Arizona Cancer Center Receives $11.5 Million SPORE Grant to Fight Lymphoma

The Arizona Cancer Center Lymphoma Program, in partnership with the University of Rochester James P. Wilmot Cancer Center, has received an $11.5 million Specialized Program of Research Excellence (SPORE) grant from the National Cancer Institute (NCI). These lead institutions will be collaborating with researchers from Virginia Commonwealth Massey Cancer Center.

The five-year Lymphoma SPORE award has been granted only to a very small group of similar research collaborations nationwide: Johns Hopkins University, University of Iowa/Mayo Clinic Rochester, City of Hope and Baylor College of Medicine. The highly competitive grant will fund translational research projects designed to advance findings quickly from the laboratory to clinical settings and improve care and find cures.

Thomas P. Miller, MD, co-principal investigator for the SPORE and director of the Arizona Cancer Center Lymphoma Program, and Richard I. Fisher, MD, director of the James P. Wilmot Cancer Center and principal investigator for the SPORE, have worked collaboratively for more than 25 years with shared leadership in the Southwest Oncology Group (SWOG), the largest NCI-funded adult cancer research group in the nation. This established collaboration will help to move new therapies to nationwide patient studies quickly. “We have worked together designing clinical trials to improve treatment for patients with lymphoma, and together we have established many of the standard therapies used in the treatment of lymphoma,” says Dr. Miller.

The grant is a testament to both the cooperation that exists between clinical and basic scientists within the two programs and the collaborative environment that exists between the Arizona Cancer Center and the University of Rochester’s Wilmot Cancer Center.

“With this grant, we will rapidly increase our progress in the basic understanding of the disease, so we can develop new approaches to treatments for the thousands of people affected every year,” says Dr. Fisher.

Lymphomas are a group of cancers that originate in the lymphatic system, which helps the body fight infection and disease. The National Cancer Institute is keenly interested in learning more about the causes and treatments of lymphomas because the incidence has grown by nearly 80 percent in the past 30 years. This year, about 74,000 Americans will be diagnosed with non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma and the less common Hodgkin’s disease.

“This grant will accelerate research at home and bring new therapies to patients at a faster rate. With this SPORE, the Arizona Cancer Center will now be viewed as one of the few world-class institutions in which to receive treatment for lymphomas,” says Dr. Miller.

The Arizona Cancer Center provides expert care for patients with cancer and is the only organization in Arizona offering specialized treatment for lymphoma patients.

At the Arizona Cancer Center, Dr. Miller is leading the efforts of the research team, which includes Daruka Mahadevan, MD, PhD, associate professor of medicine, director of Phase 1 Clinical Trials; Daniel Persky, MD, assistant professor of clinical medicine; Lisa Rimsza, MD, professor of pathology; Sylvan Green, MD, director of biometry; and Margaret Briehl, PhD, associate professor of pathology.

The Lymphoma Spore is the second prestigious SPORE for the Arizona Cancer Center. The Gastrointestinal Cancer Program recently received a five-year $12 million SPORE grant renewal from the National Cancer Institute.
UMC earns kudos
Recent announcements rank UMC among the top U.S. hospitals in two major surveys. In August, the international health-care consulting firm, Thomson Reuters, announced its 100 Top Hospital Performance Leaders among hospitals in the United States. The study named UMC among the top 100 hospitals in the nation with the fastest, most consistent improvement over five consecutive years. Hospitals are rated on patient mortality, medical complications, patient safety, length of stay, expenses, profitability, cash-to-debt ratio and use of evidence-based medicine over a five-year period.

In September, the University HealthSystem Consortium announced that UMC is ranked fifth among 88 teaching hospitals nationwide. Rankings are based on mortality, effectiveness, safety, equity, “patient-centeredness” and efficiency. Last year UMC ranked 11th in the same survey. The year before, its rank was 17.

Integrative medicine scholarship available
The Arizona Center for Integrative Medicine has announced a $20,000 scholarship for the Fellowship in Integrative Medicine, a two-year, distance-learning program for physicians, nurse practitioners and physician assistants. Made possible through support from the Arizona Area Health Education Centers (AzAHEC), the scholarship is available to health-care professionals who practice in Arizona in one of the five qualifying Arizona AHEC areas. Application deadline is Nov. 15. For information, visit www.integrativemedicine.arizona.edu/Education/Fellowship/

HIV/AIDS scholar to speak at College of Nursing Homecoming, Oct. 24
Sandra VanDann Anderson, PhD, RN, FAAN, will present the highlights of the August 2008 International AIDS Conference in Mexico City and address the topic, “Universal Access to HIV Prevention and Care: A Worthy Goal... or Skewing the Health Budget?” Her talk is scheduled Oct. 24, 4:45 p.m., in DuVal Auditorium. For more information, contact Judyh Brown, (520) 626-6233, or Caroline Murphy, (520) 626-3173, e-mail cmurphy@nursing.arizona.edu

Project YES is focus of Second Annual ‘Cats in the Community Day’
Once again UA faculty, staff and students will have an opportunity to work with a social service agency providing vital services for our community - and have some fun while doing it! Project YES, an after-school tutoring and mentoring program in South Tucson for students in grades 1-8, has been selected as the focus for the UA's second annual Cats in the Community Day, scheduled for March 7. For more details on the project, please go to: http://lqp.arizona.edu/node/516.

