



November 2011

## IUSCC physician scientist wins prestigious National Presidential Award

**Jamie Renbarger**, MD, recently was named a recipient of a Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers.

The Presidential awards, established in 1996, are the highest honor bestowed by the United States government on science and engineering professionals in the early stages of their independent research careers and reflect the administration's priority "on producing outstanding scientists and engineers to advance the nation's goals, tackle grand challenges, and contribute to the American economy," [the White House said in its announcement](#). There were 94 recipients.

Dr. Renbarger, who joined the IU faculty in 2002, is the Nora Letzter Scholar in Pediatrics and assistant professor of pediatrics, of medicine and of obstetrics and gynecology. She is associate director of the [Indiana Institute for Personalized Medicine](#) and a researcher with the cancer center.



Dr. Renbarger was selected to receive the award for pharmacogenomic studies aimed at optimizing the use of vincristine in the treatment of children with cancer.

A primary research focus for Dr. Renbarger has been to use genomic tools to reduce the impact of side effects that frequently affect children with cancer who are being treated with the drug vincristine. The drug, widely used and effective, can cause nervous system side effects that can range from jaw pain to foot drop to severe constipation. She and colleagues at several institutions across the country are working to better detect, predict, and prevent the onset of those side effects. ([See details of that research.](#))

"I am honored to have been selected for this prestigious award. It is a privilege to enjoy a career as a physician-scientist, participating in research that I love. It is exciting to make discoveries from research based on practical clinical questions that allow us to improve the treatment of children with cancer. It is especially gratifying to be recognized for my efforts in that research," Dr. Renbarger said.

"In her relatively short time here, Dr. Renbarger has made

tremendous contributions as a physician, researcher, and teacher,” D. Wade Clapp, MD, chairman of the IU Department of Pediatrics, said.

“We are proud of her achievements, which have and will continue to help make it possible to provide the best possible care for children at Riley Hospital for Children at IU Health and beyond.”



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## Bone malignancy expert to lead hematology oncology division

**G. David Roodman**, MD, PhD, has been named director of the [Division of Hematology Oncology](#) at the Indiana University School of Medicine Department of Medicine. He begins Nov. 15.

Dr. Roodman also will be the Kenneth Wiseman Professor of Medicine at IU and co-leader of the [Hematopoiesis, Microenvironment, and Immunology research program](#) with Hal Broxmeyer, PhD, at the IU Simon Cancer Center.



"We are extremely excited about the arrival of Dr. Roodman to lead the Division of Hematology Oncology. Dave is an internationally recognized leader in bone and myeloma research, a well-established investigator in the VA system, and has years of administrative experience as former vice-chair for research at Pittsburgh," David Crabb, MD, chair of the IU Department of Medicine, said.

"His recruitment was only possible with strong support from the IU Simon Cancer Center and the Lilly Physician Scientist Initiative. Dave's contributions will strengthen the School of Medicine team which is dedicated to finding cures and providing exceptional treatment to our patients," Dr. Crabb said.

A specialist in diseases of the bone, Dr. Roodman has been at the forefront of research into understanding the role of the bone marrow microenvironment in promoting hematologic malignancies. His research also looks at osteoclasts and osteoblasts, which are responsible for bone growth and bone resorption. He holds three National Institutes of Health grants and funding from the Multiple Myeloma Research Foundation and the U.S. Department Veterans Affairs.

A highly respected researcher, Dr. Roodman is the recipient of incentive funding made possible through Lilly Endowment's gift to create the [Physician Scientist Initiative](#). To capitalize on the unique talents that skilled investigators with medical degrees bring to scientific research, the IU School of Medicine created the Initiative, which is supported by a \$60 million grant from the Lilly Endowment.

Dr. Roodman said he was drawn to join the IU faculty

because of the strength of the bone disease program and the university's researchers, clinicians and leadership.

"Indiana University has a world class bone (disease) group and a very strong hematologic malignancies program," Dr. Roodman said. "I hope to take advantage of that outstanding talent and organization already in place to build hematology oncology into an even stronger translational research program and recruit additional physician investigators to make the IU Simon Cancer Center a leader in the field."

Dr. Roodman has published more than 500 articles, book chapters, abstracts and editorials and serves on multiple editorial boards for professional journals, as well as being on the Scientific Advisory Board of the International Myeloma Foundation.

A native of Louisville, Ky., Dr. Roodman currently is a professor of medicine and vice chairman for research at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine's Department of Medicine and director of the Myeloma Program and the Bone Biology Center at the University of Pittsburgh Cancer Institute. He has been on faculty there for 10 years and previously worked for 21 years at the University of Texas Health Science Center and the Audie Murphy Veterans Administration Hospital in San Antonio, Texas.

