a prestigious Damon Runyon Clinical Investigator and ASTRO Junior Faculty Award winner.