News from the Association of American Cancer Institutes
March 2017

Headlines

Capitol Hill Educational Briefing Set for March 28
AACI will host an educational briefing to introduce the 115th Congress, staff, and Hill veterans, to academic cancer centers and highlight the role they play in pursuit of 21st Century Cures. The briefing, titled "Implementing the Promise of 21st Century Cures: The Role of Academic Cancer Centers" will take place on Tuesday, March 28 at 12 noon in the Rayburn House Office Building. more...

Online Registration Continues for Annual Hill Day, May 4
AACI's annual Hill Day is set for Thursday, May 4, 2017, in Washington, DC. AACI will once again partner with the American Association for Cancer Research (AACR) and the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) to bring advocates to Capitol Hill and request stable, predictable investments in the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and National Cancer Institute (NCI). more...

Registration Opens March 15 for 9th Annual AACI CRI Meeting
The 9th Annual AACI Clinical Research Initiative Meeting will be held July 12-13, in Chicago, at the Loews Chicago O'Hare Hotel. Information on the meeting, including the program and electronic registration, will be available on the AACI website on Wednesday, March 15. Last year’s CRI annual meeting attracted 302 attendees discussing a variety of issues related to the conduct of cancer clinical trials at academic cancer centers. more...

Academic Difference Initiative Library Now Online
As part of AACI's Academic Difference Initiative (ADI), a library of documents designed to identify the unique attributes and value of academic cancer centers is now available on AACI's website. The documents, submitted by AACI academic centers, focus on six areas-research, clinical care, education, economic impact, patient outcomes, and general cancer center information.

ADI is an ongoing effort and AACI welcomes additional contributions. For questions and to submit materials from your center, please contact Jaime Anderson. more...

News from the Centers

Awards & Honors

Rowley to be Posthumously Inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame
The University of Chicago Medicine Comprehensive Cancer Center
Janet D. Rowley, MD, the Blum-Riese Distinguished Service Professor of Medicine, Molecular Genetics & Cell Biology and Human Genetics, who discovered a connection between the
appropriate for inclusion.

To subscribe to AACI Update, please send an e-mail to aaciupdate@aaci-cancer.org with your name, title, and telephone number asking to be added to the AACI’s distribution list. To unsubscribe, please send an email with “unsubscribe” in the subject line.

Duke Faculty Elected to the ASCI Class of 2017

Duke Cancer Institute

Three members of the Duke Cancer Institute have been elected to the American Society for Clinical Investigation (ASCI) Class of 2017: John Sampson, MD, PhD; Stefanie Sarantopoulos, MD, PhD; and Dorothy Sipkins MD, PhD. Membership in this organization recognizes excellence and outstanding achievement for physician-scientists representing a diverse range of disciplines and specialties.

Horwitz Inducted as Fellow of the American Brachytherapy Society

Fox Chase Cancer Center, Temple Health

Eric M. Horwitz, MD, chair of the Department of Radiation Oncology at Fox Chase Cancer Center, has been selected by the American Brachytherapy Society (ABS) as an inaugural ABS Fellow. He will be formally recognized at the ABS 2017 Annual Conference in Boston in April. Under Dr. Horwitz’s leadership, Fox Chase has notably expanded its radiation oncology treatment options and patient volumes.

Grants & Gifts

Colorado "Comprehensive" Designation Renewed

University of Colorado Cancer Center

The University of Colorado Cancer Center has again been designated by the National Cancer Institute (NCI) as a "comprehensive cancer center", recognizing the Center’s excellence across all aspects of cancer research and oncology care. NCI also highlighted the Center’s unique structure as a "consortium" center. Rather than relying on a localized, one-campus system, the CU Cancer Center represents the collaboration of members at multiple institutions including University of Colorado Boulder, University of Colorado Denver|Anschutz Medical Campus, and Colorado State University (with most CSU members coming from the Flint Animal Cancer Center). Also included in the consortium are CU Cancer Center's clinical partners University of Colorado Hospital, Children's Hospital Colorado, and Denver VA Medical Center.

