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IU Simon Cancer Center earns prestigious designation

Oct. 9, 2014

INDIANAPOLIS -- The Indiana University Melvin and Bren Simon Cancer Center has been recognized again as a premier cancer center by the National Cancer Institute following an in-depth peer review.

The NCI renewed the IU Simon Cancer Center's Cancer Center Support Grant and the prestigious designation following a multi-step competitive process. Overall, the NCI rated the cancer center's research activities as "excellent" and awarded it a five-year, \$7.8 million support grant -- an increase of 20 percent from the previous award in 2008.

The grant is an important source of funding for the cancer center's shared facilities that are available to researchers. Those facilities provide researchers with access to the highest quality of equipment and technology.

The NCI designation places the IU Simon Cancer Center in an elite group of 68 cancer centers across the country that focus on the rapid translation of research discoveries to directly benefit people with cancer. It is the only NCI-designated cancer center in Indiana that provides patient care.

Patients benefit from the scientific discoveries made by researchers at the IU Simon Cancer Center. Cancer center physicians treat adult patients at the IU Health Simon Cancer Center, Eskenazi Health and the Richard L. Roudebush VA Medical Center, and pediatric patients are treated at Riley Hospital for Children at IU Health, all of which are on the Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis campus.

"We are especially honored to be renewed with this very prized designation again," said Patrick J. Loehrer, M.D., director of the IU Simon Cancer Center. "To receive a funding increase in the current funding climate is icing on the cake.

"The members of the IU Simon Cancer Center realize we have much more to do, but each day brings promise of a new research discovery. Research is at the heart of making progress against cancer, enabling us to find better ways to prevent, detect and treat the disease. The nearly 200 researchers at the IU Simon Cancer Center have dedicated themselves to moving impactful research from the labs to the bedside."

Both the grant and designation recognize that the IU Simon Cancer Center's research programs meet the NCI's rigorous criteria for world-class, state-of-the-art programs in multidisciplinary cancer research. Reviewers, composed of NCI officials and others from NCI-designated cancer centers, evaluated the cancer center's five research programs. The goals of those programs range from understanding the molecular changes that cause cancer to the development of targeted therapies to prevent and treat cancer. Members of those research programs are on the Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, IU Bloomington, IU South Bend and Notre Dame campuses.

The NCI reviewers noted the IU Simon Cancer Center "has made truly substantial progress over the current funding period." They added: "The reorganized leadership and recruitment of new leaders in combination with outstanding facilities, institutional commitment, and leadership should continue to advance the mission of the cancer center in the years ahead."

The IU Simon Cancer Center first received the NCI designation in 1999, just seven years after its founding. It has held this distinction since then.

Grant funding awarded to IU cancer researchers and membership has continued to grow since 1999.



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Walther Hall on the IU School of Medicine campus



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External funding has grown from \$29.4 million in 1999 to \$61 million today, while membership of the cancer center has grown from 150 members -- researchers and physicians -- in 1999 to nearly 200 current members.

In September 2013, as part of the competitive renewal process, the IU Simon Cancer Center submitted a 1,011-page Cancer Center Support Grant application to the NCI. After that, NCI officials and others from NCI-designated cancer centers reviewed the application, and 24 reviewers visited campus in February 2014.

Since its founding, IU Simon Cancer Center researchers have made protocol-defining discoveries that have changed the way doctors treat testicular cancer, breast cancer, gastrointestinal cancer, genitourinary cancer, leukemia, multiple myeloma, thymoma and thymic carcinomas, and thoracic cancer.

[Watch a video of the IU Simon Cancer Center director talking about the NCI designation.](#)

CANCER CENTER HISTORY

1992: The National Cancer Institute awarded a planning grant to the IU School of Medicine for a cancer center, establishing the Indiana University Cancer Center under the direction of Stephen Williams, M.D.

1999: IU Cancer Center earned its first NCI designation.

2004: Designation renewed.

2006: The cancer center is renamed the Indiana University Melvin and Bren Simon Cancer Center.

2008: Designation renewed.

2009: Patrick Loehrer Sr., M.D., is named the cancer center's second director following the death of Dr. Williams.

2014: Designation renewed.

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IU researchers: Blood test may help to diagnose pancreatic cancer

Oct. 28, 2014

INDIANAPOLIS -- Indiana University 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 today in the American Journal of Gastroenterology, Murray Korc, M.D., the Myles Brand Professor of Cancer Research at the [Indiana University School of Medicine](#) and a researcher at the [Indiana University Melvin and Bren 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.

Dr. Korc pointed out that additional studies are needed to confirm that a blood test could be an effective method of diagnosing pancreatic cancer.

