USA Researchers Pursuing Early Detection Screening for Pancreatic Cancer; Volunteers Needed

University of South Alabama scientists and clinicians are expanding research that could lead to early detection and pre-diagnosis treatment of pancreatic cancer. Introduction of a simple, commercial test, where currently none exists, could save thousands of lives each year in the United States alone.

USA Mitchell Cancer Institute researchers discovered the possible breakthrough when doing research for colon cancer. They found a clean protein profile of the pancreas when examining gastrointestinal fluid from colonoscopy patients. Of protein markers for cancer, PSA for prostate cancer is the best known.

Patients preparing to undergo colonoscopies take a bowel preparation to clear their digestive tract of any solids. Even after this takes place, researchers found, the pancreas continues to secrete fluids. The production of the enzymes responsible for the digestion of food is often reduced during the development of the most serious form of pancreatic cancer, often leading to digestive problems. USA researchers believe the examination of proteins from gastrointestinal fluids could hold the key to early detection.

“There appears to be a very clear difference in the protein profile of the people who have pancreatic cancer and the people who are healthy,” said Dr. Lewis K. Pannell, principal investigator, professor of oncologic sciences and head of the proteomics research facility at MCI.

There were an estimated 45,220 new cases of pancreatic cancer in the U.S. in 2013, and there were 38,460 deaths, according to the National Cancer Institute. It is the fourth leading cause of cancer death. The chance of survival beyond five years after diagnosis is approximately 6 percent, though this changes significantly with early detection.

The discouraging survival rate, one of the lowest among cancers, is due to the difficulty in early-stage detection, even though pancreatic cancer develops extremely slowly and—similar to colon cancer—can be treated before it becomes advanced, Pannell said.

Pancreatic cancer is usually fatal because it is difficult to detect when it is most treatable. There are often no noticeable signs of the cancer in the early stages, and, because of the pancreas’ location in the body behind other organs, screening is difficult.

While the results look promising to date, Pannell said, the research is still in its early stages and a commercial test is several years away.

The research began as a colon cancer study five years ago. When MCI scientists realized that they were observing a protein profile from the pancreas and not the colon, they teamed up with Dr. Lee Thompson, a surgical oncologist with Infirmary Health’s Cancer Surgery of Mobile, who performs many of the pancreatic surgeries in the area. He asked his patients to provide samples prior to surgery, and these became the basis of the discovery efforts.

Researchers now are expanding the sampling pool and need volunteers. Specifically, Pannell said, he is looking for people with an immediate, blood relative who has or had been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer, people with pancreatitis or other non-cancer diagnoses of the gastrointestinal system; and people who have been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer but have not yet received treatment or had surgery.

Pancreatic cancer can follow family lines, especially in cases where there is more than one pancreatic cancer diagnosis in a family.

People who fit into one of these categories should call Pannell at (251) 445-9860 or email him at lpannell@health.southalabama.edu.

The research group is also beginning collaborations with other gastroenterologists and surgical oncologists in the area, including Dr. Marcus Tan at MCI, groups at UAB and beyond.

“We are hopeful that this research will lead to a commercial test for pancreatic cancer,” Pannell said. “If we are successful, the results could be profound. The sooner the cancer is detected, the greater chance we have to save lives.”

A biotechnology company has acquired the two patents from USA connected to the research and has given some funding to the project. It is still in its early stages and a commercial test is several years away.

The annual “Salty Worm Brackish Classic and Delta Bash,” a fundraiser established by the family and friends of the late brothers Tommy and Peter Gaillard Jr., and this year’s major fundraiser at the Mitchell Cancer Institute, Celebrate Hope.

“Half the Sky” Exhibit Opens at USA Archaeology Museum April 5

The USA Archaeology Museum will host the temporary exhibit “Half the Sky” beginning at noon on Saturday, April 5, and continuing through Sept. 1.

The exhibit is a component of the Common Read/Common World Initiative encouraging the USA community to read “Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide” by New York Times journalists Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn (Knopf, 2009).

Using existing research and personal stories, the book reveals how women and girls are being victimized and terrorized, first by poverty and then by the global marketplace.

Four key themes of the book – education, economic empowerment, maternal health and violence – are examined in the exhibit. These themes are brought to light through diverse media, including cultural objects, art, photography and audio-visual content.

Compelling images from Los Angeles-based photographer Jamie Johnson’s “One World” series visually communicate that we are much more similar than we are different, emphasizing our interconnectedness.

The exhibit also showcases silk-screen prints made in response to the books by students of Megan Moore, assistant professor of visual arts in printmaking. An audio-visual station further allows visitors to learn more about the themes through a series of curated short videos.

The exhibit also includes a tactile and participatory component. Visitors will be invited to engage with cultural artifacts that connect to the stories conveyed. For instance, one of the stories related to economic development describes the village of Umoja, Kenya, and the beaded items that women there produce will be included in the exhibit. The cultural artifacts will not be displayed in a traditional museum manner using a glass display case known as a vitrine. Rather, the objects will be placed inside seats used for the audio-visual stations, inviting the viewer to touch and interact with the objects.

