At The Tisch Cancer Institute, improving the coordination of interdisciplinary care is not just a topic for national healthcare debate—it is a daily practice. Building on the multispecialty expertise at The Mount Sinai Medical Center, cancer care at Tisch is a model of integrated expertise and treatment.

Consider, for example, the recent case of a 68-year-old woman with a history of aggressive plasmablastic multiple myeloma. The patient had a large mass on her spine, brittle bones that fractured in her left arm, and dangerously low blood counts. Her entire bone marrow was replaced by the myeloma, and due to her condition, she needed a wheelchair.

After her sixth failed chemotherapy regimen, others might have decided on no further treatment, but at Mount Sinai, a multidisciplinary team that included radiation oncologists, oncological orthopedic surgeons, and stem cell transplant physicians came together to prioritize her needs and tackle each of her problems. First, they carefully administered radiation to the substantial mass. Then, specially trained physicians administered high-dose chemotherapy followed by an infusion of her remaining stem cells—a procedure that only a few medical centers have accreditation to perform. Remarkably, her mass disappeared and the myeloma in her bone marrow was eradicated. Finally, despite her brittle bones, experts were able to repair her left arm fracture. Today, the woman can walk several blocks, use her arm, and is now well enough to enter a clinical trial.

The Tisch Cancer Institute offers a continuum of services before, during, and after treatment. Many clinical trials are also available for patients who fail conventional therapies. In another exemplary case, a 60-year-old woman was diagnosed with melanoma on her left foot that had spread to her lymph nodes. She had previously been offered limb infusion with high-dose chemotherapy—a procedure with high toxicity and poor long-term efficacy. She came to Mount Sinai looking for alternatives. The patient enrolled in a clinical trial for an experimental oncolytic herpes virus, which was injected directly into her skin lesions and lymph nodes. Within three months, the skin lesions disappeared and today, she does not exhibit any cancer symptoms.

Determining—and in many cases, developing—the best cancer treatments for individual patients is the focus of our work at Tisch and of our collaborations with the broad range of specialists at The Mount Sinai Medical Center.

Steven J. Burakoff, M.D., is Director of The Tisch Cancer Institute; William K. Oh, M.D., is Chief of Hematology and Medical Oncology; Ajai Chari, M.D., is Assistant Professor of Medicine (Hematology and Medical Oncology); and Yvonne Saenger, M.D., is Assistant Professor of Oncology and Dermatology at The Mount Sinai Medical Center in New York City.