

NOTABLE CANCER CENTER MEMBER
William Gradishar, MD, FACP



In order to excel at his job, a foreign correspondent must be empathetic, tenacious and intensely curious. He should thrive on change and be motivated to share his knowledge with others. The qualities that made **William Gradishar, MD, FACP**, consider a career in journalism are the same ones that inspired him to pursue his interest in science and a career in medicine. “What we do is hard work,” says Gradishar. “That’s not unique to being a physician. It’s a learned skill to persevere, focus on a goal—and hopefully attain it.”

Dr. Gradishar is Director of Breast Medical Oncology at the Robert H. Lurie Comprehensive Cancer Center of Northwestern University and Professor of Medicine at the Feinberg School of Medicine. He also serves as Chair of the Lynn Sage Breast Cancer Symposium, Director of the Hematology / Oncology Fellowship Training Program and Associate Director of the Lynn Sage Breast Cancer Program. After graduating from the University of Illinois Abraham Lincoln School of Medicine in 1982 and completing his residency in Internal Medicine at the Michael Reese Medical Center in 1986, Dr. Gradishar trained as a Hematology / Oncology Fellow at the University of Chicago Medical Center.

About half-way through his fellowship, Dr. Gradishar took a year off during the Soviet war in Afghanistan and followed his inner foreign correspondent to the Pakistan / Afghanistan border. Although he was still working in medicine, Gradishar faced new and disparate

challenges training Afghan insurgents how to return to the country and run primary care clinics. "It was a fascinating experience," he relates. "It's a very different mindset—tertiary care versus no care."

It wasn't any one individual who inspired Dr. Gradishar's interest in cancer. "There are a number of people I've admired over the years who had attributes that I've tried to incorporate into how I interact with others and how I conduct my career," he says. "I hope I've taken something away from each of them."

Dr. Gradishar is encouraged by what he sees as a reinforced link between science and clinical medicine. "Increased understanding of the science has stimulated the effort to develop therapies that are more rational, targeted and, consequently, better tolerated and more effective," he states. "That's proved to be true with both breast cancer and hematologic malignancies. I believe that we'll continue to see more rational drug design as we go forward."

As a result of the new treatment options, Dr. Gradishar believes that people will come to understand that although they may not be cured of their disease, they have a chronic illness that they can manage. They can anticipate a long life and good quality of life despite a diagnosis of cancer. "I think we'll begin to see in solid tumors what we've seen in hematologic malignancies over the last several years," he says. "By developing more targeted therapies based on an understanding of biologic pathways we'll be able to develop drugs that uniquely fit each patient—to tailor therapy. It's a phrase that's been in use for the past decade, but there's reason to believe that it's now within the realm of possibility for many, many patients."

Dr. Gradishar is actively preparing for the 9th Annual Lynn Sage Breast Cancer Symposium to be held September 27-30, 2007 at the Fairmont Chicago. He began the conference with Dr. V. Craig Jordan and Dr. Monica Morrow with the goal of developing a dominant meeting to educate practicing

physicians about breast cancer. "It was an effort to harness our strengths here at Northwestern, build on our reputations and enlist people from across the country and around the world to serve as faculty. The meeting has grown each year, and we're proud of it's success."

A Fellow of the American College of Physicians, Dr. Gradishar is also a member of the American Association for Cancer Research, the American Federation for Clinical Research, and the Association of Subspecialty Professors. He is the immediate past chair of the Oncology Training Program Committee of the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) as well as a member of ASCO's Program Committee. He is a member of the Breast Cancer Core Committee of the Eastern Cooperative Oncology Group, the Committee on Cancer of the American College of Surgeons, the National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN) Breast Cancer Guidelines Panel, and the NCCN Breast Cancer Prevention Panel. In addition, he serves as a consultant to the Oncology Drug Advisory Committee of the FDA, serves on several study sections nationally and internationally including: NIH, Komen Foundation, Avon Foundation, American Cancer Society, Alberta Cancer Board and the Imperial Cancer Fund. He is a member of editorial boards and reviewer for numerous journals, including *Journal of the National Cancer Institute*, *Journal of Clinical Oncology*, and *Clinical Cancer Research*. He has published extensively in the area of breast cancer therapeutics, with a focus on new endocrine therapy, chemotherapy and novel targeted therapies.

Dr. Gradishar and his wife are the parents of two boys and admits, "there isn't a lot of free time." For the past eight years the family has lived in a Frank Lloyd Wright house that vies for his attention as well. "There are always things in a 120 year old house that need working on, but it's not a museum, it's a home."