

Humans of CDI

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Dr. Cesar Castro, MD, MMSc is an Associate Professor of Medicine at Harvard Medical School and Director of the Gynecologic Oncology Program at the MGH Cancer Center. Dr. Castro is a translational oncologist with experience leveraging nanotechnology and molecular imaging for solid tumor detection and serial profiling. He also directs the Cancer Program within the MGH Center for Systems Biology. He serves on the steering committee for the National Cancer Institute Liquid Biopsy Consortium.

What don't people know about you? What would people be surprised to learn about you?

Despite years of personal resistance, I recently caved in and purchased our family's first mini-van. I now call it my "mid-life crisis car" because it's so enjoyable and convenient. Where has it been all my life? This example also underscores that maintaining an open mind not only applies to investigative inquiries but modes of transportation as well!

How has this institution changed since you arrived?

My first interaction with MGH was through SRTP as a medical student from UCSF. It was also our current CDI Director Elena Olson's first year. Since my formal arrival in 2008 as an Oncology trainee, I have seen CDI's footprint expand into various facets of the MGH experience, catalyzed by hospital leadership. We have moved beyond talking and are now "walking the walk". There is still much left to do, but at this pace I hope to be jogging soon.

What is your proudest moment/contribution to the work?

Being selected as Faculty Co-Director for Research at CDI, alongside Professor Julie Price, has been a highlight of my MGH experiences to date. I am honored and thrilled about the opportunity to further propel the investigative trajectories of UiM trainees and faculty through this high visibility platform. My own academic trajectory has been punctuated by dedicated and invested mentors and collaborators. I understand the impact of extending one's network reach. In so doing, my hope will be UiM investigators will further entrench themselves into our research ecosystem. Among the myriad benefits, it should render the HMS promotions process an easier journey to navigate.

What is your favorite movie or book?

Hands down, "Grease." It has by far the highest rewatch value due to its superb soundtrack and choreography. This guilty pleasure originated in my childhood. I've toned it down in recent years - my children no longer allow me to recite the entire dialogue...

What advice would you give to UiM trainees and faculty in research?

Effective investigators are not myopic; they see around corners. Maintain an open mind and instead of always seeking predictable routes and opportunities, be on the look out for that potential unexpected collaboration that will catapult you into other exciting directions. And please do pay it forward!