Grant Funds Largest Study of Factors Affecting African Americans with Cancer

Barbara Ann Karmanos Cancer Institute

The Karmanos Cancer Institute and Wayne State University School of Medicine will launch the nation's largest study of African American cancer survivors to better understand disproportionately high incidence and mortality from cancer and its impact on this specific patient population. The study is being funded with a five-year, $9 million grant from the National Cancer Institute. Principal investigators Ann G. Schwartz, PhD, MPH, and Terrance Albrecht, PhD, will lead the research.

Effort to Improve Radiation Therapy for Veterans Receives Nearly $4 million

Siteman Cancer Center

In a national effort to improve and standardize radiation therapy for U.S. veterans with cancer, the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) has contracted with Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis for an additional $3.8 million to fund the project. Federal funding for the effort, which aims to ensure that veterans receive the same high-quality radiation therapy at any of the 40 VHA radiation oncology centers across the country, now totals $4.5 million. The additional funding extends the length of the contract to three years, from one year.

Gajewski Receives NCI Outstanding Investigator Award

The University of Chicago Medicine Comprehensive Cancer Center

Thomas Gajewski, MD, PhD, professor of pathology and medicine, has been awarded an Outstanding Investigator Award by the National Cancer Institute. The award guarantees $600,000 in direct costs per year for seven years. Dr. Gajewski, director of the immunology and cancer program at the University of
Leadership Transitions

**Drebin Named Chairman of the Department of Surgery**  
**Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center**  
Jeffrey A. Drebin, MD, PhD, has been named the new chairman of the Department of Surgery at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center (MSK). Dr. Drebin brings to MSK decades of experience as a surgical oncologist specializing in pancreaticobiliary, upper gastrointestinal and liver surgery. He joins MSK from the Perelman School of Medicine of the University of Pennsylvania where he was most recently the John Rhea Barton Professor and Chairman of the Department of Surgery. Dr. Drebin formally assumes his new role as Peter Scardino, MD, steps down as Chairman after ten years of leadership. more...

**Wingard Named Deputy Director**  
**University of Florida Health Cancer Center**  
John R. Wingard, MD, has been appointed deputy director of the University of Florida Health Cancer Center. In this role, Dr. Wingard will oversee the UFHCC good manufacturing practices resource to facilitate bringing UF-developed novel cell and drug therapies rapidly to the clinic. He will also be responsible for managing the internal grants programs to stimulate collaborative research initiatives, coordinating membership activities and developing a strategic plan for the UFHCC. more...

**Houlihan named Associate Director for Administration**  
**University of Florida Health Cancer Center**  
The University of Florida Health Cancer Center has announced that Robert Houlihan, DHA, MBA, FACHE, has been appointed the center's associate director for administration. Dr. Houlihan will oversee all administrative activities of the UFHCC. Working closely with other members of the senior leadership board, Dr. Houlihan will be responsible for programmatic development and operational management to fully realize the center's mission and strategic vision of achieving National Cancer Institute designation. more...

**Associate Director for Education and Training Appointed**  
**VCU Massey Cancer Center**  
Massey researcher Devanand Sarkar, MBBS, PhD, has been appointed as the associate director for education and training at VCU Massey Cancer Center. Dr. Sarkar holds the Harrison Foundation Distinguished Professorship in Cancer Research at Massey and is a member of Massey's Cancer Molecular Genetics research program. He is also an associate professor in the Department of Human and Molecular Genetics at the VCU School of Medicine and associate scientific director, Cancer Therapeutics, at the VCU Institute of Molecular Medicine. more...

**Salvino Appointed Scientific Director of Molecular Screening**  
**The Wistar Institute**  
The Wistar Institute has announced the appointment of Joseph M. Salvino, PhD, as professor in the Molecular and Cellular Oncogenesis Program and Scientific Director of the Institute's Molecular Screening Facility. Dr. Salvino's research is directed at drug discovery and development. He focuses on early development and in vivo validation of small molecules as tools to confirm the pharmacological relevance, and "drugability" of a therapeutic target. more...

**Heath Appointed Associate Center Director for Translational Sciences**  
**Barbara Ann Karmanos Cancer Institute**  
Wayne State University School of Medicine Professor of Oncology Elisabeth Heath, MD, FACP, has been appointed associate center director for...
Translational Sciences for the Barbara Ann Karmanos Cancer Institute. Dr. Heath will enhance the ongoing work conducted in translational research, create opportunities by facilitating interactions and communications between scientists and clinicians, advocate for resources to expedite multi-principal investigator projects, and develop teams of scientists and clinicians for major research grants. more...

