



BROWN MEDICINE

Insider

Fall 2022

Groundbreaking Breast Cancer Research in RI

NEW DRUG EXPECTED TO EXTEND LIFE OF MANY PATIENTS

A Brown Medicine physician is at the forefront of breast cancer drug research that will not only change the way many patients are treated, but will help extend their lives.

Stephanie Graff, MD FACP, a physician with Brown Medicine's Division of Hematology/Oncology, is a principal investigator working with the DESTINY-Breast trials.

The drug, trastuzumab deruxtecan (brand name Enhertu), is a combination of monoclonal antibody bound to chemotherapy (an antibody-drug conjugate or "ADC") that's administered intravenously every three weeks. The DESTINY-Breast trials are looking at this promising new drug in many different situations. Two such trials involving patients with metastatic breast cancer are being conducted at the Lifespan Cancer Institute in Providence.

"Metastatic means the cancer has spread outside the breast or lymph nodes to somewhere else in the body," explains Graff, who is director of oncology for the Institute. "Metastatic cancer, also sometimes called Stage 4 cancer, is not curable, but can be treated. We hope with clinical trials like this that those treatments keep getting better."

Historically, patients with breast cancer were categorized in a binary manner as either "positive" or "negative," based on how much protein their cancer cells have. This protein is known as human epidermal growth factor receptor 2, or HER2, and is found on the surface of many types of tumors including breast, gastric, lung and colorectal cancers. "HER2-positive cells have higher than normal levels of the protein," Graff explains.



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MONKEY POX

Monkeypox can spread to anyone through close, personal, skin-to-skin contact including touching clothing, bedding or towels and surfaces that have been used by someone with the viral illness. Additionally, infected animals can spread the virus to people. At this time, data suggests that gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men make up the majority of cases in the current outbreak. Antiviral drugs and vaccines developed to protect against smallpox may be used to prevent and treat monkeypox infections.



[CLICK HERE FOR MORE MONKEYPOX INFO](#)

Monkeypox presents as a new rash that can initially look like pimples or blisters and may be painful or itchy. Other symptoms can include fever, chills, swollen lymph nodes, exhaustion, muscle aches, headache, and respiratory symptoms.

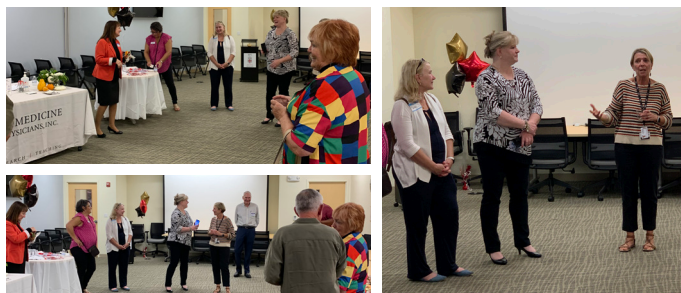
If you have symptoms, talk with your Brown Medicine healthcare provider, even if you don't think you had contact with someone who has monkeypox. Currently, there is no asymptomatic testing in Rhode Island.

In-House Job Fair

Our managerial staff interviewed 20 people on-site at the Brown Physicians Patient Center this past summer for a wide range of positions at all Brown Medicine locations. Candidates enjoyed learning about the opportunities for personal and professional growth as well as the outstanding job benefits available, including student loan repayment and tuition reimbursement. Our next job fair will be at the Patient Center (375 Wampanoag Trail, East Providence, RI) on November 3, 2022 from 4:00 pm - 6:30 pm.

Business After Hours

As a member and silver-level sponsor of the East Providence Area Chamber of Commerce, Brown Medicine hosted a Business After Hours networking event at its Brown Physicians Patient Center in East Providence. Members and their guests mingled over hors d'oeuvres, and enjoyed meeting senior leadership and staff from the various Divisions located within the building.



