



Bio – Dr. Michael Boyer, Director, Sydney Cancer Centre

As the director of the Sydney Cancer Centre, Dr. Michael Boyer is both captain and crew of the esteemed institution. At the helm, he keeps the centre on course to provide some of the best cancer treatment around. For years, the hospital has been a model of multi-disciplinary care. Surgeons, medical oncologists, radiation oncologists, radiologists and pathologists all meet each week to come up with the best treatment for each patient. Dr. Boyer oversees the process, ensuring continuous improvement.

The work starts with his own patients. As a crew member of his own ship, Dr. Boyer is a practicing oncologist, internationally renowned in head, neck and thoracic cancers, particularly lung cancer. An accomplished academic who graduated with first-class honours from the University of Sydney and then went on to collect a PhD from the University of Toronto, he was drawn to the challenges of lung cancer. It was one of the more difficult diseases, yet there was potential to gain ground on it. “It was the very dawning of an era when we were starting to get treatments that you could use in lung cancer, so there was a certain excitement around it,” recalls Dr. Boyer.

Today research has helped improve survival rates and lengthen life expectancies for lung cancer patients. Specific drugs can now target molecular subtypes of cancers marked by genetic mutations. There are even experimental vaccines. Dr. Boyer and his group spend much of their time performing clinical trials of new drugs. Their achievements include valuable contributions such as the first randomised trials looking at the value of PET scanning in the assessment of operable lung cancer.

Dr. Boyer serves in leadership roles outside of the hospital too. He chairs the scientific advisory committee of the Australasian Lung Cancer Trials Group and he heads the bylaws committee of the International Association for the Study of Lung Cancer. He considers all of the effort he puts into looking for new solutions well worth the time. “I know that finding better treatments for this disease changes people’s lives – and not just for patients, but for their families and friends,” he says. “Seeing that is a very powerful driver for me.”

These days, he’s using that drive to push even further. He helped instigate Lifehouse at RPA, the new holistic cancer centre that will bring even better integration of care to patients. Carrying on the inspiration provided by the late Dr. Chris O’Donnell, Dr. Boyer continues to develop plans to complete the facility by 2013. It’s a project he relishes. “I think we have a fantastic centre today and I think we’re going to build an even better centre in the future,” he says. That’s a vision both captain and crew can get behind.