Notes from the WMFC Halifax Ed Forum

The first-ever Waldenstrom's Macroglobulinemia Foundation of Canada's (WMFC) educational forum in Halifax, Nova Scotia on October 27 provided four dozen patients, family members and hematology nurses the opportunity to learn from and speak with international and local WM experts, and to establish and renew friendships.

IWMF Torch Doc Stars Shirley D'Sa from University College Hospital London and Zachary Hunter from The Bing Center for WM in Boston were joined by hematologist Dr. Ismail Sharif and radiation oncologist Dr. Rob Rutledge, both from Dalhousie University in Halifax.

D'Sa, author of the definitive Guide to Lymphoplasmacytic Lymphoma and Waldenstrom's Macroglobulinema, kicked off the programme by explaining the basics of WM and the various complications that can arise. She concluded with an analysis of the current situation for WM patients in the United Kingdom (UK), particularly the recent successes in staging WM clinical trials. The development of a patient registry by WM advocacy organisation WMUK has resulted in approval of 2-year funding for ibrutinib therapy for UK WM patients.

Sharif explained how patients at the Halifax Hematology Clinic were diagnosed, the current treatment options available in Canada, and the importance of clinical trials to develop new therapies.

D'Sa and Sharif were joined by Dr. Hunter for a lively Ask The Doctor session, where questions from the audience were supplemented by others submitted in advance.

After lunch Rutledge, who has won awards for health promotion with a focus on psychosocial and spiritual oncology, engaged participants' minds and bodies with his presentation on The Mind-Body-Spirit Connection in your WM Journey. Sleep, diet, exercise and meditation were highlighted as vital components of our magnificent healing powers.

Hunter concluded the proceedings with the latest news in WM, including findings from the recent International Workshop on WM, held in New York in mid-October. Highlights included the recommendation to add genetic testing for the MYD88 mutation as a requirement for a definitive diagnosis of WM, and the international consensus against rituximab maintenance therapy. Hunter also described current research and clinical trials at The Bing Center, all with the intention of one day rendering WM a chronic, manageable condition at worst, or perhaps leading to a cure.

The next WMFC educational forum is scheduled for Toronto, Ontario, on April 13, 2019.