

ADVANCING ORAL HEALTH FOR PEOPLE AFFECTED BY CANCER

The Princess Margaret Dental Oncology Program

Oral health is critical to overall health. For many patients diagnosed with cancer, access to specialized dental care before, during and after treatment is essential to secure the optimal outcome.

The Princess Margaret Dental Oncology Program aims to be a leader in clinical care, education and research in oral health as it relates to cancer. Led by Dr. Michael Glogauer, Head of Dental Oncology at the Princess Margaret and Dentistry at UHN, the program engages a number of highly-specialized dentists who focus on oncology including dental specialists in oral pathology, oral radiology, oral and maxillofacial surgery, maxillofacial prosthodontics, and periodontics. The clinic also includes a dental hygienist and its own dental laboratory.

The Dental Oncology Clinic diagnoses, treats and prevents dental problems that may arise as a result of cancer treatment. Approximately 8% of all patients treated at the Princess

Margaret are referred to the clinic, amounting to 1,450 new patients and more than 14,000 visits per year (2019). The clinic provides rapid screening and dental treatment for patients undergoing head and neck radiation, bisphosphates and high-dose chemotherapy for hematologic malignancies, and bone marrow transplants, all of which can have a significant impact on oral and overall health. Dental professionals diagnose and treat potentially life-threatening conditions such as osteonecrosis of the jaw after radiation to the head and neck or intravenous bisphosphonate therapy, and aid with the prevention of post-transplant complications that can occur in immuno-compromised patients.

The Dental Oncology Clinic offers a diagnostic mouth clinic in conjunction with an ear, nose, and throat surgeon to provide rapid assessment for patients with suspicious lesions. Moreover, the department can complete surgical implant placement and oral and maxillofacial intraoral prosthetics to facilitate maxillofacial rehabilitation.

In an effort to address the shortage of dentists with specialized expertise in oncology, the program has implemented a number of education initiatives. This includes establishing a one-year dental oncology fellowship - the first of its kind in Canada and only one of three in North America - that aims to train dentists in the management of patients who have cancer or are survivors of cancer. In addition, interdisciplinary education sessions are offered for community-based dentists to upskill knowledge and expertise so patients can return to their family dentist.

There are currently no international guidelines in place pertaining to standards of care for dental oncologists. Drs. Michael Glogauer, Erin Watson, Jessica Metcalfe and others are working to develop a Pan-Canadian network of oncology dentists to establish best-practice standards for the provision of dentistry, beginning with developing guidelines for the dental management of patients who undergo head and neck radiation.

Dental Oncology is developing a robust research program that exemplifies the unique and diverse contributions of dentistry to advancing cancer care. This includes investigating oral based biomarkers for monitoring susceptibility to infection in neutropenic and bone marrow

transplant patients, assessing the use of an oral rinse designed to detect acute graft-versus-host disease, development of evidence-based guidelines for dental therapy pre-radiation in head and neck cancer patients, and investigating the impact of pre-head and neck surgery dental care on post-operative infection rates.

“Our goal of providing the best dental care available to cancer patients while carrying out cutting edge research in dental oncology will help us fulfill our mandate of optimizing the quality of life for patients,” says Dr. Michael Glogauer. 

The Princess Margaret Dental Oncology Program Leadership Team



From left to right:

Michael Glogauer, Head, Dental Oncology

Erin Watson, Deputy Head, Dental Oncology

Jessica Metcalfe, Education Director, Dental Oncology

Read the full report to learn more about our progress and activities in clinical care, research and education in 2019.

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