Rhode Island Free Clinic Founders' Award

Brown Medicine is honored to be the Founders' Award recipient from The Rhode Island Free Clinic in recognition of a long-standing commitment to healthcare access and equity for vulnerable adults in the state. The award will be presented at the 2022 Virtual Founders' Event on October 12. All proceeds raised from the event will go toward providing low-income, uninsured Rhode Islanders with the healthcare they deserve.



For more information, visit: <https://www.rifreeclinic.org/>

Employee of the Quarter

Congratulations to Anna DiMaio, lead medical secretary at our Providence Primary Care office, on being named "Employee of the Quarter" for April-June 2022. *Thank you for your hard work and dedication.*



Leadership Academy



The seventh cohort of the Brown Physicians, Inc. Leadership Academy graduated this past summer. This four-month program teaches core skills to be an effective leader within an academic medical center while continuously maintaining patient care as the primary focus. In addition, participants complete a business-oriented

Capstone Project which is presented to Senior Management, their colleagues and Academy alumni as part of their graduation requirement. Four Brown Medicine employees graduated, as follows: Stephanie Araujo-Practice Manager (Endocrinology); Christine Duffy, MD; Christine Ellingwood-Human Resources Business Partner; Vicki Larsen-Account Manager and Robert Velasco, MD. *Congratulations!*



On Saturday, October 22, 2022, The Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University is celebrating 50 years of impact in medical education, research, and the contributions of alumni and faculty in Rhode Island and around the world. As part of Brown's sponsorship of this event, Brown-affiliated groups will perform and host various activities throughout the evening.

Saturday, October 22, 2022 at sunset (5:53 pm). The event is free and open to the public, and the fires will remain lit until 10 p.m.

Mentorship Program

Brown Medicine is pleased to announce the second graduating class of its "Mentorship Program." The program was developed and managed by Director of Analytics Brad Crough and Human Resources Business Partner Christine Ellingwood to ease the pathway to career advancement for motivated, talented staff within the Brown Medicine organization. The program has recently expanded with the participation of Brown Dermatology employees.



Mentor (left):
Allie Leclerc, Practice Manager - General Internal Medicine (East Greenwich, East Providence, and Smithfield)

Mentee (right):
Mimi Thamavongsa, Medical Assistant - Kidney Disease & Hypertension (East Providence)



Breast Cancer Awareness

The Brown Medicine team participated once again this year in the Gloria Gemma 5k @ Flames of Hope event held on October 2, 2022 to help raise vital funds to support cancer patients, survivors and their family in our community.



L to R: Rachel Correia-Human Resources Business Partner; Giovanna Mercurio-Project Manager-Marketing & Events; Jessica Savoca-Manager, Quality Initiatives & HCC Coding; Vicki Larsen-Accounting Manager and her son Brenner; Jodi Wagner-Accounts Payable Specialist and her husband Kevin



After her personal battle with breast cancer last year, Jodi Wagner, Accounts Payable Specialist, joined the Brown Medicine Team to walk the 5k



Vicki Larsen, Accounting Manager and her son Brenner



Jessica Savoca, Manager, Quality Initiatives & HCC Coding



Tour de Pink

Brown Medicine Senior Director-Ambulatory Operations Dana Palka was scheduled to ride in the YSC (Young Survival Coalition) Tour de Pink Lisa J. Frank Memorial Ride in Long Branch, New Jersey on October 2, 2022. The official ride was canceled due to rain and high wind gusts up to 20-30 mph so Dana with 2 others (150 riders in total) ventured out to ride the unofficial TdP in honor and memory of friends and loved ones.

If you'd like to learn more about the Tour de Pink or would like to donate to Dana's team, please visit: <https://east.ysctourdepink.org/DanaBirdPalka?tab=MyPage>

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“HER2-negative cells have lower than normal levels with no sub-classification in between.”