“The exhibit is a component of the Common Read/Common World Initiative encouraging the USA community to read “Half the Sky.””

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Police recently hosted the first "Coffee with a Cop" at USA. About 100 USA students, faculty and staff attended the event. Free coffee was provided by Starbucks and Aramark.

"Coffee with a Cop" is a national initiative supported by the United States Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services. The event was also sponsored by Aramark, the Future Justice Professionals and Iota Nu City-Wide Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.

USA Police Host Successful National Relationship Building Initiative on Campus

The University of South Alabama Police recently hosted the first "Coffee with a Cop" at the Humanities Building on the main campus. About 100 USA students, faculty and staff attended the event. Free coffee was provided by Starbucks and Aramark.

"Coffee with a Cop" is a national initiative supported by the United States Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services. This initiative provides a unique opportunity for community members to meet local police officers, discuss community issues, ask questions and learn more about the USA Police department.

The program aims to advance the practice of community policing by improving the relationships between police officers and community members over a cup of coffee. Since most interactions with officers occur during emergency situations, "Coffee with a Cop" breaks down those barriers and allows for a relaxed, one-on-one interaction.

"We were pleased to be able to answer questions and hear concerns. We want to continue to build relationships with our students, faculty and staff," said USA Chief of Police Zeke Aull. "These interactions are the foundation of community partnerships."

The initiative was also sponsored by USA's Aramark, the Future Justice Professionals and Iota Nu City-Wide Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.

For more information, call Chief Zeke Aull at (251) 460-6611.

Dr. Jakobi Williams to Speak at Commemoration of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s Assassination

Dr. Jakobi Williams, associate professor of African-American and African diaspora studies at Indiana University in Bloomington, will speak on April 4 during a commemoration of the 46th anniversary of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in Memphis.

Students are asked to meet at 5:30 p.m. at the Moulton Tower and Alumni Plaza before walking to the Humanities Building where the lecture will be held in the auditorium, Room 160.

Williams will lecture on the role violence played in the lives of those participating consciously in engaged civil rights struggles. His visit is sponsored by the University’s African-American Studies Program.

Williams, who earned a bachelor's degree from Southern Illinois University at Carbondale and both a master's degree and doctorate from UCLA, is the author of "From the Bullet to the Ballot: The Illinois Chapter of the Black Panther Party and Racial Coalition Politics in Chicago."

Williams's visit is co-sponsored by the African-American Student Association, the USA Chapter of the NAACP, USA Chapter of the Pinoy South Society, the department of foreign languages and literatures, the department of English, the department of history, the Gender Studies Program and the Honors Program.

For more information, call the African-American Studies Program at (251) 460-6146.

Counseling and Testing Services Names New Counselor

Dr. Carolyn Dolan Admitted to U.S. Supreme Court Bar

Dr. Carolyn Dolan, professor of community/mental health nursing in the College of Nursing and paralegal studies instructor for the School for Continuing Education and Special Programs, was sworn in and admitted to the U.S Supreme Court Bar on March 3.

Dolan, who is also a member of the American Association of Nurse Attorneys, was one of five nurses sworn in before the nation’s highest court during the ceremony.

Dolan was admitted to the Alabama State Bar in 2005. She received a bachelor of science degree in nursing from Auburn University in Montgomery, a master of science degree in nursing from USA and a law degree from the Jones School of Law at Faulkner University in Montgomery.

Dr. Carolyn Dolan

Counseling and Testing Services has appointed Leslie Weaver as a new counselor, according to Dr. Robert Hanks, director.

Weaver received both a bachelor’s degree in health education and a master’s degree in community counseling from USA.

Weaver, a licensed professional counselor, worked for 10 years as a counselor and outreach coordinator at Penelope House where she was a representative on USA’s Violence Prevention Alliance. In the near future, she will assume the position of president-elect with the Alabama Counseling Association, District VIII.

Leslie Weaver
USA CHILDREN’S & WOMEN’S HOSPITAL INVITES YOU TO A

FARM TO TABLE event
PRESENTED BY HANCOCK BANK

USA CHILDREN’S & WOMEN’S HOSPITAL PARK

SUNDAY APRIL 6TH 4 UNTIL 7

TICKETS: $150 CASUAL ATTIRE

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LOCAL GOODNESS

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH ALABAMA Children’s & Women’s HOSPITAL
Hancock Bank.

Buy Tickets: CWHLocalGoodness.EventBrite.com / 251-415-1636
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Opportunities for the audience to affect change both in the short and long term are encompassed in the exhibit. The re:Action Station will encourage visitors to take action by interacting with a tablet that provides specific ways to combat women's oppression within the next five minutes, five days or five months.

“We hope this effort will spark dialogue and action about these important issues as well as exemplify the museum’s commitment to social responsibility,” said Barbara Filion, education curator at the museum and organizer of the exhibit.

Diane Gibbs, associate professor of art and art history, head of Little Bird Communications and host of Design Recharge, will provide graphic design work for the exhibit.

