University of Arizona Cancer Center’s Better Than Ever Program

2015-2016 GRANT AWARD WINNER

The Better Than Ever (BTE) training program is a fitness training and fundraising program designed to help make walking, running or biking a regular part of life. The program also raises funds to support investigator-initiated clinical trials focusing on breast and gynecologic cancers under the umbrella of Women’s Cancers at the University of Arizona Cancer Center. This year, we continue to focus on investigator-initiated clinical trials for women’s cancers.

We would also like to take this opportunity to thank all of our BTE program members. We are very grateful for their hard work and support, without which this vital program would not be possible.

Each year, the BTE Scientific Review Committee, led by Setsuko K. Chambers, MD, chooses recipients for these grants. We are pleased that this year’s award brings the 15-year grant distribution total to more than $1.9 million. The following grant has been awarded $25,500 for 2015-2016 and we congratulate this year’s recipient.

Uma Goyal, MD – Improved technique for specialized brachytherapy treatments for patients with cervical cancer – Cervical cancer continues to account for the highest incidence worldwide among gynecologic cancers. In disadvantaged populations such as in the SW, considerable disparities exist with significant barriers to access to care. The UA department of Radiation Oncology has been responsive to these realities and has strived to improve brachytherapy techniques to allow for fewer visits, so that more patients will complete their multiple treatments within the recommended period of time. Studies have shown that radiation treatments which are delivered over longer numbers of weeks lead to poorer survival. In addition, the brachytherapy component is absolutely critical to the treatment plan. Inadequate or missing brachytherapy applications lead to central pelvis failures, as external beam radiation therapy alone is inadequate for control of cervical cancer.

Dr. Goyal is a radiation oncology resident mentored by Dr. Shona Dougherty, Professor of Radiation Oncology. The hypothesis for their study is that the use of inflatable balloons for immobilization of Tandem and Ovoid apparatus in patients undergoing brachytherapy radiation for cervical cancer has significant advantages over the traditional gauze packing techniques. For patients requiring the apparatus to remain in situ overnight, balloons have satisfactory reproducibility of positioning of the apparatus, adequate protection of normal tissue, decreased operating room time, and increased comfort for patients. This study is a combined retrospective and prospective study of this specialized brachytherapy approach using inflatable balloons to improve access of disadvantaged cervical cancer patients to critical brachytherapy applications. Building on preliminary data of reproducibility in paired CT scans, further data will be analyzed for dosimetry consistency of both target lesion and normal organs as well as for acute toxicity. A database will be created which will allow for comparisons to standard brachytherapy techniques, and for long term follow-up of efficacy and toxicity.