

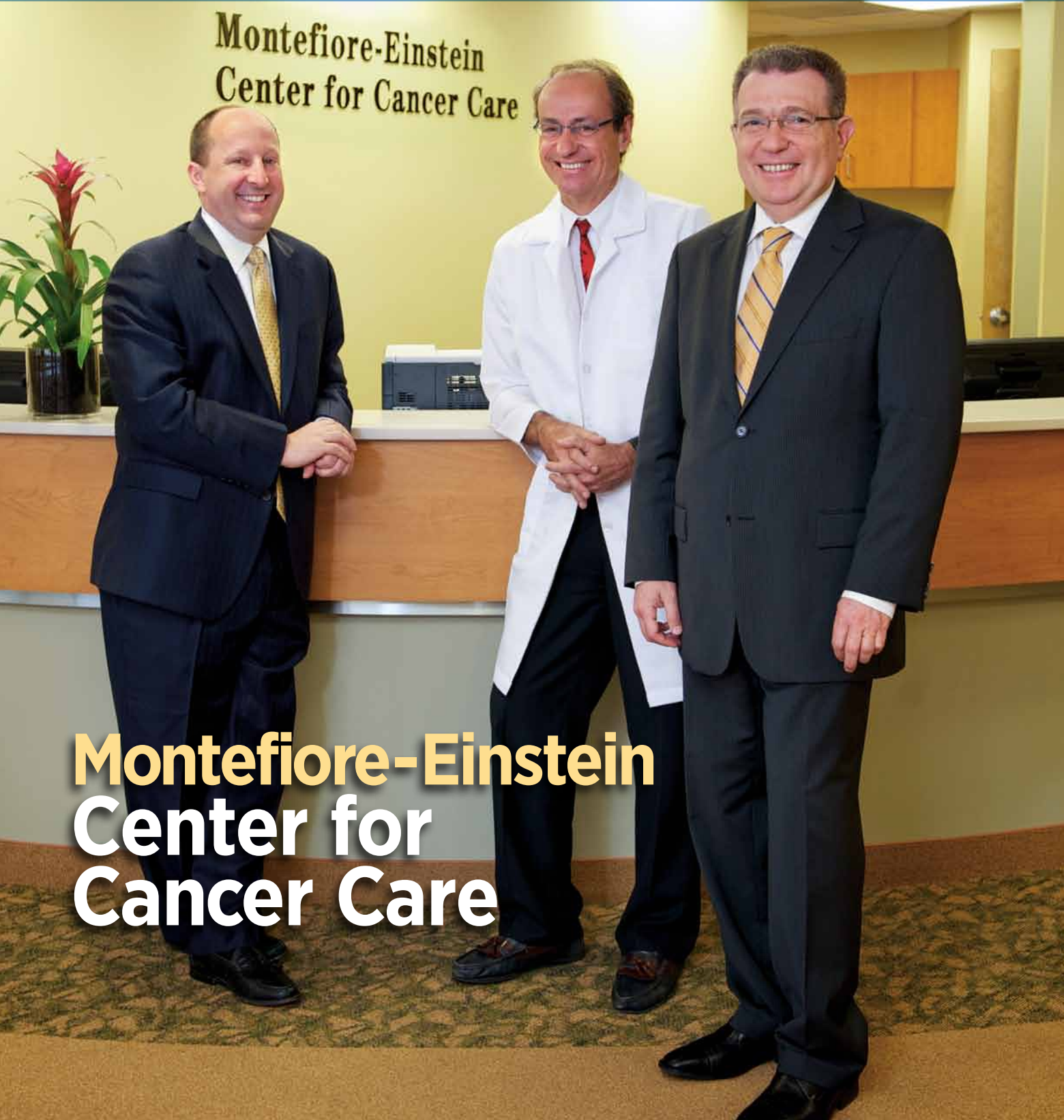
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Montefiore-Einstein
Center for Cancer Care

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CENTER FOR CANCER CARE

Integrating Science and Medicine to Provide State-of-the-Art Treatments

By Jean B. Edwards

A **RISING AS A** hospital with a desire to serve the community, Montefiore Medical Center was founded in 1884 and named in honor of Sir Moses Montefiore, a famed philanthropist of the time. In 1955, the Albert Einstein College of Medicine opened its doors, and *The New York Times* reported “the new medical school’s distinguished and talented faculty assured the institution of a place in the ranks of the great medical schools in the world.” In 1963, the two nationally known institutions formed an unwavering bond; an alliance that has intensified with time, creating the long-term framework to cultivate the potential of knowledge into the

reality of effectively predicting, preventing, diagnosing and treating diseases.

