



For Immediate Release

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Hartford HealthCare and Memorial Sloan Kettering (MSK) Cancer Center release new study on the link between HPV and Head and Neck Cancer.

HARTFORD—The Hartford HealthCare Cancer Institute and the Memorial Sloan Kettering (MSK) Cancer Center will release new findings at their community talk, “The Link Between Head and Neck Cancer and Human Papilloma Virus,” on Wednesday, Feb. 28 from 4 to 5 pm at the Hartford Hospital Wellness Center at Blue Back Square in West Hartford.

The talk presented by Dr. Andrew Salner, Medical Director of the Hartford Healthcare Cancer Institute at Hartford Hospital, and Dr. David Pfister, Chief of Head and Neck Oncology Services at the Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, will focus on the importance of coordinated care in the treatment of head and neck cancer. They will also present a joint study conducted by MSK and Hartford HealthCare aimed at helping patients better identify and cope with long term side effects of treatment.

For years head and neck cancer was mostly associated with heavy drinkers and smokers who had other chronic diseases. That has changed dramatically in recent years.

“The face of the disease has really changed because of the prevalence of HPV (human papillomavirus) which is now the leading cause of head and neck cancer, particularly in the oropharynx(tonsils and back of tongue). We’re seeing a younger and healthier patient population,” said Dr. Salner.

HPV is the most common sexually transmitted infection (STI) in the United States with 79 million people, most in their late teens and early 20s infected, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Most people who have HPV will not develop cancer. For some however, the virus can create damage that



eventually causes a tumor to grow over the years. The good news: Head and neck cancer is detectable through routine screening and the five year survival rate is more than 75 percent with even better outcomes for those patients with cancer related to HPV.

Some of the long term effects of treatment which might occur include mouth dryness, neck stiffness, swallowing dysfunction, and possible jaw bone injury.

“The challenge for us is not only treating those patients effectively but also trying to minimize the side effects because those patients have a good prognosis and will be living with the impact of treatment forever” said Salner.

The event is free but registration is required. Call 1.855.HHC.HERE or visit hartfordhealthcare.org to register.

Hartford HealthCare is a member of the Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Alliance, which has brought MSK treatment standards, protocols, research and clinical trials to all HHCCI cancer centers, which include Backus, Windham, Hospital of Central Connecticut, MidState Medical Center and Hartford.