



Weekly news for faculty, staff and students from
the **Indiana University School of Medicine**

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Sound Medicine

Handling mistakes in modern health care, Ebola ethics and a poet in the dissection lab

Research News

\$2.4 million NIH grant funds IU-led research to discover biomarkers for diabetes detection

An international team of diabetes researchers led by IU scientists has been awarded a \$2.4 million research grant to discover and develop biomarkers meant to provide early prediction and diagnosis of type 1 diabetes.

Nearly 2 million people in the U.S., most of them children, are diagnosed with type 1 diabetes each year, and nearly 30 million American are living with the disease. Type 1 diabetes occurs when the insulin-producing cells of the pancreas -- beta cells -- die off to the extent the body is unable to produce enough insulin, which is needed to convert sugar and other foods into energy.

IU School of Medicine researchers [Raghu Mirmira, M.D., Ph.D.](#), and [Carmella Evans-Molina, M.D., Ph.D.](#), are the lead scientists on the three-year biomarker project, funded as a "high-risk, high-reward" proposal by the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases at the National Institutes of Health.

Biomarkers are proteins, bits of genetic material or other molecules found in blood or other tissues that can be used as indicators of disease, response to drugs or other bodily activities.

Early detection is needed because by the time patients are diagnosed with diabetes, most of their beta cells have been destroyed by the body's own immune system. Research trials attempting to slow or reverse the

disease by suppressing the immune system have not been successful.

Type 1 diabetes is widely viewed as an autoimmune disorder -- one in which the body's immune system attacks the body's own tissues as if they were foreign tissues. However, research by Dr. Mirmira and others suggests that problems arise in the beta cells themselves early in the evolution of the disease, triggering biochemical stress pathways inside the cells that either initiate or accelerate the immune system attacks on the beta cells.

For more on this story, visit the [IUSM Newsroom](#).

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IU researchers: Blood test may help to diagnose pancreatic cancer

IU cancer researchers have found that a simple blood test might help diagnose pancreatic cancer, one of the most deadly forms of the disease.

In research published Oct. 28 in the American Journal of Gastroenterology, Murray Korc, M.D., the Myles Brand Professor of Cancer Research at the [IU School of Medicine](#) and a researcher at the [IU Simon Cancer Center](#), and colleagues found that several microRNAs -- small RNA molecules -- circulate at high levels in the blood of pancreatic cancer patients.

"This is a new finding that extends previous knowledge in this field," Dr. Korc said. "The key new feature here is that there is a panel of microRNAs that can be measured accurately in the plasma component of blood to determine if a patient has pancreatic cancer."

Specifically, the IU research team found that an increased expression of miRNA-10b, -155, and -106b in plasma appears highly accurate in diagnosing pancreatic ductal adenocarcinoma. Pancreatic ductal adenocarcinoma is by far the most common type of pancreatic malignancy.

Dr. Korc and colleagues made the discovery by examining plasma, bile, pancreatic juice or a combination, which had been collected from 215 patients either immediately before or during an endoscopy.

Also contributing to the study were IU School of Medicine researchers Gregory A. Cote, M.D., M.S.; A. Jesse Gore, Ph.D.; Samantha D. McElyea, M.S.; Laura E. Heathers, B.A.; Huiping Xu, Ph.D.; and Stuart Sherman, M.D.

For more on this story, visit the [IUSM Newsroom](#).

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Faculty and Staff News

Walthall named deputy health commissioner at state department of health

Jennifer Walthall, M.D., MPH, associate professor of clinical emergency medicine at the IU School of Medicine, [has been named deputy commissioner](#) and director for health outcomes for the Indiana State Department of Health.

Gov. Mike Pence made the announcement Oct. 24, saying Dr. Walthall's primary focus will be long-term public health issues, such as infant mortality, smoking cessation and obesity.

"Dr. Jennifer Walthall's experience on the front lines of patient care gives her a unique perspective on the health issues Hoosiers are facing today," Pence said. "Her extensive research background in clinical emergency medicine and pediatric care will be invaluable as the Indiana State Department of Health continues to make progress on its key initiatives."

Dr. Walthall currently serves as the division director for emergency medicine pediatrics in the Department of Emergency Medicine and as program director for the emergency medicine and pediatrics residency program at the IU School of Medicine. Her previously work includes attending staff physician for IU Health Methodist Hospital Emergency and Trauma Center and Riley Hospital for Children at IU Health. Along with her clinical and academic work, Dr. Walthall is involved in several advocacy projects, promoting safety awareness for ATV riders and bicycle riders.

She received her bachelor's degree at the University of Houston Honors College. She received a Master of Public Health from the IU Richard M. Fairbanks School of Public Health and her medical degree from the IU School of Medicine, where she also completed her residency training in emergency medicine-pediatrics.

Dr. Walthall will continue to work at IU School of Medicine. She will assume her role with the Indiana State Department of Health on Nov. 3.

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Wright named director of postdoctoral affairs

Tricia Wright, Ph.D., has been named the director of the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs at the IU School of Medicine.