"It may be possible to use a blood test to screen individuals who are at high risk for developing pancreatic cancer," Dr. Korc said. "We are planning to conduct such studies. It will be important to identify additional markers and to assess how useful a panel of such markers would be for the early diagnosis of this cancer. Based on our findings, this test could also be useful to differentiate between pancreatic cancer and chronic pancreatitis."

Such a marker would be an advance against metastatic pancreatic cancer because current treatments typically extend a person's life for only six to 16 weeks. Pancreatic cancer is difficult to detect and diagnose because there are no noticeable signs or symptoms in the early stages and because the pancreas is hidden behind other organs such as the stomach, small intestine, liver, gallbladder, spleen and bile ducts.

Only 6 percent of people with the disease survive more than five years after diagnosis. According to the National Cancer Institute, there will be an estimated 46,420 new cases of pancreatic cancer and 39,590 deaths from the disease in 2014.

This research was funded, in part, by NIH grants R37-CA-075059 and 5K23DK095148.

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.


Dr. Korc was named the inaugural Myles Brand Professor of Cancer Research in October 2011. The professorship was created to help physicians and scientists at the IU Simon Cancer Center to continue investigating devastating malignancies, such as pancreatic cancer, which claimed the life of Brand, the 16th president of Indiana University. Brand served as IU's president from 1994 to 2002.


He is also director of the [Center for Pancreatic Cancer Research](#). The center brings together nearly 50 basic scientists and clinicians who work to improve outcomes for pancreatic cancer patients.

Dr. Korc's focus is on aberrant growth-factor signaling in pancreatic cancer and genetic mouse models of

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Murray Korc, M.D.
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IU researchers

Blood test may help to diagnose pancreatic cancer

Newscenter

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pancreatic cancer, with the goal of designing novel therapeutic strategies. He has published more than 280 peer-reviewed manuscripts, and he is internationally recognized for his seminal contributions to the understanding of the role of the epidermal growth factor receptor and transforming growth factor-beta in pancreatic cancer, work for which he earned a National Institutes of Health MERIT Award. The highly-selective MERIT Awards are presented to researchers who demonstrate superior competence and outstanding productivity in research endeavors.

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Shared Facilities

Epidemiology Consultation Core

Mission

The Epidemiology Consultation Core promotes population research and education in epidemiology at the IU Simon Cancer Center.

Goals

The overall goal of population research is the prevention and early diagnosis of human diseases, proper treatment fitting the patients, as well as improved survival rates. A successful outcome of population research will need active collaboration between epidemiologists, statisticians and clinicians. Hence, the goals of the Epidemiology Consultation Core are: 1) to bridge faculty members from the IU Simon Cancer Center and the multiple academic institutions in Indiana to promote collaborative interactions; and 2) to facilitate joint research projects and grant proposals, engaging the complementary strengths of faculty from multiple disciplines.



News briefs

Dr. Jalal named medical director of Clinical Trials Office

Shadia Jalal, MD, has been named medical director of the cancer center's



Jalal

Clinical Trials Office. In this capacity, she will be responsible for the oversight and coordination of all the activities of the adult CTO. She will work with the leadership of the cancer center to expand investigator-initiated trials and provide oversight to the increasingly complex clinical trial infrastructure.

An assistant professor of medicine, Dr. Jalal's clinical interest is in thoracic oncology and the management of all forms of lung cancer. Her research interest is focused on the study of DNA repair capacity and its impact on patient response to chemotherapy in hopes of personalizing therapy.

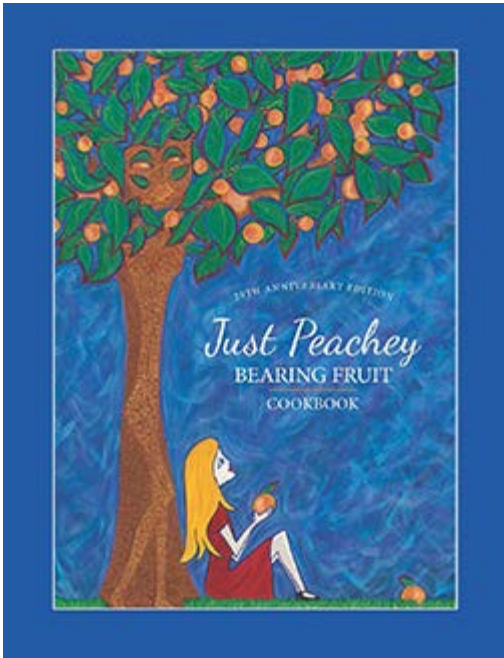
She is an active member of the lung cancer working group, and she is active in clinical research within the thoracic program, the cancer center's Phase I program, and the [Hoosier Cancer Research Network](#). Dr. Jalal also runs the thoracic clinic at the VA.