Understanding Brain Tumors in Children
A physician-scientist at the Steele Children's Research Center wants to know what causes brain tumors in children so that novel and more effective treatments can be found. Kartik Krishnan, MD, PhD, assistant professor in the Department of Pediatrics, recently received funding to advance his research into the origins of malignant pediatric brain tumors.

Eureka Grant May Help Turn Off Cancer
A new National Institutes of Health (NIH) program has awarded one of 38 NIH “Eureka” grants to Laurence Hurley, PhD. Eureka (Exceptional, Unconventional Research Enabling Knowledge Acceleration) grants are awarded for exceptionally innovative research projects that can have a significant impact on science. Dr. Hurley, UA’s BIO5 associate director, College of Pharmacy professor and Arizona Cancer Center member, is designing a molecular system that permits the design of simple drugs that turn off cancer genes.

Bone Infection Doesn’t Mean Amputation
Researchers at the College of Medicine and two other institutions have found that fewer than half of people with serious limb and life-threatening infections require an amputation. This is good news for patients with bone infections.

UA Medical Students Serve as National Officers
Three of the new national officers for the Association of the Native American Medical Students (ANAMS) are UA College of Medicine students. Naomi Young, medical student (MS)-IV, serves as president for 2008-2009; Donovan Williams, MS-III and a current pathology fellow, as president-elect; and Stephanie Gauby Augustine, MS-IV, as membership coordinator. ANAMS represents the interests of American Indian medical students nationwide. According to the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) statistics, only 0.9 percent of the 67,466 medical students in the U.S. are of American Indian descent.
Henry Ichiro "Hank" Yamamura, 68, beloved husband, father, teacher/mentor and researcher, died peacefully at home on Sept. 4 in Tucson. Regents’ Professor of Pharmacology at the UA College of Medicine in Tucson, Professor Yamamura is internationally renowned and is credited with more than 500 scholarly publications and 11 books. He ranked among the top 100 most-cited scientists in the country. Professor Yamamura’s work centered on receptors, the proteins responsible for mediating the actions of many medicines. His research has led to new approaches to treating anxiety, depression, memory loss, pain and addiction. He is survived by his wife, Susan, and son, Mark. A memorial service/celebration of life was held Sept. 26 in DuVal Auditorium.

Dr. Yamamura earned his BS and MS in pharmacy from the University of Washington School of Pharmacy in 1964 and 1968, respectively, and his PhD from the Department of Pharmacology at the UW School of Medicine in 1969. He was a research associate in pharmacology at Johns Hopkins Medical Center and served as a captain in the U.S. Army Medical Service Corps from 1969. He was a research associate in pharmacology at Johns Hopkins Medical Center and served as a captain in the U.S. Army Medical Service Corps from 1969 to 1973.

He came to the UA in 1975 as associate professor in pharmacology and later in psychiatry. He was promoted to professor in 1980 and served on the Committee in Neurosciences and as senior member of Arizona Research Laboratories. He joined the College of Medicine in 1975 and was named Regents’ Professor in 1997. Dr. Yamamura was named UW’s 2004 Distinguished Alumnus of the Year.

Even while he was battling cancer, Dr. Yamamura continued his research and scholarly activities. His work is cited more than 14,000 times in the scientific literature. He trained and mentored more than 100 students, fellows and visiting faculty, including 57 post-docs and 18 PhD students.

“Hank always had a wonderful rapport with students, both in the classroom and as a mentor,” said Josephine Lai, PhD, a 1988-90 post-doc and now a UA professor of pharmacology. “He treasured every one of them.”

Bob Speth, PhD, an early post-doc who is now a professor of pharmacology at the University of Mississippi, said, “I measure my life before and after Hank Yamamura. I trace all the successes in my career back to the inspirational guidance Hank gave me.”

In lieu of flowers gifts may be made to: UA Foundation – Hank Yamamura Endowed Fellowship in Pharmacology. The endowment is a tribute to Professor Yamamura from friends, colleagues and family in honor of his contributions to pharmacology and to the lives of his students and colleagues. It is designed to attract and retain promising students in the Department of Pharmacology at the UA College of Medicine. Contributions can be mailed to UA College of Medicine, Development Office, P.O. Box 245018, Tucson, AZ 85724-5018. For more information about the endowment, please call the Development Office at (520) 626-2827.
In 2003, I joined as an assistant professor after I completed a geriatrics fellowship at The University of Arizona.

I really like teaching, especially as a mentor in the College of Medicine’s Societies Program for medical students and on the inpatient wards with internal medicine residents. I recently was appointed Clerkship and Associate Residency Director along with Laura Meinke, MD, and I look forward to that challenge.

I’m an internist caring for patients in the outpatient and inpatient setting, as well as an academic educator. I recently joined the Arizona Air National Guard, and I’m currently training to be a flight surgeon for my unit, the 162nd Fighter Wing.

I admire Joseph Alpert, MD, who is an excellent role model as a clinician and teacher.

I like to hike – I climbed Mount Kilimanjaro a couple of years ago – and like to travel.

It’s an honor and a privilege to be a physician, and you must always do your absolute best to provide excellent medical care.

Learn more about Dr. Campion online at www.facultyaffairs.med.arizona.edu