Division of Palliative Care Medicine, Department of Oncology
Research Update: Key Grants and Publications
1st January 2013 – 31st December 2013

Our research continues to be important in defining the conceptual frameworks for the definition, classification and clinical assessment of key symptoms of advanced malignant disease, cancer – associated cachexia and cancer pain. These formerly lacked consensus and both the literature and clinical practice are confounded by disparate assessments and widely divergent diagnostic criteria. The Edmonton Classification System for Cancer Pain (PI R Fainsinger, C Nekolaichuk) continues to build its international validation (1) while ongoing work is developing further details of the classification criteria. This classification is poised to replace an extremely divergent set of existing cancer pain assessment tools that number several dozen. For cancer cachexia (PI V Baracos), the research activity included 19 publications including further development of key concepts relating to potential reversal of cachexia (2) and innovations in the diagnostic criteria for cancer cachexia (3), which had required the application of new concepts in the context of rampant obesity. Therapy for another cancer symptom, constipation, was evaluated in a randomized clinical trial (4) and while RCT are few and difficult to conduct in an end-of-life care setting, they provide hard evidence for treatment efficacy. We continue to evolve and to evaluate tools applied in Palliative Medicine, including multi-disciplinary palliative care consultation for rural cancer patients by videoconferencing (5), assessments of performance status which are crucial to care planning (6) as well as screening for distress (7).

Significant Publications:

Grants awarded in 2013: Total $3,298,000