Patrick Named Director of Drug Development Institute
The Ohio State University Comprehensive Cancer Center
James Cancer Hospital & Solove Research Institute
Jeffrey Patrick, PharmD, has been named director of the Drug Development Institute (DDI) at The Ohio State University Comprehensive Cancer Center - Arthur G. James Cancer Hospital and Richard J. Solove Research Institute (OSUCCC - James), effective Feb. 13, 2017. Created by the OSUCCC - James and with the help of seven Ohio State colleges and the university's technology commercialization office, the DDI helps accelerate cancer drug development through strategic partnerships within the global pharmaceutical and research/development industries. DDI has cataloged 30 novel anticancer agents developed at Ohio State and is currently working to advance the most promising toward phase 1 human testing by seeking investigational new drug applications by 2020. more...

Levy to Lead Medical Oncology Program at Sibley
Sidney Kimmel Comprehensive Cancer Center
Lung cancer specialist Benjamin Levy, MD, has been named the new clinical director of medical oncology and medical director of thoracic oncology for the Johns Hopkins Kimmel Cancer Center at Sibley Memorial Hospital in northwest Washington, DC. Dr. Levy is the former director of thoracic medical oncology at Mount Sinai's Icahn School of Medicine. more...

Research Highlights

Anti-Aging Gene a Promising Therapeutic Target for Older Melanoma Patients
The Wistar Institute
Scientists at The Wistar Institute have shown that an anti-diabetic drug can inhibit the growth of melanoma in older patients by activating an anti-aging gene that in turn inhibits a protein involved in metastatic progression and resistance to targeted therapies for the disease. Ashani Weeraratna, PhD, led the study. more...

Researchers Discover Sugar-Addiction of Cancer Cells in Childhood Leukemia
City of Hope Comprehensive Cancer Center
An international team of researchers led by City of Hope’s Markus Muschen, MD, PhD, found a connection between drug-resistance in acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL) and increased sugar uptake in the ALL cells. To try to get a better understanding of the mechanisms that are at play in ALL, Dr. Muschen and colleagues at City of Hope investigated the role of B cells, the cells that produce antibodies in the human immune system. more...

Five-Tiered Gleason Grade Grouping System Finding Validated
Sidney Kimmel Cancer Center at Thomas Jefferson University
Scientists at the Sidney Kimmel Cancer Center have been able to validate the contemporary five-tiered Gleason Grade Grouping Using Population-based Data. The research conducted confirms that the proposed five-tiered Gleason grade grouping system is effectively able to predict the mortality rate among prostate cancer patients. more...
Target for Upper Gastrointestinal Tumors Identified
Vanderbilt-Ingram Cancer Center
The signaling protein Aurora kinase A is overexpressed in several cancer types and has diverse oncogenic functions, making it an attractive druggable cancer target. Wael El-Rifai, MD, PhD, and colleagues are exploring a role for AURKA in upper gastrointestinal cancers, which are characterized by poor patient survival and resistance to chemotherapy. more...

Gut Bacteria Associated with Cancer Immunotherapy Response in Melanoma
University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center
Melanoma patients' response to a major form of immunotherapy is associated with the diversity and makeup of trillions of potential allies and enemies found in the digestive tract, researchers at The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center report at the ASCO-Society for Immunotherapy in Cancer meeting in Orlando. Analysis of 113 fecal samples of patients with metastatic melanoma found that those who responded to a PD1 checkpoint inhibitor had a greater diversity of gut bacteria and larger volumes of a specific type of bacteria than those who did not respond. more...

Scalp Cooling Can Help Some Breast Cancer Patients Retain Hair
UCSF Helen Diller Family Comprehensive Cancer Center
Scalp cooling can lessen some chemotherapy-induced hair loss - one of the most devastating hallmarks of cancer - in certain breast cancer patients, according to a new multicenter study from UC San Francisco, Weill Cornell Medicine and three other medical centers. A majority of the study's patients, all women with stage 1 or 2 breast cancer who underwent scalp cooling, retained more than half of their hair after completing chemotherapy, the investigators learned. The study, which tracks patients over five years, used standardized photographs to grade hair loss. more...