Both organizations, as acknowledged leaders in the field of medicine, stand on the threshold of a new era of unprecedented advances in medical discovery. Montefiore Medical Center and Albert Einstein College of Medicine recently announced a new, 10-year agreement to renew their existing partnership, one which continues to reduce barriers to research and stimulate the transformation of research and knowledge into improved health care.

One such crucible of scientific and medical ingenuity and



Dr. Steven Libutti discusses next steps with his patient, who is successfully recovering from cancer surgery he had days earlier at Montefiore.



Dr. Shalom Kalnicki consults with a nurse at Montefiore's Center for Radiation Therapy.

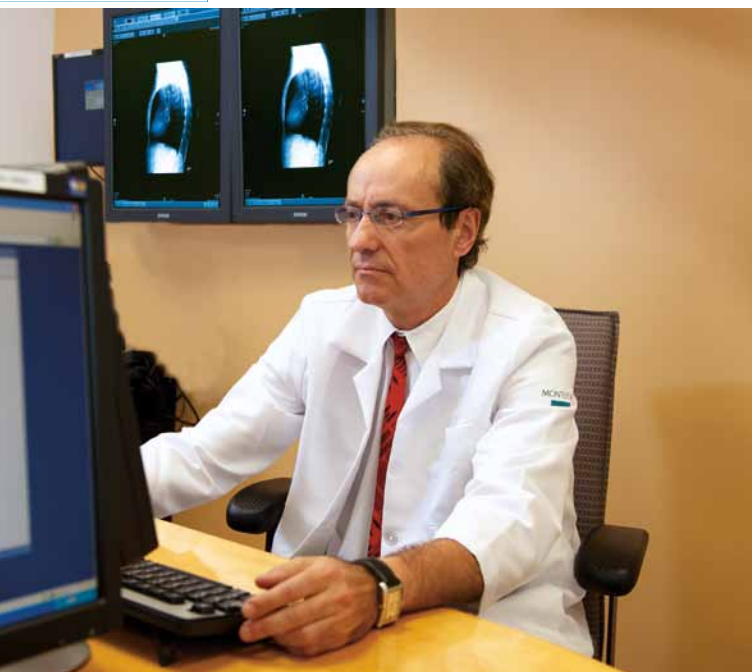
an internationally recognized Center of Excellence is the Montefiore-Einstein Center for Cancer Care. Half of all men and one-third of all women in the United States will develop cancer during their lifetimes, and the disease continues to be the second-leading cause of death in the nation. The Montefiore-Einstein Center for Cancer Care in the Bronx brings new hope of breakthrough treatments to patients with cancer, as some of the nation's most accomplished physicians join forces to take the lead in shaping a world-class cancer center.

Building the Team

Uniting a multidisciplinary team of highly experienced surgeons, medical and radiation oncologists, pathologists, specialists and oncology nurses, along with a broad array of resources, has created a unique, synergistic system that integrates clinical and translational research. Principal in this pioneering initiative are Steven Libutti, M.D., FACS; Shalom Kalnicki, M.D.; and Roman Perez-Soler, M.D. Together, they have formed a highly cohesive group of experts to determine the best course of treatment and to deliver the most comprehensive, high-quality care to cancer patients.