Dr. Jalal earned her medical degree from the University of Jordan and completed both her residency and fellowship at IUSM.

Dr. Jalal succeeds Rafat Abonour, MD, who had served as medical director of the CTO since 2005. Dr. Abonour stewarded the cancer center through two competing renewals during part of his tenure, and he also ably served as chair of the Hoosier Cancer Research Network.

Cookbook makes for great holiday gifts, supports breast cancer research

Consider giving family and friends *Just Peachey: Bearing Fruit*, a cookbook and breast health reference, as holiday gifts. Developed by the [Catherine Peachey Fund](#), the book is the 20th anniversary edition of *Just Peachey: Cooking Up a Cure*, which sold 57,000 copies and established



the Catherine Peachey Fund as a funding resource for breast cancer researchers in Indiana.

The fund is a 100-percent volunteer organization with less than 5 percent overhead. All of the revenue from sales of the cookbook will be granted to research and programs at IU. To date, the Catherine Peachey Fund has granted \$2,447,143 to Indiana University.

Just Peachey: Bearing Fruit includes more than 500 recipes from celebrities, chefs, cancer survivors, physicians, researchers, and friends and family. The pink pages at the front of the book were overseen by Anna Maria Storniolo, MD, medical editor.

The cookbook is available at amazon.com and Bright Ideas (on the north side of Broadripple) for \$24.99.

Miles for Myeloma raises nearly \$2.9 million in 10 years

Earlier this month, **Rafat Abonour**, MD, completed his 10th annual Miles for Myeloma, raising \$275,000 this year for multiple myeloma research. In the three-day cycling event, he rode 300 miles from Indy to Spencer, Ind., to Terre Haute and back to Indy. In the past decade, nearly \$2.9 million has been raised because of Dr. Abonour's efforts. [Read related story >](#)



Dr. Bond, former IU oncologist, passes away

Dr. William Holmes Bond, 98, of Indianapolis, died Oct. 17. Dr. Bond attended the University of Chicago for both undergraduate as well as medical school before working as a medical doctor in the U.S. Army during World War II. He then went on to become an associate professor of medicine at the IU School of Medicine, and he practiced medicine at the VA.

He was recruited to IU by Dr. Robert Rohn, the first chief of hematology-oncology at the school. Upon his retirement, he worked as an oncology consultant in southern and central Indiana for Indiana Oncology Hematology Consultants.

"Bill was incredibly smart and very funny. He would routinely have a twinkle in his eye and laugh vertically with his entire body," said Dr. Patrick Loehrer, director of the IU Simon Cancer Center and former chief of the division of hematology-oncology at IUSM.

Dr. Bond was a member of Phi Beta Kappa Society and St. Michael Catholic Church. He was preceded in death by both his loving wife of 31 years, Dr.

Peggy King Bond, and his son, James King Bond, who passed away in 1988. James' wife, Becky, was one of the first oncology nurses at IU and worked for Lawrence Einhorn, MD, during his first clinical trials for testicular cancer.

Dr. Bond is survived by his sons Roy A. and Robert S. Bond; daughter Linda J. Bond; and grandchildren and great children.

Reminders

Palliative care symposium is Nov. 17-18; RSVP due Nov. 7

On Nov. 17-18, the IU Simon Cancer Center's Mary Margaret Walther Program in Palliative Care Research and Education will host a two-day symposium entitled, "[Passages and Promises: Innovations in Palliative Care Research Education and Practice](#)." The focus of the symposium is on research for improving communication among patients, family members, and clinicians in the context of advanced cancer.

[Registration](#) is required; the deadline to register is Nov. 7. [See the symposium schedule](#).

Please contact Richard Frankel, PhD, at rfrankel@iu.edu for additional information and any questions you may have.

BCOG colloquium is Nov. 13-14

The BCOG November Colloquium, "Implementation of Healthcare System Change and the Role of Technology" is Nov. 13-14 at the Hyatt Regency, 1 S. Capitol Ave.

David H. Gustafson, PhD, professor of industrial engineering and preventive medicine at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, is the keynote speaker on Thursday, Nov. 13.

Speakers on Friday, Nov. 14 include:

- David Haggstrom, MD, MAS, associate professor of medicine, IU
- Malaz Boustani, MD, MPH, associate professor of medicine, IU; CEO, Center for Health Innovation and Implementation Science
- Larry Cripe, MD, associate professor of medicine, IU; service line chief, hematology oncology, IU Health Physicians

The colloquium is free. To RSVP and view the agenda, [visit here](#).

BCOG -- Behavioral Cooperative Oncology Group - is a consortium of behavioral scientists at IU, Ohio State University, Michigan State University, and the University of Michigan.

New members

[Chien-Chi Lin](#), PhD

School of Engineering and Technology at Purdue University

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