



Interview with Prof. Rimas V. Lukas: discussion with an academic neuro-oncologist

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Editor's note

As an emerging journal in the field of clinical oncology, *Chinese Clinical Oncology (CCO)* has published a number of special series in recent years, receiving overwhelming responses from academic readers around the world. Our success cannot be achieved without the contribution of our distinguished guest editors. Taking this opportunity, *CCO* launched a new series “Interviews with Outstanding Guest Editors” this year to highlight our active contributors. We hope to express our heartfelt gratitude for their tremendous effort and to further uncover the stories behind the special series.

The special series “Introduction to the Evolving Landscape of the Management of Glioblastoma (GBM)” led by Prof. Rimas V. Lukas (*Figure 1*) from Northwestern University has attracted numerous readers since its release. Focusing on GBM, a rapidly evolving field, this special series has provided readers with an in-depth and international perspective to the field. Hereby, we are honored to have an interview with Prof. Lukas to share his experience in scientific career and his insights on this special series.

Expert introduction

Dr. Lukas is Associate Chief of the Neuro-Oncology Division at the Lou & Jean Malnati Brain Tumor Institute of Northwestern University. He is interested in the care of patients with primary brain tumors and spinal cord tumors as well as central nervous system (CNS) metastases. Specifically, he enjoys focusing his efforts on translating the discoveries of his basic science colleagues into clinical trials

with the goal of improving patient outcomes. Additionally, he has a strong interest in medical education in the U.S. and internationally and conducts research in neuroscience medical education.

Interview

CCO: In the Editorial of Section 2 on “International Perspective on the Management of Glioblastoma”, you mentioned the advantages of international societies. Could you share some examples that are related to your own clinical teaching and practice?

Prof. Lukas: I have been a member of the Society for Neuro-Oncology for a number of years. For the past few, I've had the opportunity to serve on the International Outreach Committee allowing me to meet and work with colleagues from around the world. More recently I've had the honor and opportunity to participate in the American Society for Clinical Oncology (ASCO) virtual mentor program. This facilitates direct interaction and collaboration between clinicians and investigators across international borders. It is an opportunity which has led to continued collaboration beyond the original scope of the program.

CCO: Since you have a strong interest in medical education, what improvement in clinical teaching do you think shall be made to help young surgeons be aware of the evolving problems in glioblastoma?

Prof. Lukas: Neurosurgeons are key members of the teams involved in the care of this patient population.



Figure 1 Photo of Prof. Rimas V. Lukas.

They perform procedures of diagnostic and therapeutic value. Their insight is essential for providing a holistic perspective in patient care. On the local level, active participation in the clinical discussions, via multidisciplinary Neuro-Oncology Tumor Boards for example, and involvement in the research endeavors has educational value and can hopefully energize the young neurosurgeons to devote time and energy for this type of activity. Guidance from mentors can help provide a template for success and inform them of the pitfalls they may encounter. At the regional/national/international level attendance at society meetings can help keep them on the cutting edge. Ideally, this observational participation can evolve over time to more active participation.

CCO: *What kind of projects are you recently working on? How are they related to this special series?*

Prof. Lukas: I have been working on a number of therapeutic studies for patients with glioblastoma. Many of these centers on immunotherapeutic approaches, typically combinatorial. Specific targets which we are investigating include indoleamine 2,3-dioxygenase (IDO) and stimulator of interferon response cGAMP interactor (STING). In addition, we are collaborating on cell-based therapies, specifically using natural killer (NK) cells. My hope is that we can make a meaningful impact for patients with this disease via the research we are forwarding.

CCO: *Which part of the content impressed you most in this special series? Comparing with other similar projects, what do you think is the unique advantage of this special series?*

Prof. Lukas: My belief is that this was a unique format for a Special Issue. The first half is focused on important advances in the treatment of glioblastoma. This includes re-evaluation of therapeutics which have been around for a number of years. I was interested in having a perspective on how our perceptions of these therapies have evolved since the initial publications. The second half related to international perspectives on the management of this disease. This was embarked on with an understanding that there would be substantial overlap across countries regarding what is deemed standard of care. However, there would also be unique distinguishing aspects that may relate to population size, ethnicity, economic circumstances, health insurance systems, research infrastructure, and the presence of interested clinicians and investigators. Ideally this section can serve as a snapshot of various countries across the globe.

CCO: *To make a quick takeaway for clinical doctors, what are your suggestions on diagnosing and managing glioblastoma based on the special series?*

Prof. Lukas: While the clinical history and radiographic appearance can be highly suggestive of glioblastoma, the obtainment of tissue for pathological interrogation is essential for establishing the diagnosis. This is of particular importance in the World Health Organization (WHO) 2021 classification where the molecular characterization is an essential component of how we perceive these tumors. I personally favor extensive molecular analyses of tumor tissue. At my home institution we routinely conduct extensive next generation sequencing and DNA methylation profiling to evaluate genetic and epigenetic features of all CNS tumors.

CCO: *If there is a chance to update this special series, what content would you like to moderate, add or emphasize more?*

Prof. Lukas: I am greatly looking forward to the forthcoming article on the Chinese perspective on the

management of glioblastoma. It would be wonderful to expand the number of articles to encompass a larger number and broader range of countries to garner an improved perspective at both the local and global level.

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Ethical Statement: The authors are accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved.

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