Study Could Help Identify Breast Cancer Patients Who Would Benefit from Preoperative Hormone Therapy
VCU Massey Cancer Center
Preliminary findings from a pilot study led by VCU Massey Cancer Center suggest that it may be possible to use genetic testing to identify more breast cancer patients who would benefit from hormone therapy as an alternative to chemotherapy. The findings were presented at the 2016 San Antonio Breast Cancer Symposium by surgical oncologist Harry D. Bear, MD, PhD. more...

One Giant Leap Against Cancer: UVA Plays Key Role in Cancer Moonshot
University of Virginia Cancer Center
The University of Virginia Health System is playing a leading role in the Cancer Moonshot program, which is designed to make a decade's worth of advances in cancer prevention, diagnosis and treatment in only five years. To achieve such rapid progress, researchers are coordinating their efforts, sharing resources and breaking down barriers to collaboration. more...

New Class of Drugs to Combat Aging Diseases Discovered
University of New Mexico Comprehensive Cancer Center
Eric Prossnitz, PhD, and his international team uncovered new details of the aging process. They discovered an altered balance between certain signaling molecules in the smooth muscle cells of blood vessels and the heart. The team also discovered a new class of drugs that combats an important part of the aging process. more...

The Right Chemistry: Collaborating Across Multiple Disciplines
The University of Kansas Cancer Center
Two doctors at KU Cancer Center are collaborating on the "lab-on-a-chip," a testing platform that captures and performs analysis of various biomarkers, which are actively released by tumor cells into blood. Rather than the usual invasive and costly biopsy, the credit-card size devices will screen for circulating markers that are released from cancer cells within patients' blood. more...
"Exceptional" Long-Term Survival Seen When Single Dose of Chemotherapy Selects Patients for Chemo-Radiation or Surgery

University of Michigan Comprehensive Cancer Center

Even as treatment options for laryngeal cancer seemed to improve, survival rates did not. For the most advanced patients, 50 percent survival was the norm, whether patients had surgery to totally remove the voice box or alternative treatment with chemotherapy and radiation to try to avoid surgery. But the head and neck oncology team at the University of Michigan Comprehensive Cancer Center came up with a different approach: Give patients a single dose of chemotherapy and see who responds to it. Gregory T. Wolf, MD, led the study. more...

Most Elective Colorectal Surgery Patients Receive Inadequate Bowel Prep to Prevent Postoperative Complications

Fox Chase Cancer Center, Temple Health

In the largest study of its kind to date, researchers from Fox Chase Cancer Center and the Lewis Katz School of Medicine at Temple University confirmed that oral antibiotics combined with mechanical bowel preparation were more effective at preventing surgical site infections after elective colorectal surgery compared to no bowel preparation or use of mechanical bowel preparation alone. Nestor F. Esnaola, MD, MPH, led the study. more...

Online Database Aims to Collect, Organize Research on Cancer Mutations

Siteman Cancer Center

The body of knowledge on cancer genomics is massive and ever-expanding. But this wealth of potentially critical information is far less likely to be of help to patients if it is inaccessible to the doctors who treat them. Washington University researchers at Siteman Cancer Center have developed an online "knowledgebase" intended for the gathering and organization of this information so that clinicians have improved chances of identifying important mutations in a patient's tumor and potentially connecting genetic errors with drugs known to target them. Obi L. Griffith, PhD, is senior author of the study. more...

Scientists Create Scorecard Index for Heart-Damaging Chemo Drugs

Stanford Cancer Institute

Researchers at the Stanford University School of Medicine used heart muscle cells made from stem cells to rank commonly used chemotherapy drugs based on their likelihood of causing lasting heart damage in patients. The researchers found that their assay can accurately identify those tyrosine kinase inhibitors already known to be the most dangerous in patients. In the future, they believe their system may prove useful in the early stages of drug development to screen new compounds for cardiotoxicity. more...