Dr. Libutti, Director of the Montefiore-Einstein Center for Cancer Care, professor and Vice-Chairman, Department of Surgery, professor, Department of Genetics, Montefiore Medical Center and Albert Einstein College of Medicine, is a prominent surgical oncologist and endocrine surgeon. He is also Associate Director for Clinical Services at the Albert Einstein Cancer Center. He spent a great deal of his career at the National Cancer Institute. In addition to his surgical expertise, he is a pioneer of regional and targeted cancer therapy and brings specialized knowledge in developing new research models and therapies to treat endocrine and neuroendocrine tumors. The center will be the only institution in New York and one of only a few centers in the country that will focus on these rare tumors, in addition to more common types of cancers at all stages.

"Today, medicine is so complex that it requires a team of physicians, specialists, medical professionals and scientists to work together to provide the best diagnosis and medical care for patients," Dr. Libutti says. Joining forces, the two institutions will provide patients with greater access to Montefiore Medical Center's outstanding clinical expertise and Albert Einstein College of Medicine's powerful, cutting-edge research to expand



Dr. Roman Perez-Soler reviews patient data at the Montefiore-Einstein Center for Cancer Care.

and improve patient treatment.

Dr. Kalnicki, Chairman and professor of Radiation Oncology, Montefiore Medical Center and Albert Einstein College of Medicine, brings extraordinary expertise in innovative radiation delivery methods that are critical to improve survival rates and quality of life for cancer patients. Launched at the University of Pittsburgh Cancer Institute, where he was vice chairman of radiation oncology, his work in novel radiation techniques and modalities will enable the center to remain in the forefront with the newest, cutting-edge radiation treatments.

“I believe our team concept is radically different from any other institution,” Dr. Kalnicki says. “Decisions about who should have radiation and when are made by radiation faculty and physicians in conjunction with other specialists,” he says. “I believe this approach will lead to much improved care because we place the patient’s needs first.”

Dr. Perez-Soler, Chairman and Chief, Department of Oncology, Montefiore Medical Center, Gutman professor of medicine, Albert Einstein College of Medicine, is internationally recognized as an expert in experimental cancer therapy. A specialist in lung cancer, Dr. Perez-Soler spent many years at the renowned M. D. Anderson Cancer Center in Houston. According to Dr. Perez-Soler, the Montefiore-Einstein Center for Cancer Care is at the forefront of new and innovative methods to prevent and treat cancer. The center offers breakthrough therapies in radiotherapy, chemotherapy, drug intervention and surgery, along with comprehensive patient care to treat the disease that remains the No. 1 cause of cancer-related deaths in the United States.

“We are deeply committed to meet the total health care needs of our patients and help them navigate through every step in their journey to fight this disease,” Dr. Perez-Soler emphasizes.

Ground-Breaking Achievements

“At most academic medical centers or large hospitals, cancer patients often feel lost, alone and abandoned at a time when they are very vulnerable,” says Dr. Perez-Soler. Echoing his concerns, Dr. Libutti believes that too many patients end up navigating their own way through the health care system at a time when they most need support. “We are confident that our new model for care will deliver a better approach to treating cancer,” he says.

Adhering to the new model of care and the latest addition to Montefiore Medical Center’s network of cancer care services is the center’s new outpatient facility. The 8,200-square-foot, state-of-the-art facility houses cutting-edge treatments and technology, and is at the intersection of cancer care and clinical research. It brings specialists together to efficiently and conveniently serve each patient. Here, patients can discuss therapeutic options with disease- and organ-specific clinical teams, as well as other subspecialists, social workers, nutritionists and research coordinators. Nurse navigators shepherd patients through treatment from diagnosis to resolution. Dr. Libutti explains, “When a patient walks through our doors, we want to immediately relieve them of the burdens that cancer brings. Their only job is to focus on getting healthy. We will take care of every detail in a seamless, coordinated manner.”

Beyond Traditional Therapies

Teams at the new facility will exploit their rapidly increasing knowledge to focus not only on prevalent cancers, but also on less common diagnoses such as neuroendocrine cancer, that do not benefit from large-scale, well-funded research efforts. This knowledge will also facilitate the teams in detecting cancer in its earliest stages, when it is most treatable, and to individualize patient care.

