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Winship Discoveries Highlighted at ASCO



The research presented by Winship investigators at the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) 2015 Annual Meeting taking place in Chicago May 29 to June 2 will feature promising new treatment approaches for cancer patients, including immune-based drugs and novel forms of radiation, the

use of biomarkers in therapeutic decision-making, and several landmark clinical trials of immediate interest to patients under active care.

More than 20 Winship investigators will present their research. Oral presentations by Winship physicians include two ASCO-featured studies led by **Sagar Lonial**, MD on new immune-based drugs that could significantly increase treatment options for multiple myeloma patients; a presentation by **Suresh Ramalingam**, MD on an important new epidermal growth factor receptor (EGFR) inhibitor for selected lung cancer patients; and a presentation by **H. Jean Khoury**, MD on the long-term outcomes for leukemia patients who received a dendritic cell vaccine.

"There's tremendous innovation and creativity among all the speakers and in all the sessions," says **Walter J. Curran, Jr.**, MD, executive director of Winship and a member of the ASCO board of directors. Curran is chairing a panel on innovative approaches to treating patients with locally-advanced lung cancer and will talk about new trials testing proton therapy, including a trial in which Winship is participating.

Curran says one theme to look for at this year's meeting is the use of the immune system against cancer. "There are some major breakthroughs but I expect to hear about new ploys to direct our own immune system against the cancer that threatens our patients," says Curran.

The two studies being presented by Lonial show effective use of two different monoclonal antibodies that represent first-in-class immune-based therapies for multiple myeloma. One is a Phase III study demonstrating that the addition of elotuzumab to standard treatment cuts the risk of myeloma progression by 30 percent. Elotuzumab is an antibody that is known to generate a two-pronged attack by targeting myeloma cells directly and by activating the immune system. Lonial will also present a Phase II study showing effective use of daratumumab as a single agent.

The annual meeting regularly attracts more than 25,000 oncology professionals from around the world and showcases more than 5,000 abstracts. This year's meeting will focus on the potential for integrating cancer science and health information technology (HIT) to achieve more rapid improvements in patient care, including an initiative called CancerLinQ™ which aims to harness the vast amounts of patient data from around the world.

New Strategy to Promote Cancer Cell Death

Lung cancer researchers at Winship have discovered a novel strategy to exploit apoptosis, a form of programmed cell death, for the treatment of lung cancer. The protein Bcl-2 is a known target for cancer treatment since it allows cancer cells to evade cell death via apoptosis.

Lead study author **Xingming Deng**, MD, PhD, a Winship cancer biologist, and his colleagues have discovered an entirely new class of compounds that act by binding to the BH4 domain of Bcl-2 to inhibit its function. The binding of the potential drug results in Bcl-2 being converted from its role of providing survival advantage to cancer cells to that of promoting death of cancer cells. Though this strategy was primarily studied in lung cancer models, it could be widely applicable to other cancer types as well. The findings were published May 21 in the journal *Cancer Cell*.

"Discovery of the Bcl2 BH4 antagonist as the way to promote cancer cell death may provide a new weapon against lung cancer," says Deng, who is also an associate professor in Emory's Department of Radiation Oncology.

"This potential drug identified by Dr. Deng and our Winship team may accelerate our success against lung and other cancers. We are now testing this molecule further in preparation for future testing among eligible patients," says co-author **Walter J. Curran, Jr.**, MD, Winship's executive director.

Other authors include **Fadlo R. Khuri**, MD, **Suresh Ramalingam**, MD, **Dong M. Shin**, MD, **Taofeek K. Owonikoko**, MD, PhD, **Georgia Chen**, PhD, **Gabriel L. Sica**, MD, PhD, **Bingshe Han**, PhD, **Dongkyoo Park**, PhD, **Rui Li**, PhD, **Maohua Xie**, PhD, and **Guojing Zhang**, MS.

Congratulations

Anita Corbett, PhD received the Eleanor Main Graduate Faculty Mentor Award from Emory University School of Medicine.

Amita Manatunga, PhD received the Thomas Sellers Award from Rollins School of Public Health.

Adeboye Osunkoya, MD received the prestigious Arthur Purdy Stout Prize, one of the top honors in surgical pathology in North America.

Welcome

Winship welcomes **Gayathri Srinivasan, PhD**, Emory's new director



of public and private partnerships, a new position shared by

Development and Alumni Relations and the Office of Technology Transfer.

Save the Date

Join **Joan Giblin** and *Healthy Winship* at noon on June 4 in the John H. Kauffman Auditorium (C5012) to learn about colorectal cancer, screening and prevention.

The **Winship Clinical Trials Festival**, an educational expo for faculty and staff, will be held on June 17 from noon to 3:30pm in the John H. Kauffman Auditorium (C5012).

winshipcancer.emory.edu



Reduce Your Risk of Melanoma

By Suephy Chen, MD

Did you know that melanoma cases in the United States are growing faster than any other cancer? Malignant melanoma is a type of skin cancer that can be deadly if it spreads throughout the body. It usually grows near the surface of the skin and then begins to



grow deeper, increasing the risk of spread to other organs. Detecting and removing a malignant melanoma early can result in a complete cure. Removal after the tumor has spread may not be effective.

Melanoma can occur anywhere on the skin, including areas that are difficult for self-examination. Many melanomas are first noticed by other family members.

Most patients with early melanoma have no skin discomfort whatsoever.

See a doctor when a mole suddenly appears or changes. Itching, burning or pain in a pigmented lesion should cause suspicion. Visual examination remains the most reliable method for identifying a malignant melanoma.

Avoiding exposure to ultraviolet radiation is the best way to prevent melanoma and other skin cancers. Have fun this summer, but remember these tips for sun safety:

- Avoid direct exposure between 10am and 4pm, opt for shade
- Cover up with clothing (broad brimmed hat, sunglasses, long sleeves, etc.)
- Use a sunscreen of SPF 30 or higher every day (including lip balm with SPF 30)
- Apply 1 ounce (2 tablespoons) of sunscreen to the entire body, 30 minutes prior to going outdoors; reapply every 2 hours or after excessive sweating or swimming
- Keep newborns out of the sun; if it cannot be avoided use a sunscreen with physical blockers to exposed areas
- Avoid tanning beds
- Remember water and sand reflect the sun; and clouds allow 70-80% UV penetration

Dunwoody Golfers Raise Funds for Winship

The Dunwoody Country Club Senior Men's Golf Association recently raised over \$215,000 to benefit prostate cancer research at Winship. Butch Price and Richard McCraney chaired the John H. Kauffman Prostate Cancer Research Fundraiser on May 13 that included a golf outing and reception. Money raised at the annual event is used to fund critical research projects at Winship that are finding new ways of diagnosing and treating prostate cancer.