The exhibit is made possible by the generous support of the Alabama Humanities Foundation.

For more information on the exhibit, e-mail bfilion@southalabama.edu, or visit www.southalabama.edu/archaeology/museum.html.

USA Health System Offers Free Skin Cancer Screenings

The USA Health System will offer free skin cancer screenings for all USA Health and Dental Plan members on Wednesday, April 9, 2–5:30 p.m. at the new clinic at University Commons.

Screenings will be performed by Dr. Marcus Tan, surgical oncologist at the USA Mitchell Cancer Institute, and Mona Hagmaier, physician assistant certified, with University Physicians Group.

According to Tan, the incidence of melanoma in the United States is rising more rapidly than for virtually any other cancer. “In fact, one in every 55 individuals will develop melanoma. However, if caught early, it is curable in 90% of cases,” he said.

There are several risk factors to consider in a melanoma diagnosis, including family history of melanoma, prior melanoma, multiple pigmented skin lesions and some rare genetic syndromes. In addition, a history of extensive or severe sun exposure or severe sunburns may also contribute to the development of this potentially fatal cancer.

Hagmaier recommends that everyone have an annual skin cancer screening as part of their preventative health program. She also recommends monthly self-exams of the skin to monitor for changes.

In conducting a successful self-exam, it is crucial to know what to look for. Lesions suspicious for melanoma usually have a combination of the “ABCDEs of Melanoma:”

- A - asymmetry
- B - irregular Borders
- C - variable Color (pigmentation)
- D - diameter greater than 1/4 inch
- E - expanding (growing) skin lesion

To schedule a free skin cancer screening, call (251) 660-5787.

To schedule a free skin cancer screening, call (251) 660-5787. University Commons is located at 75 University Blvd. at the intersection of University Blvd. and Old Shell Rd. (adjacent to the USA College of Education).

Thursday, March 27, 2014

The department of surgery will host the 5th Annual Greater Gulf Coast Trauma and Acute Care Surgery Symposium through Friday, March 28, at the Renaissance Mobile Riverview Plaza Hotel. The symposium will provide physicians, surgeons, nurses and technicians with current evidence-based concepts and techniques of resuscitation, diagnostic evaluation and therapeutic intervention. The 7th Annual William A.L. Mitchell Endowed Lectureship in Traumatology and Surgical Critical Care will be held in conjunction with the seminar. This year’s lecture will feature Dr. Timothy C. Fabian, Wilson Alumni Professor and chair of surgery at the University of Tennessee Health Science Center in Memphis. The lecture, “Blunt Aortic Injury,” will begin at 4 p.m. on Thursday. A reception will follow. The event is free and open to the public. Fabian will also lecture during the two-day symposium. Educational credits are available. For more information, visit www.usa-cme.com, or contact Rebecca Scarbrough at (251) 471-7971.

Friday, March 28, 2014

SBIR/STTR Application Writing Assistance is now available through the Economic Development Partnership of Alabama Web site. For more information about the SBIR/STTR assistance program visit http://alabamalaunchpad.com/sbir/. For more information about writing assistance and the link to the application itself visit http://alabamalaunchpad.com/sbir/writing-assistance/. Companies or teams may also benefit from writing assistance. If a team has participated in a previous Alabama Launchpad Competition, the application fee may be waived. If there are suggestions or questions about the application process, contact Austen Parrish, research and grants analyst at aparrish@edpa.org, or call (205)943-4727. A general SBIR

E-mail items to midweekmemo@southalabama.edu

Workshop will be held March 28, 2014 and an NIH – specific workshop will be held May 2. Contact Dr. Mark Weaver at markweaver@southalabama.edu for additional information about these workshops.

Friday, April 4, 2014

The College of Nursing will co-sponsor “Transcultural Caring: Transcending Differences Embracing Commonalities,” the first annual conference of the Transcultural Nursing Society Networking Chapter of the Alabama and Mississippi Research and Cultural Symposium. The event will be 8 a.m.-5 p.m. in the Health Sciences Building. For more information, call Dr. Jennifer Styron, assistant professor of nursing, at (251) 445-9505.

Thursday, April 10, 2014

The USA Obstetrics and Gynecology Conference will begin at 7:15 a.m. in the Daphne Civic Center, 2603 U.S. Highway 98, in Daphne. The two-day event is sponsored by the department of obstetrics and gynecology and the College of Medicine’s Office of Continuing Medical Education. The program will be of particular interest to obstetricians and gynecologists, family medicine physicians, advanced practical nurses, physician assistants, certified nurse midwives, nursing professionals, social workers and others interested in the health care of women and newborns. Special guest speakers will be Dr. Brian Brocato, instructor, department of obstetrics and gynecology, at the University of Tennessee in Memphis; Dr. Gale Y. Blakley, national medical director, United Healthcare Group of New York; and Dr. Craig V. Towers, associate professor, department of obstetrics and gynecology at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville. For more information, visit http://www.usahealthsystem.com/obgyn-conference-announcement.