“There is a very high incidence of triple negative breast cancer in the Bronx,” says Dr. Libutti. “Today, I think it’s understood that breast cancer is not one disease but many different forms of cancer that originate in the breast.” Triple negative breast cancer, depending on which stage the patient has, can be extremely aggressive and is more likely to recur and metastasize than other subtypes of breast cancer. These tumors simply don’t respond to traditional therapies, and we desperately want to develop better strategies to help patients.”

Research is the foundation of all medical progress, and Montefiore Medical Center has long been a leader in developing and exploring new cancer treatments and drug therapies. Through the experimental therapeutics program led by Susan Band Horwitz, Ph.D., distinguished professor, Department of Molecular Pharmacology, Albert Einstein College of Medicine, and Dr. Perez-Soler, the various clinical divisions that treat cancer patients are engaged in translating laboratory findings into practical applications, so patients have access to the very latest treatments and therapies that help fight cancer. Also available at the center is a broad array of clinical trials to ensure patients have access to all available cutting-edge technologies, techniques and medications to manage their cancers. The partnership between Montefiore Medical Center and Albert



Drs. Steven Libutti and Shalom Kalnicki discuss a patient's case as he undergoes image-guided radiation therapy at Montefiore's Center for Radiation Therapy.

Einstein College of Medicine greatly enhances the search for even newer treatments and therapies and will expand patient access to a larger number of clinical trials to uncover new breakthroughs for even the most stubborn cancers.

The Center for Radiation Therapy's Trilogy linear accelerator utilizing RapidArc technology

Cutting-Edge Radiation Therapies

Dr. Kalnicki's research in radiation treatment planning and techniques enables the center to offer all of the latest radiation therapies available. Dr. Kalnicki pioneered the use of intensity modulated radiation therapy, image guided radiation therapy (IGRT), target motion management with 4-D radiation planning, stereotactic body radiation therapy and functional tumor imaging with positron emission tomography/computed tomography scan fusion techniques. His research enabled Montefiore Medical Center to be the first hospital in the New York Metropolitan region to use IGRT and only one of a few hospitals in the nation to employ RapidArc radiotherapy.

"When we target tumors during treatment, cutting-edge techniques allow for greater precision," says Dr. Kalnicki. "Our goal is to target and enhance the amount of radiation we administer to the tumors, to spare the patient's normal tissue and to avoid injury to other organs."

Support Services

Although there is no standard emotional response to the diagnosis and treatment of cancer, the center provides





Drs. Steven Libutti, Roman Perez-Soler and Shalom Kalnicki collaborate on a patient case at the Montefiore-Einstein Center for Cancer Care.

psychological and emotional support through education, supportive counseling and stress management techniques. A compassionate staff offers an array of programs for the mind, body and spirit, as well as valuable information on nutrition, genetics and rehabilitation. Convenient scheduling of appointments is available, so patients can take advantage of the multiple specialists and numerous resources during one visit.

Leading the Search for Outcome Measures

Large-scale, collaborative projects, especially complex, cancer-related research, requiring collaboration among medical professionals with highly diverse skills and training can be challenging in terms of developing validated outcome measures. However, the team approach is proving to be the paradigm for achieving progress in translating basic science discoveries into useful interventions.

“The field of oncology continues to struggle to develop validated outcome measures for cancer care,” Dr. Libutti says. “I think it’s critical to have standardized outcomes because we need to know if new therapies are really effective. Right now, we are working with our expert biostatisticians to

develop meaningful outcome measures. Ideally, we look to have a number of these operational measures within the next 12 months.”

Making a Difference

Extraordinary advances in understanding cancer have developed in recent years. Once believed to be a single disease that could rapidly be eradicated, it is now known as a diverse and complex disease. The dedicated scientists, health care providers, educators and other like-minded professionals at the Montefiore-Einstein Center for Cancer Care are committed to translating research findings into innovative treatment strategies.

Dr. Libutti has been the Director of the Montefiore-Einstein Center for Cancer Care for a year and a half, and through innovation and collaboration among some of the nation’s most skilled physicians, he and his team are already making a difference. Just as important to Drs. Libutti, Kalnicki and Perez-Soler is their personal commitment and determination to make a real difference in how patients are treated and respected in a large, comprehensive institution at one of the most vulnerable times of their lives. ■