Drugs, Diseases and Proteins: New Archive Helps Precision Medicine, Drug Development

University of New Mexico Comprehensive Cancer Center

Tudor Oprea, MD, PhD, at UNM Comprehensive Cancer Center and his collaborators from the UK-based European Bioinformatics Institute in Hinxton and from the Institute for Cancer Research in London have created the beginnings of an open archive that links a drug's chemical structure, its molecular biology activity and the diseases it is used to treat. more...

Connection Seen Between Intimate Partner Violence and Barriers to Cancer Recovery

UK Markey Cancer Center

Researchers in the UK College of Public Health, UK College of Medicine and Center for Research on Violence Against Women collaborated on a recent study indicating victims of intimate partner violence experience poorer quality of life during a cancer diagnosis. Participants were asked to indicate whether they experienced current or past physical, sexual or psychological violence by an intimate partner. The investigators found a
Scientists Identify Bone Degradation Process Within Metastatic Breast Cancer
Huntsman Cancer Institute

Once breast cancer spreads through the body, it can degrade a patient’s healthy bones, causing numerous problems. Scientists at Huntsman Cancer Institute at the University of Utah have identified a new way that bones get destroyed through cancer. And they’ve also learned how to block that destruction with a new drug. Initial tests with patients show promising results. Alana Welm, PhD, led the study. more...

'Dense Breasts' Eclipse All Other Known Breast Cancer Risk Factors
UCSF Helen Diller Family Comprehensive Cancer Center

Women whose breasts are composed largely of glandular tissue, rather than fat, have an amplified risk of breast cancer, which exceeds the impact of other widely known risks on a population level, including family history of the disease, personal history of benign lesions and first full-term pregnancy over age 30. In what is believed to be the first large-scale study to quantify the development of breast cancer according to the degree of glandular tissue, which appears dense on mammogram, versus fat, which appears non-dense, researchers headed by UC San Francisco evaluated risk factors in more than 200,000 women. more...

Aplastic Anemia Patients Disease-Free After Bone Marrow Transplant, Chemo
Sidney Kimmel Comprehensive Cancer Center

Physicians at the Johns Hopkins Kimmel Cancer Center report they have successfully treated 16 patients with a rare and lethal form of bone marrow failure called severe aplastic anemia using partially matched bone marrow transplants followed by two high doses of a common chemotherapy drug. In a report on the new transplant-chemo regimen, the Johns Hopkins team says that more than a year after their transplants, all of the patients have stopped taking immunosuppressive drugs commonly used to treat the disorder and have no evidence of the disease. Robert Brodsky, MD, was author of the report. more...

Researchers Discover How Epithelial Cells Maintain Constant Cell Numbers
Huntsman Cancer Institute

Research from scientists at Huntsman Cancer Institute (HCI) at the University of Utah shows how epithelial cells naturally turn over, maintaining constant numbers between cell division and cell death. The HCI team learned that opposing mechanical tensions control both cell division and cell death. Specifically, they found that stretching epithelial cells causes them to divide, and crowding epithelial cells causes them to expel and die. Jody Rosenblatt, PhD, is study leader. more...

Norton, UK Partner on Clinical Trial for First-Ever Treatment of Radiation Necrosis
UK Markey Cancer Center

A joint clinical trial at Norton Brownsboro Hospital in Louisville and the University of Kentucky is the first in the world to intra-arterially deliver a single, small dose of bevacizumab, a cancer drug known by the name of Avastin, directly to the area of the brain affected by radiation necrosis. Moments before this, the blood-brain barrier is temporarily disrupted so that the drug can reach the lesion. This targeted method allows a much larger amount of the drug to directly reach the affected brain than would otherwise be possible using traditional intravenous delivery, thus amplifying its effect and reducing serious side-effects. more...

Nixing the Cells that Nix Immune Response Against Cancer
University of Colorado Cancer Center
Some cells excite the immune system. Others soothe it. Myeloid-derived suppressor cells (MDSCs) are one type of soothing cell, and previous work shows that cancer may specifically boost production of MDSCs as a way to tamp down immune response against tumors. At least that's how it works in mice. Now a University of Colorado Cancer Center study for the first time characterizes the uptick of these cells in the spleens of human cancer patients, paving the way for therapies directed against these suppressor cells that collude with cancer. more...