The first DESTINY-Breast trial, DESTINY-Breast01, which started in 2016 enrolled just a small number of patients with a brand-new category of breast cancer: HER2-low. “Half of patients with late-stage cancer in the HER2-negative category may actually be HER2-low and therefore eligible for the drug,” notes Graff. “Only about 15% of breast cancer is HER2-positive, but as much as 60% is HER2-low. By expanding this definition of breast cancer, it can affect a lot of people diagnosed with the disease.” The unprecedented response rates of this first trial led to others.

Data from DESTINY-Breast04 was presented this past summer at the American Society of Clinical Oncology’s annual meeting in Chicago, known as ‘cancer’s biggest stage’ because tens of thousands of oncologists are in attendance. “Everyone in the huge room where the plenary session was held gave a standing ovation and clapped and cheered,” Graff recalls. “This never happens. The study was, in a word, groundbreaking. It fundamentally changes how we physicians diagnose and treat metastatic breast cancer.”

For this new subgroup of breast cancer, it means they can live longer when treated with this new drug.



A physician in Brown Medicine’s Division of Hematology and Oncology, Dr. Stephanie Graff is also director of breast oncology at Lifespan Cancer Institute, assistant professor of medicine at Brown University, and medical advisor for the Dr. Susan Love Foundation for Breast Cancer Research. She was awarded the Woman Disruptor of the Year by Healio.com at this year’s ASCO Annual Meeting for her emergence as a leader and being an example to younger women of how a successful career can unfold. Be sure to tune in to listen to Brown Medicine’s “Moving the Needle” Podcast featuring her interview on this topic.

TUNE IN HERE

<https://brownmed.org/news/brown-medicine-moving-the-needle-podcast-ground-breaking-breast-cancer-research-with-dr-graff/>

Trastuzumab deruxtecan improved survival rates by nearly 40%. As compared to chemotherapy, patients demonstrated a significant and clinically meaningful improvement in both progression-free and overall survival. “In other words, patients saw the time until their cancer started to grow improve by 4.7 months and lived 6.4 months longer overall,” Graff states.

DESTINY-Breast06 and 07 clinical trials will be conducted at the Lifespan Cancer Institute, with Dr. Graff’s involvement. DESTINY-Breast07 is looking at trastuzumab deruxtecan in combination with several other drugs for patients with HER2 positive metastatic disease, including patients with brain metastases. DESTINY-Breast06 is seeing if using trastuzumab deruxtecan earlier in HER2-low breast cancer is better. “A lot of innovation is happening right here in Rhode Island and it’s very exciting. We also have several clinical trials looking at another antibody drug conjugate with the

same drug (deruxtecan), but a different antibody,” she adds. “I encourage all breast cancer patients to get curious about the details of their HER2 status beyond the binary definitions of positive and negative. It’s important to know where they fall on the HER2 spectrum.”

Dr. Graff looks forward to the future of oncology as finding the cure versus slowing the growth of cancer.

RECIPE

*Fall is here,
which means
Pumpkin Spice
everything!*

Follow this recipe for the season’s favorite latte

Pumpkin Spice Latte

INGREDIENTS

- 2 tbsp. pumpkin puree
- 1 tbsp. brown sugar
- 1 tbsp. granulated sugar
- ½ tsp. pumpkin pie spice, plus more for serving
- 1 tbsp. water
- 1 c. whole milk (can substitute for dairy-free alternative)
- 2 tsp. vanilla extract
- ¼ c. hot espresso or strongly brewed coffee
- whipped cream, for serving (can use dairy-free alternative)

DIRECTIONS

In a small saucepan, combine the pumpkin puree, brown and granulated sugars, pumpkin pie spice and water. Heat over medium heat, stirring frequently with a rubber spatula; about 2-3 minutes until mixture looks smooth and the sugars have dissolved.

Add the milk and vanilla to the pot and whisk until smooth. Cook 2-3 minutes until just simmering. Remove from heat. Whisk vigorously or let cool slightly, transfer to a mason jar, cover and shake vigorously to create a foam. Add the coffee to a mug and immediately top with the milk. Top with whipped cream and an additional sprinkle of pumpkin pie spice, if desired.

Source: [The Pioneer Woman](#)

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