



iuscc research news

February 2009

Senior Health Center focuses on outpatients age 65 and older

The IU Simon Cancer Center is dedicated to helping older adults manage their cancer. Clarian Senior Health, in collaboration with the IU Simon Cancer Center, now offers the Senior Health Center at the cancer center. It is the only such clinic in Indiana and among only a handful in the country.

The clinic is open to:

- IU Simon Cancer Center outpatients age 65 and older
- Patients being considered for treatment of cancer or a blood disorder
- Patients currently undergoing treatment of cancer or a blood disorder

During the initial session, a patient will undergo a medical history, physical exam, and screening for issues such as falls and mobility problems, memory complaints, depression, medication problems, and malnutrition.

All sessions are geared toward early detection of issues that

may interfere with a person's cancer treatment. "Our thought is if we can address those issues while they're being treated for cancer, they will hopefully tolerate their treatment better," Cathy C. Schubert, MD, a geriatric medicine expert, said.



Schubert

The Senior Health Center brings together a team that works with the patients. The team includes social workers, nurses, and nutritionists. Patients may also participate in offerings from the cancer center's [CompleteLife Program](#).

The clinic, which is open 8 a.m. to noon each Monday, is located in the Indiana Cancer Pavilion.

To learn more about the program, call 278-5196.



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New IU Simon Cancer Center Web site section helps patients, families

For some cancer patients, the soles of their feet and the palms of their hands burn or tingle, while others may become forgetful because of some forms of chemotherapy.

And family members become anxious and concerned about their loved one's well-being.

Both share a need for information, whether it's about a diagnosis, treatment, or symptoms among other topics for which they want quick answers.

A [new section called "Cancer Info"](#) of the IU Simon Cancer Center's Web site helps patients and their families find information about a variety of topics in one place.

In the symptom management section, for example, people can learn about anemia, dry mouth, nausea, and shortness of breath among others.

Overall, according to Anna McDaniel, professor with the IU

School of Nursing and a researcher with the IU Simon Cancer Center, the section "makes information more accessible to the public as well as patients. It's been designed so there is a clearly defined way to access quality, or evidence based, information."



McDaniel

Such information is beneficial for patients. "Research has shown that having access to good information can increase coping in cancer patients and lead to better treatment outcomes," Dr. McDaniel said.

Dr. McDaniel received a \$250,000 grant from Indianapolis-based Walther Cancer Foundation in 2007 for the project. She and others from IU's schools of nursing and informatics and the cancer center worked together to create the section, which made its debut on Feb. 23.

The new section is dedicated to Dr. Harold Burdette, a visionary leader committed to eliminating the burden of cancer in Indiana.

Dr. McDaniel and others are now testing the section's next phase, which takes symptom management to an interactive

level.

Patients will log into a secure system to answer questions about any side effects they might be experiencing from chemotherapy. They will rate their symptoms on a scale of zero to 10. Depending on the severity of the symptoms, the patient either will be directed to information within the new section or their oncologist will be notified.

Twenty patients are currently being recruited into this test phase.

"The unique aspect of this is that it will connect the patient and the healthcare provider," Dr. McDaniel said. "Not only does the system give patients useful information about how to help themselves during chemotherapy, it increases communication with oncology doctors and nurses."



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Teens with cancer present unique psychological issues

A diagnosis of cancer is devastating at any age, but for teens it occurs at a time of critical physical, individual, and interpersonal development and other often anxiety-provoking changes.

"Teens are at the threshold of life, increasingly separating

from parents, developing close peer and romantic relationships, and thinking about the future -- about things like college and jobs. But when confronted with a life threatening diagnosis, along with that diagnosis comes the need to surrender a growing independence and rely upon their parents once again," Melissa Carpentier, PhD, said.



Carpentier

Carpentier and Larry Mullins, PhD, of Oklahoma State University are the authors of *Adolescents With Cancer: The Influence of Close Relationships on Quality of Life, Distress, and Health Behaviors*, a new book targeted to physicians, psychologists, social workers, and others who treat teens with cancer.

"Unfortunately, teens are often lumped together with children when we consider the psychological effects of cancer, but they differ in many aspects from children and really should be focused on as a distinct group. We need to take teens' unique perceptions into account and listen to what they are struggling with," Dr. Carpentier said.

The teenage years are a time of hormonal and physical changes, a shift from dependence on parents to greater reliance upon peers, as well as the development of dating and sexual relationships as teens transition to adulthood. According to Dr. Carpentier, little research has been done on how peer and romantic relationships in teens with cancer affect critical outcomes such as quality of life.

The teenage years can also be a time of experimentation with behaviors such as smoking, drinking, and sex. Many teens also struggle with issues related to body image. Dr. Carpentier said it is important for the medical team, as well as parents, to convey to the teen with cancer that they understand and empathize with what he or she is going through.

Teens, especially older ones, are accustomed to having increased control and independence in their lives. Cancer largely robs them of this newly experienced freedom and may cause friction between the teen and his or her parents. Yet even if they are resistant to parental guidance, Dr. Carpentier said teens do need parental help to make decisions which impact their future and which may be especially difficult for a teen to consider, such as future fertility. This is particularly important as cancers that involve the male and female reproductive organs are among the most common in teen cancer diagnoses.

In her next study, Dr. Carpentier plans to focus specifically on teen and young adult testicular cancer patients and their romantic partners to learn how testicular cancer impacts relationships, sexuality, and fertility in the years following diagnosis and treatment.