Other News

Lowy Delivers HPV Research Lecture at Vanderbilt-Ingram
Vanderbilt-Ingram Cancer Center
Douglas Lowy, MD, acting director of the National Cancer Institute, warned that worldwide death rates from cervical cancer are expected to increase in low- and middle-income countries during the next 15 years unless steps are taken to prevent the cancer from occurring. Almost all cases of cervical cancer are linked to a viral infection. Dr. Lowy made that prediction during his Vanderbilt-Ingram Cancer Center (VICC) George Daniel Brooks Lecture, delivered Jan. 24 at Vanderbilt University Medical Center. Pictured is Dr. Lowy with VICC Director Jennifer Pietenpol, PhD. more...

Cleveland Clinic Opens New Cancer Center
Cleveland Clinic Taussig Cancer Institute
The new Cleveland Clinic Taussig Cancer Center will begin welcoming patients on March 6. The 377,000-square-foot facility, estimated at $276 million, will house all outpatient cancer treatment services in one location with the center's team of medical and radiation oncologists, surgeons, nurses, genetic counselors, social workers and others all working together in one shared space to improve patient outcomes. more...

MD Anderson Designated as First Project ECHO Superhub for Oncology
University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center
Recognizing a critical need to address disparities in cancer care, The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center has been designated as an ECHO superhub for oncology by the ECHO Institute at the University of New Mexico Health Science Center. MD Anderson is one of just nine ECHO superhub sites in the world and the first focused on oncology. Project ECHO (Extension for Community Healthcare Outcomes) was developed in 2003 to expand local capacity to provide specialty treatments for hepatitis C patients in rural New Mexico. The telementoring ECHO model connects primary care physicians from rural and underserved areas with specialists from academic medical centers to share best-practice management of complex health conditions. more...

Research at the Heart of Decade-Long Smoking Cessation Collaboration
The University of Kansas Cancer Center
UKanQuit, a joint inpatient program between the University of Kansas Medical Center and The University of Kansas Hospital, helps patients use their smoke-free stay at KU Hospital as a springboard to a life without tobacco by providing bedside tobacco counseling, medications and other smoking-cessation tools. In the 10 years since the program began, 30 percent of the more than 13,000 patients treated were tobacco-free six months after being discharged. Kimber Richter, PhD, MPH, is director of UKanQuit. more...

Job Opportunities

Clinical Research Support (CRS) Medical Director
Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center more...

Senior Director, Clinical Laboratories
City of Hope more...
Meeting Announcements

2017 NACCDO/PAMN Annual Conference
April 18-21, 2017
Lexington, Kentucky
For more information visit: NACCDO/PAMN

Epigenetics in Cancer
The Wistar Institute in Philadelphia is hosting a free, full day scientific symposium entitled "Epigenetics in Cancer" on April 25 from 10am-5pm. In this symposium, Wistar will bring together leaders in epigenetics research to discuss the most recent advances in the field and their potential translational applications. Learn more. Registration is required.

2017 Cancer Center Administrators Forum & CCAF-IT
Hosted by Moffitt Cancer Center
April 30 - May 2, 2017
The Vinoy Renaissance
St. Petersburg, Florida
For more information visit: moffitt.org

AACI/AACR/ASCO Hill Day
AACI will co-host its annual Capitol Hill Day with the American Association for Cancer Research (AACR) and the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO).
May 4, 2017
Washington, DC
Register to attend today!

Melanoma: Advances in Therapy and Biology
On June 20, The Wistar Institute in Philadelphia will host a free scientific symposium: "The Noreen O'Neill Melanoma Research Symposium, Melanoma: Advances in Therapy and Biology" from 9am-4pm. Expanding our understanding of melanoma biology will help decode the mechanisms of innate and acquired resistance and drive the development of novel and improved targeted therapies. Learn more. Registration is required.

Call for Abstracts! 9th Annual AACI CRI Meeting
Abstract FAQs, template and scoring guidelines can be found on the AACI website.
9th Annual AACI CRI Meeting
July 12-13, 2017
Loews Chicago O'Hare Hotel

2017 AACI/CCAF Annual Meeting
Save the Date!
October 15-17, 2017
Grand Hyatt Washington, DC