RUSH

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The Carole B. and Gordon I. Segal Professor of Women's Cancer Issues

Advancement of Medicine

In 2024, I was privileged to work with the Rush Head and Neck Cancer Team on several fronts.

Clinically, we are still the busiest head and neck cancer program in the city, continuing to manage the most complex cases and providing exceptional care. My colleagues have extraordinary skills, clinical acumen and compassion. I am grateful and proud to be a member of a team that clearly impacts the care of every patient we see.

We held our yearly Rush Update in Otolaryngology on November 8-9, 2024. The event continues to be an extraordinary success thanks to the amazing work of our team of head and neck surgeons: Mihir Bhayani, Samer Al-Khudari and Vanessa Stubbs. Topics such as surgical management of early-stage cancers, HPV-associated cancers and multidisciplinary care of our patients were expertly presented.

Several significant studies were also published, including "Air pollution is associated with increased incidence-rate of head and neck cancers: A nationally representative ecological study," in *Oral Oncology* in March 2024. *Oral Oncology* is a well-respected journal with an impact factor of 4.6, indicating a high citation index. Only 11% of all journals carry a score at this level or higher. This means our study was likely seen and read by practitioners in some of the most influential circles and institutions in the world.

We represented the Rush head and neck cancer team during the American Head and Neck Society meeting in May 2024, where I served as moderator/speaker for the session titled "Premalignant Lesions: Progress and Opportunities."

I remain involved with several research projects, and I continue to mentor all levels of medical students and residents.

Publication Highlights — Abbreviated

- Ochoa Scussiatto H, **Stenson KM, Al-Khudari S**, Jelinek MJ, Pinto JM**, Bhayani MK**. Air pollution is associated with increased incidence-rate of head and neck cancers: A nationally representative ecological study. *Oral Oncol*. 2024;150:106691. doi:10.1016/j.oraloncology.2024.106691
- Raad RA, Holland K, Ritz EM, et al. A nationwide analysis of salvage surgery for laryngeal cancer in the elderly. *Head Neck*. 2023;45(11):2915-2924. doi:10.1002/hed.27525
- Raad RA, Akers R, **Al-Khudari S, Stenson K, Bhayani MK**. A Nationwide Analysis of Head and Neck Fibromatoses. *Laryngoscope*. 2024;134(5):2228-2235. doi:10.1002/lary.31153
- Charous SJ, Yuhan B, **Stenson KM**, Talati V, McMullen P. Dedifferentiation of a Chondrosarcoma of the Larynx: A Case Report. *Head Neck*. 2025;47(5):E58-E63. doi:10.1002/hed.28004

The Year Ahead: 2025 and Beyond

In my next year as the Carol B. and Gordon I. Segal Professor of Women's Cancer Issues, I will continue to work on the sentinel node project, "Post-Injection Site Pain between Technetium Sulfur Colloid and Technetium Tilmanocept in Oral Cavity Squamous Cell Carcinoma Cancer Patients Undergoing Sentinel Lymph Node Biopsy."

In addition, we have begun several thyroid cancer-related projects, including:

- **Anaplastic thyroid cancer project:** The purpose of this study is to identify the genetic signature of this aggressive neoplasm at diagnosis. Historic pathologic tissue will undergo next generation sequencing to determine the genetic profile with the goal of discovering and improving targeted therapies.
- **Predictive model identifying high-risk papillary thyroid cancers:** The purpose of this study is to evaluate the molecular profile of anaplastic thyroid cancers that originate from known

papillary cancers. The tumors will be sequenced and then stratified based on outcomes. The overall goal is to develop a genetic signature and a prospective evaluation of patients.

- **Assessment of iodine deficiency and multinodular goiter in an iodine sufficient region:** The WHO Global Database on iodine deficiency and the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) have demonstrated trends of increasing rates of iodine deficiency within the U.S. over the past two decades. This has been coupled with a global increase in the prevalence of thyroid nodules. Therefore, although the U.S. is now considered an iodine-sufficient country, there is evidence indicating iodine deficiency at the individual level may still be a relevant issue leading to a higher incidence of goiter. Significantly, patients with goiters are at a higher risk of developing thyroid cancer.

With Gratitude

Mr. and Mrs. Segal, I continue to be amazed and humbled by your generosity. My gratitude, deep appreciation and respect for your humanity and dedication to Rush's mission is truly difficult to express. *Thank you.* I will continue to do my utmost to fulfill the intent of your endowment and strive to utilize the funds in the most impactful way I can to benefit people receiving their cancer care at RUSH MD Anderson Cancer Center.