The 20th Andrew H. Weinberg Symposium

Speaker: Mignon Loh, MD, the Benioff Professor of Clinical Pediatrics and Chief of Pediatric Hematology/Oncology at the University of California, San Francisco Benioff Children's Hospital

Report by Steven DuBois, MD, MS Director, Experimental Therapeutics, Pediatric Oncology, Dana-Faber Cancer Institute

The Weinberg Symposium was created in honor of Andrew H. Weinberg, who died of cancer before his third birthday. The Weinberg family, with support from family and friends, as well as the Medicinal Chemistry Group of the Northeastern section of the American Chemical Society, created a fund in 1995 to support the lecture. Through this symposium, the Andrew H. Weinberg Memorial Endowment Fund brings together researchers from the field of cancer drug development and those in the biomedical research and clinical care communities at large, helping to foster an environment for synergy in advancing the care of children with cancer.

"The Weinberg Symposium plays a vital role in the oncology drug development landscape. Bringing together researchers from Universities, Medical Centers and Industry, it allows for creative discussion among guests which is atypical at traditional meetings. It also serves to inspire our next generation of thought leaders- the students who intend to pursue careers in this rapidly evolving field. "

—Graham Jones, PhD, Tufts Clinical and Translational Science Institute (Tufts CTSI); Associate Director and Director of Research Collaborations Tufts CTSI.

"I am grateful for the opportunities the Weinberg symposium has provided as a forum for interaction and collaboration between my research program and some of the most prominent physicians and scientists in the field."

— Alejandro Gutierrez, MD, Division of Hematology/Oncology at Children's Hospital Boston and the Department of Pediatric Oncology at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute.

"The Weinberg Symposium has been a unique venue that has brought together a wide breadth of basic and clinical researchers from diverse settings ranging from academia, government and the pharmaceutical industry to promote the discovery and development of new cancer therapeutics for children. While there exist many conferences that focus on similar objectives in adult malignancies, especially the ones most common, it is rare for this to occur in the setting of childhood cancers. It is for this reason that I look forward to hearing from the invited speaker each year."

— Peter Ho, MD, PhD, Chief Medical Officer, Epizyme, Inc.

"I have been fortunate to be involved with the Weinberg Symposium since its inception. There are several ways in which the event has brought meaning to me and to the field: James Weinberg has taken a tragedy in his life and turned it into a personal mission to improve the care of children with cancer. He has utilized his own expertise (medicinal chemistry) to put together a symposium that combines industry, academia and government speakers. The speakers, to a one, understand this mandate, and bring new ideas to the symposium allowing a better understanding over the years of how cancer treatment for children comes about. Our trainees meet with the speaker each year, allowing them personal insight into cancer drug development."

— Holcombe Grier, MD, Professor of Pediatrics, Clinical Oncology at Dana- Farber/Children's Hospital Cancer Care

With advances in treatment and discoveries in basic science, about 90 per- cent of children with acute lymphocytic leukemia (ALL) are now long-term survivors. But that is no cause for complacency, an expert in the disease told an audience at Dana-Farber on Sept. 28, 2016.

Delivering the 20th Annual Weinberg Symposium, Mignon Loh, MD, chief of Pediatric Hematology/Oncology at the University of California, San Francisco, discussed how researchers are translating recent discoveries into new therapies for children, adolescents, and young adults with ALL.

“The mission for all of us is to identify which patients can be cured with our current therapies, and what 21st century methodologies we can use to improve the prospects for those at high risk of treatment failure,” she said.

Strategies for improving treatment are proceeding along four routes, she remarked:

1.) identifying patients who may benefit from targeted therapies;
2.) modifying therapy for patients who do not metabolize – or break down – certain drugs normally;
3.) adjusting therapies to prevent or deter drug resistance;
4.) determining which patients might benefit from immunotherapies.

Three major trials are underway nationwide to test these approaches.

This lecture webcast can be viewed at:
http://video.dfcionline.org/accordent/WeinbergSymposium092816/

Recent Weinberg Symposium lectures can be viewed at:

The 18th Annual Andrew H. Weinberg Annual Memorial Lecture
Luis Alberto Diaz, Jr., M.D Associate Professor, Oncology, Johns Hopkins Sidney Kimmel Comprehensive Cancer Center and the Ludwig Center for Cancer Genetics and Therapeutics, Novel clinical applications of cancer genomics
http://video.dfcionline.org/accordent/Weinberg061914

The 19th Annual Andrew H. Weinberg Annual Memorial Lecture
Gregory Reaman, M.D., Associate Director of Oncology Sciences Office of Hematology and Oncology Products Center for Drug Evaluation and Research, U.S. Food and Drug Administration, and Professor of Pediatrics George Washington University School of Medicine and Health Sciences, “Drug Development for Pediatric Cancers – Turning Challenges into Opportunities: A View from the Other Side”
http://video.dfcionline.org/accordent/2015WeinbergSymposium102915

- photo of Mignon Loh by Sam Ogden