--Cindy Fox Aisen



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News Briefs

Dr. Williams online tribute

A tribute to Dr. Stephen Williams, the founding director of the IU Simon Cancer Center, remains online [here](#). Dr. Williams died of cancer -- the very disease to which he dedicated his career -- on Sunday, Feb. 15, 2009.

3 members hold presidential posts

Three IU Simon Cancer Center members will hold presidential posts with national cancer-related organizations in 2010. Hal Broxmeyer, PhD, will serve as president of the American Society of Hematology. He is currently president-elect. Peter Johnstone, MD, MA, has been appointed president-elect of the American Radium Society from May 2009 to May 2010 and president from May 2010 to May 2011. Finally, George Sledge, MD, becomes president-elect of the American Society of Clinical Oncology in June 2009 and president in June 2010. "These three men are clearly accomplished in their respective fields and will serve these organizations extremely well," Patrick Loehrer, MD, deputy director of the IU Simon Cancer Center, said. "Their appointments typify the caliber of healthcare professionals at the IU Simon Cancer Center. These dedicated professionals represent our physicians who care directly for patients and our researchers who continually search for the clues to solving the cancer puzzle."

Salmonella and cancer patients

Because cancer patients with impaired immune systems are more likely to become severely ill from a salmonella infection than others, the NCI has developed a new fact sheet, Peanut Product Recall and Cancer Patients, to address the special concerns of cancer patients and their healthcare providers. See the [fact sheet](#).

Wanted: Mentors for Summer Research Program

You are invited to serve as a faculty mentor for the 2009 [IU Simon Cancer Center Summer Research Program](#), June 1 - July 31. By placing students with faculty mentors, students gain insight into a wide-range of basic science, translational, and clinical research activities. Mentors facilitate and guide the students toward completing a research project, encourage students to explore the field of biomedical science, and provide students access to professional

networks. Mentors receive \$500 toward the purchase of lab supplies for the student(s) and project(s).

Questions? Contact [Rivienne Shedd-Steele](#) at 278-0073.

Cancer Research Day is May 6

Mark your calendars. The Indiana University Melvin and Bren Simon Cancer Center [Cancer Research Day](#) is May 6. Students, fellows, and faculty conducting cancer research at IUPUI, Indiana University-Bloomington, Purdue University, and the Walther Cancer Research Center at the University of Notre Dame are eligible to present their current cancer research efforts at the event. A call for abstracts will be e-mailed in early March to all IU Simon Cancer Center members. Cancer Research Day, led by James Klaunig, PhD, encourages collaboration among the cancer research institutions in the state.

Psychiatrist joins CompleteLife

Michael Webber, MD, recently joined the CompleteLife Program as attending psychiatrist. Dr. Webber is assistant professor of clinical psychiatry with the IU School of Medicine and medical director of the Center for Borderline Personality Disorder Treatment and Research at Larue D. Carter Memorial Hospital. He offers psychotherapy and pharmacotherapy for patients at the cancer center from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. on Mondays and Fridays. To refer patients to Dr. Webber, call 278-6663.

IUSCC members in the news

- The late **Stephen Williams**, MD, director of the IU Simon Cancer Center, and **Anna Maria Storniolo**, MD, are among the finalists in this year's Indianapolis Business Journal's Health Care Hero awards program. Williams is a finalist in the "physician" category and Storniolo is a finalist in the "advancements in health care" category for her work with the Susan G. Komen for the Cure Tissue Bank at the IU Simon Cancer Center. The winners will be announced during a breakfast celebration March 4.
- The American Association for Cancer Research (AACR) has accepted the abstracts of several IU Simon Cancer Center members for presentation for oral and poster sessions during its 10th annual meeting in Denver April 18-22. The annual meeting, which attracts more than 17,000 participants, highlights the best cancer science and medicine from institutions all over the world. The following members will present the following abstracts:
 - **Curtis Balch**, PhD
"Differential transcriptional regulation of microRNAs, in ovarian cancer cells, by two distinct hydroxamic acid histone deacetylase inhibitors"
 - **Melissa Fishel**, PhD
"Sensitization of pancreatic cancer cells via inhibition of Ape1, a DNA base excision repair enzyme and redox signaling protein"
 - **Noah Hahn**, MD
"Subcutaneous 5-azacitidine treatment in de

novo canine bladder cancer: A novel epigenetic approach to human bladder cancer therapeutic development"

- o **Mark Kelley, PhD**
"Inhibition of APE1/Ref-1 redox function as an anti-angiogenic molecular target"
- o **Samy Meroueh, PhD**
"Small molecules that inhibit interactions of the urokinase receptor also block tumor cell migration and invasion in vitro"

New members

Erin Newton, MD
Affiliate member
Assistant professor of clinical medicine
Department of Medicine
Division of Hematology/Oncology

New grants

Curtis Balch, PhD
Epigenetic Targeting of Ovarian
Tumor Stem Cells In Vivo
American Cancer Society

**Diane Von Ah, PhD,
RN, CNA**
Advanced Cognitive Training in
Breast Cancer Survivors
American Cancer Society

**Attaya Suvannasankha,
MD**
3-Dimensional Model of
Reconstructed Bone Marrow:
Endosteal Niche and Multiple
Myeloma Stem Cells
American Cancer Society