

Raphael Pollock, MD, PhD, tells a story about The Human Side of medicine

Dr. Pollock served as Chair of the Dept. of Surgical Oncology from 1994-2010 and Head of the Division of Surgery from 1997-2012. In an interview conducted in 2012, he tells a story about involving a patient in his research, leading to a greater sense of community and purpose for the entire laboratory.



Building Community and Meaning in the Lab

I had a patient who had metastatic liposarcoma. The disease was indolent but progressive. This individual came to me and said, “I’m looking for something to do. Can I be a volunteer in the lab?” So we were able to work that out, and because of his administrative acumen, he was able to totally reorganize our tissue repository and put it in a barcode system and set up a whole tissue procurement network. And for the last four years of his life, he worked as a volunteer in the lab and became very closely integrated, came to our Chinese New Year parties...[I]t was very, very meaningful to everyone in the lab, knowing that this was someone who was going to die of the disease that they were studying. He had a number of operations performed by me during the time that he was in the lab, so the tissues were used in a very direct fashion.

I think the value of this as bringing home the message that whether you’re in research or clinical care, if you work here, it’s ultimately about people trying to help take care of other people. It was a very, very meaningful relationship for all of us. The entire lab was invited and went to his funeral, and that’s something that I would hazard to guess to say that most research labs --even in an institution like MD Anderson, the people who are in the research program probably have not have many of these types of opportunities. Very meaningful.

About This Content

This interview clip was taken from an in-depth interview conducted for the Making Cancer History Voices Oral History Project. This ongoing project currently contains almost 400 interview hours with MD Anderson institution builders.

The transcript has been edited from the original.

The content is available for all uses.

To explore the full interview go to: <http://mdanderson.libguides.com/PollockR>

About the speaker:

Raphael Pollock, MD (left MDA 2013)

Interviewed: 2012

Primary app't: Department of Surgical Oncology.

Research: surgical techniques, surgical stress, natural killer cells, molecular approaches to soft tissue sarcoma; angiogenesis, chemoresistance, novel therapeutics

Admin: Chair, Department of Surgical Oncology (1994 – 2010); Head, Division of Surgery (1997 – 2012).

Interview Clip Identification:

Session number and date: 03; 19 November 2012

Segment: 19

Citations: Please provide the following information

Interview Subject's name, Clip Title, Date of Session, Historical Resources Center, Research Medical Library, The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center.

To request an uncompressed audio file, photographs, or for information about the interview and photo collections, contact: Javier Garza, MSIS, jjgarza@mdanderson.org