INTERVIEW WITH DR. ANDREA GUERIN, MEDICAL GENETICIST.

"The beauty of Medical Genetics and Genomics is that nothing is common"

OMPRN
Ontario Molecular Pathology Research Network

SPECIALTY AREA:

Medical Genetics

KEY FOCUS:

Genetic testing for cancer risk and inherited conditions

WHO THIS IS FOR:

- *People with a strong family history of cancer*
- *Patients diagnosed with cancer at a young age*
- *Families with rare or multiple cancer diagnoses*

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- *Some cancers are linked to inherited genetic mutations*
- *Genetic testing can help guide treatment, prevention, and family planning*
- *Genetic counsellors are there to support patients through the process*

Read the whole interview here:

CAN YOU WALK US THROUGH A TYPICAL DAY AS A MEDICAL GENETICIST?

"Typically, it is outpatient clinic. Patients can be seen in person or virtually, depending on the indication. I work with Genetic Counselors, who see patients where a physical examination is not required. They allow a small number of Medical Geneticists to be able to see thousands of patients a year. Most often I have clinic with my own patients, either new consultations or follow up results and am also covering the counselor clinics too. I do inpatient consults as needed and often have learners of many different disciplines in my clinics.
In the afternoons I work on my education leadership roles at Queen's, teach, do research, clinic prep and any work that is needed in my role as Division Head."

WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES OR CHANGES YOU'VE SEEN IN YOUR FIELD RECENTLY?

"It's a fine balance of trying to mainstream access to testing to get to a diagnosis quickly without overwhelming non geneticist colleagues with extra tasks of providing genetic counselling and more importantly interpreting results. It can also lead to a slippery slope that expertise in variant interpretation and dysmorphology is not needed to diagnose genetic disorders which is not good for patient care. We need to be careful about the logistics of the organizing of genetic testing so our colleagues are comfortable, we are there to provide valuable expertise and the patients are safe".

CAN YOU DESCRIBE HOW MOLECULAR PATHOLOGY CONTRIBUTES TO YOUR DAILY PRACTICE?

"It contributes every day! I either order or interpret a molecular test result for practically every patient I see. It helps with finally solving a diagnostic dilemma for a patient, informing family members and helping people make decisions regarding their own health and reproduction".

HOW DO YOU STAY UPDATED WITH THE LATEST RESEARCH AND TREATMENT OPTIONS?

"That is a tricky one. I think being that point of contact for patients with rare disorders to treatment options is really important in my role. Before seeing a patient, I do research to see if there are any new studies or therapies that might be of benefit. I attend conferences regularly and also collaborate with other Medical Geneticists all over the world. Also, patients and colleagues who focus on one system/disorder may bring new treatment options to my attention".

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO PATIENTS PREPARING FOR A CONSULTATION WITH A MEDICAL GENETICIST?

"I think is great when patients come with questions. Knowing why you are here and what you want out of the appointment is important".