



# ZPH Science Lunch

September 5, 2023 / 12:00 - 13:00

HYBRID EVENT (WEBEX)

Location: Seminarraum 3, 1<sup>st</sup> floor



## Brenda M. Birmann, ScD

Assistant Professor, Medicine, Harvard Medical School  
Associate Epidemiologist, Channing Division of Network Medicine,  
Department of Medicine, Brigham and Women's Hospital

## **"The Epidemiology of Non-Hodgkin Lymphoma and the Challenges for Elucidating (Sometimes Rare) Subtype-Specific Etiologies"**

Incidence rates for non-Hodgkin lymphoma (NHL) rose steadily for several decades before recently plateauing in the United States and some other Western countries. Attempts to identify risk factors that could explain these increases motivated numerous epidemiologic studies, but for many years a greater understanding was hindered by the inconsistency with which lymphoid neoplasms were classified and grouped for statistical analysis in those studies. In 2001, the World Health Organization (WHO) released a modern, comprehensive classification for these tumors, which has been subsequently revised and updated several times. With this classification and guidelines from the International Lymphoma Epidemiology (InterLymph) Consortium for a standardized approach to grouping rare histologic subtypes for epidemiologic analysis, evidence has emerged supporting both homogeneity and heterogeneity of risk factor associations across histologic subtypes. However, the rarity of some subtypes continues to pose a challenge to elucidating distinct subtype-specific modifiable risk factors or biologic pathways of susceptibility. Dr. Birmann has worked for close to two decades in the Nurses' Health Study (NHS) and Health Professionals Follow-up Study (HPFS) cohorts and in collaboration with other cohorts in the US National Cancer Institute Cohort Consortium and with InterLymph to investigate potentially modifiable risk factors and biomarkers of susceptibility for distinct histologic subtypes of lymphoid neoplasm. She will present some of her recent work in the NHS and HPFS in the context of an overview of current knowledge of risk factors while highlighting some of the challenges inherent to the etiologic study of rare cancer types.

## **Brenda M. Birmann, ScD**

Dr. Birmann received her Master and Doctor of Science degrees in Epidemiology from the Harvard (now T.H. Chan) School of Public Health and undertook a postdoctoral fellowship in the Training Program Cancer Epidemiology at Harvard with Dr. Nancy Mueller. Her doctoral and postdoctoral research focused primarily on the natural history of oncogenic viruses. As a postdoc, she also worked with Dr. Graham Colditz to develop a new program of research on multiple myeloma in the Nurses' Health Study and Health Professionals Follow-up Study cohorts and, subsequently, worked with Dr. Francine Laden and others to expand a research program on non-Hodgkin lymphoma etiology in the same cohorts. Dr. Birmann is presently an Associate Epidemiologist and Assistant Professor of Medicine, Channing Division of Network Medicine, Department of Medicine, Brigham and Women's Hospital and Harvard Medical School, Boston, MA, USA, where she conducts research on modifiable risk factors for, and on biomarkers of host susceptibility to hematologic cancers. She is active in the International Lymphoma Epidemiology (InterLymph) Consortium and in the US National Cancer Institute's Cohort Consortium, in which contexts she has led large, multi-site pooled analysis projects on the etiology of lymphoid malignancies. She is also an active collaborator with the Transatlantic Research Lab on Complex Social Challenges and works part-time as Grant Editor for the Office for Research Careers at Brigham and Women's Hospital. Dr. Birmann is native to the Boston area. In her spare time, she is active in her church and community and volunteers with International Justice Mission in their work to end violent oppression and exploitation of people in poverty.

## **The Science Lunch will be HYBRID:**

**Location: ZPH, Seminarraum 3 / 1<sup>st</sup> floor**

### **Webex meeting link:**

<https://meduniwien.webex.com/meduniwien-de/j.php?MTID=me87d0332218fa41e763a5a6b9408c225>

Meeting number: 2738 722 6402 Password: 6jUCp39wYmP (65827399 from video systems)  
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*This lecture is accredited with 1 DFP-point for members of the Austrian Medical Chamber.*

For further information please contact: [epi-office@meduniwien.ac.at](mailto:epi-office@meduniwien.ac.at)