In this position, Dr. Wright is responsible for enhancing the postdoctoral experience and fostering the professional development of postdoctoral scholars at the IU School of Medicine. Duties include providing resources to postdoctoral fellows and faculty; services to potential postdoctoral fellows; assistance in the recruitment of postdoctoral fellows; and the development of relationships with other academic institutions.

Prior to IU, Dr. Wright served as chair of professional development for the postdoctoral association at Duke University, including providing opportunities to further career development and professional interactions to the postdoctoral community. She also established the university's postdoctoral career informational interview program and coordinated practice job talk sessions for postdoctoral fellows and faculty. She is also co-founder of the Postdoctoral Alliance at Duke University.

Additional experience includes service as a coordinator and instructor for the University Puerto Rico at Cayey Outreach Workshop and developer and coordinator of the mentor program for the Initiative for Maximizing Student Diversity at the University of North Carolina.

Dr. Wright holds a bachelor's of science in biotechnology from Rutgers University and a doctorate in genetics and molecular biology from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

She served as a postdoctoral associate in the Department of Pharmacology and Cancer Biology at the University of North Carolina.

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News to Use

IU Ebola preparedness information online

Reports of four cases of Ebola in the United States have recently prompted some questions and concerns about the safety of the faculty, staff and students at the IU School of Medicine, particularly among individuals currently engaged in clinical rotations in the School's partner healthcare facilities.

The IU School of Medicine, IU Environmental Health and Safety staff and university healthcare providers are in close contact with local, state and federal agencies to ensure all of the necessary precautions are being taken. All learners (students, residents, fellows) are not to come into contact with any suspected or known Ebola patients.

IUSM has established a [website with more information about Ebola](#), including links to the Indiana State Department of Health and the Centers for Disease Control, to ensure that faculty, staff and students get accurate updates, information and answers to any questions or concerns. Additionally, [Protect IU will provide the latest updates](#), guidance and university practices regarding Ebola.

The safety of faculty, staff, students and patients is of the utmost importance to the School. While this disease presents a threat, IUSM remains committed to teaching and providing high quality care and service through adherence to proper protocols and procedures -- the same as any other disease or injury.

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Faculty asked to reaffirm commitment to Honor Code

The IUSM Faculty Steering Committee is asking all faculty members to reaffirm their commitment to the IUSM Honor Code. Faculty can do so by visiting the [Honor Code website](#).

Developed by medical students in 2003, the Code asks individuals to reinforce and reconfirm their commitment to the values and principles outlined in policies and programs of IUSM and its partner hospital systems. The code includes three tenets of professionalism: honesty, integrity and respect.

New members of the IUSM community, including faculty, students, and house staff, voluntarily sign this document and promise to live by the standards it espouses.

"The Honor Code is a part of the culture at IUSM," said Abigail Klemsz, M.D., Ph.D., associate professor of clinical pediatrics and president of the faculty steering committee, "it reminds our faculty and learners of the importance ethical and compassionate behavior while treating patients and conducting research."

Depending on the situation, there are many ways to get help if one believes that there has been a violation of the Code. The Office of Faculty Affairs and Professional Development, in partnership with the Faculty Steering Committee, has developed a [website](#) that includes information about the Honor Code and multiple links to resources for redress, such as the Teacher Learner Advocacy Committee, IUSM Human Resources and IU Health Employee Relations.

For more information about the IUSM Honor Code and its history, visit [the IUSM faculty website](#).

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Open Enrollment begins Nov. 10

All full-time academic and staff full-time employees at IU will have the opportunity to make enrollment changes in their medical, dental and personal accident insurance plans -- as well as tax saver benefit reimbursement and health savings accounts -- from Nov. 10 to Nov. 21 during this year's Open Enrollment Event.

According to University Human Resources, notable changes under this year's options include:

- A new Health Savings Account administered through Nyhart will replace the current Chase HSA arrangements. All HSA account holders need to re-enroll in the new HSA in order to set up HSA contributions in 2015. Open enrollment materials will describe the options for transferring current Chase HSA balances to the new HSA.
- A second high deductible plan (HDHP) will be added in 2015. The new IU Health HDHP plan uses the IU Health provider network and will have lower premiums but a higher deductible than the current PPO HDHP plan. Details about the new plan are included in the Open Enrollment materials and web pages.
- The IU Health Quality Partners plan is being discontinued for 2015. Employees enrolled in the IUHQP plan will automatically be enrolled in the most similar plan, the PPO \$500 Deductible plan, if they do not enroll in another plan during Open Enrollment.

As in years past, the tobacco-free incentive and Tax Save Benefit plan require enrollment each year.

Printed Open Enrollment booklets are scheduled to arrive in campus mail next week. The [Open Enrollment Web pages are now online](#).


For assistance or additional questions, email enews@iu.edu.

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Opportunities

Disease and Therapeutic Response Modeling Symposium -- registration due Nov. 4

The Indiana Clinical and Translational Sciences Institute Fourth Annual Disease and Therapeutic Response Modeling Symposium will be Nov. 12 and 13 at the IUPUI Campus Center.