He attended the University of Kentucky College of Medicine and received a doctorate in biochemistry from the University of Kentucky. His postdoctoral training included an internship in internal medicine at the University of Kentucky and a residency in medicine and a hematology fellowship at the University of Minnesota.



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## News briefs

### Purdue hosts Walther symposium Nov. 13-14

Purdue University Center for Cancer Research is hosting the 2011 Walther Cancer Foundation Symposium Nov. 13-14. Registration form and agenda available [here](#).



**Rafat Abonour**, MD, second from left, inches closer to the finish line of this year's Miles for Myeloma cycling tour. He started in Jeffersonville on Friday, Oct. 21 and after 200 miles, he and more than 20 other cyclists made their way back to Indy the following day where they were greeted by more than 300 myeloma patients and family members. To date, Dr. Abonour has raised \$1.7 million for myeloma research.

### Dr. Sledge is honorary coin toss captain

George Sledge, MD, recently served as honorary coin toss captain at an Indianapolis Colts game. See [photo album](#).

### Reminders

#### ●Membership criteria changes

IU Simon Cancer Center membership criteria, benefits, and responsibilities have been updated. Membership in the IU Simon Cancer Center is open to full-time faculty of Indiana University or IUPUI who contribute on some level to the overall mission of the cancer center in areas of research, education, patient care, or community outreach. [Learn more](#).

#### ●Grants available to researchers

For the latest grant opportunities, visit the [Funding Opportunities](#) page on the IUSCC Web site.

### Cancer center members in the news

- Lead investigator **Daniel Sliva**, PhD, presented the results of an *in vivo* study during the [16th World Congress on Advances in Oncology and 14th International Symposium on Molecular Medicine](#) in Greece. The study confirmed the dramatic effects of a natural formula against aggressive prostate cancer tumors. The formula suppresses the proliferation and metastasis of human hormone refractory (androgen independent) prostate cancer cells, which is significant because hormone refractory prostate cancer is especially hard to treat.
- Men who undergo radical prostate surgery in the future may encounter fewer issues with incontinence thanks to research underway at IU School of Medicine. **Chandru Sundaram**, MD, is leading the first study to test whether patients will benefit from having a biodegradable “sling” inserted during robot-assisted prostate cancer surgery. The biodegradable sling, developed by Cook Medical in Bloomington, Ind., supports the bladder neck and urethra after the prostate is removed. Dr. Sundaram’s research monitors urinary problems in patients who have undergone complete prostate removal due to cancer, with 50 percent receiving a “sling” to support the bladder during the procedure and 50 percent receiving the current standard of care, which does not include a sling. Researchers are testing to see if inserting a sling during surgery will help patients return to regular function sooner than patients without a sling. This randomized clinical trial focuses on minimally invasive, robot-assisted radical prostatectomy (RARP) and also tracks the amount of time it takes for regular bladder function to return following surgery. Other investigators in the study include cancer center members **Michael Koch**, MD, and **Thomas Gardner**, MD.
- **Patrick Loehrer**, MD, **Higinia Cardenes**, MD, PhD, and colleagues evaluated the role of radiation therapy with concurrent gemcitabine (GEM) compared with GEM alone in patients with localized unresectable pancreatic cancer. The study appeared in the [Journal of Clinical Oncology](#).
- **Daniela Matei**, MD, **Jeanne Schilder**, MD, **Theresa Guise**, MD, and **Khalid Said Mohammad**, MD, PhD, wrote: "TGF- $\beta$ -induced TG2 enhances ovarian tumor metastasis by inducing epithelial-to-mesenchymal transition (EMT) and a cancer stem cell phenotype" in the Oct. 3 issue of [Oncogene](#).
- **Douglas Rex**, MD, is giving a theater presentation entitled “Optimizing Polyp Detection During Colonoscopy” at the American College of Gastroenterology 2011 Annual Scientific Meeting in Washington, DC. The annual meeting is Oct. 31-Nov. 2.

#### **New members**

Matthew Johnson, MD, FSIR  
*Department of Radiology and Imaging Sciences*  
Full member, Experimental and Developmental Therapeutics

Murray Korc, MD  
*Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology*  
Full member, Tumor Microenvironment and Metastases

Mingjiang Xu, MD, PhD  
*Department of Pediatrics*  
Full member, Hematopoiesis, Microenvironment, and Immunology