Speakers include Jamie Dananberg, Ph.D., executive vice president at Takeda Pharmaceuticals; Nick Holford of the University of Auckland, New Zealand; John Urquhart, M.D., of the AARDEX Group, Switzerland; Mark Sale, M.D., of Next Level Solutions; Sean Mooney, Ph.D., of the Buck Institute for Research on Aging; Stephen Hall, Ph.D., of Eli Lilly and Co.; and Benjamin Ribba, Ph.D., of the French Institute for Research in Computer Science and Automation, France.  [A complete agenda is online](#).

Registration is required by Tuesday, Nov. 4. Academic, government and Eli Lilly and Co. employees may [register for free online](#).

Other guests wishing to attend must **pay a fee of \$250 at the time of registration**. A limited number of hotel rooms have been arranged at a discounted rate at the Omni Severin Hotel in Indianapolis for \$159 per night.


Questions to Ayman Akil at aakil@iupui.edu, Abhishek Gulati at agulati@iupui.edu or Cheryl Weatherholt at weatherc@iu.edu.

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Register by Nov. 7 for the Palliative Care Research, Education and Communication Symposium

On Nov. 17 and 18, the IU Simon Cancer Center's Mary Margaret Walther Program in Palliative Care Research and Education will host a two-day symposium titled "Passages and Promises: Innovations in Palliative Care Research, Education and Communication."

The focus of the symposium is on research for improving communication among patients, family members and clinicians in the context of advanced cancer.

On the first day, acclaimed authors Gail Sheehy and Mark Nepo will join national palliative care experts Robert Arnold, Amber Barnato, Vicki Jackson and Timothy Quill and local faculty on the first day for a series of plenary talks, workshops and small-group discussions exploring the latest innovations in care for those at end of life.  **A complete schedule for the first day is online.**

The second day will consist of a "think tank" for a small number of local investigators who will partner with the national experts in developing pilot project proposals, a limited number of which will be funded for up to \$50,000 by the Walther program. The think tank session by invitation only.

This symposium is sponsored by the Walther Cancer Foundation; Indiana University Health Cancer Centers; IU Health Division for Values, Ethics, and Pastoral Services; IU Simon Cancer Center; IU School of Medicine; Goldstein Group Financial Advisory LLC; and the Columbia Club; and through a partnership with the Spirit & Place Festival.

The deadline to register for the first day is **Friday, Nov. 7**.

For more information, **visit the Walther Symposium website** or see the  **event flier**. Questions to Mary Lynn Hoffmann at hoffmaml@iu.edu.

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Epidemiology Consultation Core pilot grants

The Epidemiology Consultation Core at the IU Simon Cancer Center invites proposals for pilot projects that focus on any of the three topics that are important to our catchment area: smoking, obesity or health disparity.

The goal of the Epidemiology Consultation Core is to promote active collaboration between epidemiologists, statisticians, basic scientists and clinicians, thereby facilitating joint research projects and grant funding proposals. The core provides expertise in the areas of genetic and molecular epidemiology; population-based research study design; measurements of risk/exposure (gene or environment related); and selection of appropriate biospecimens for research.

Proposals will be funded for up to \$50,000 based on project need. It is expected that funds will lead to

submission of peer-reviewed proposals to externally peer-reviewed sources such as the National Cancer Institute or American Cancer Society.

Letters of Intent are due **Saturday, Nov. 15**. Final applications are due by **Thursday, Jan. 15**. Materials should be sent to Elizabeth Parsons at eparsons@iupui.edu.

For more information, see the [complete application guidelines](#). Questions to Hongmei Nan, M.D., Ph.D., at hnan@iu.edu.

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Kudos

Center for Health Information and Communication celebrates first year

This month marks the first anniversary of an Indianapolis research center that is investigating how to use electronic health information exchange and physician-to-physician as well as doctor-patient communication tools to meet the challenges of improving health-related collaborations and eliminating duplication in health care services.

The Veterans Affairs Health Services Research and Development Center for Health Information and Communication, or "CHIC," at the Richard L. Roudebush VA Medical Center in Indianapolis is led by Michael Weiner, M.D., associate professor of medicine at the IU School of Medicine.

CHIC is uniquely positioned to ask and answer complex questions about how veterans use not only the VA but also the many other health facilities nationwide where nearly half of all veterans receive some or even all of their care, according to Dr. Weiner, who is director of health services research at the Regenstrief Institute and of the IU Center for Health Services and Outcomes Research. CHIC researchers are trained in primary care, neurology, pain, cancer, mental health, medical sociology, clinical psychology, education, communication, medical informatics, human factors engineering and other fields.

Areas of specific concentration include enhancing patient safety and outcomes by improving information exchange from one clinical team to another and one facility to another, such as during patients' transitions from hospital to home or a nursing facility. Focuses include access to care, quality-of-care standards, disease screening, human-computer interaction and doctor-patient communication.

The center is one of only 19 nationwide funded by five-year grants from the Veterans Administration Health Services Research and Development Service Center of Innovation program.

For more on this story, visit the [IUSM Newsroom](#).

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