Francis J. Giles Joins Northwestern as Director of New Northwestern Medicine Developmental Therapeutics Institute

NORTHWESTERN MEDICINE and the Lurie Cancer Center are launching a discipline-defining research program devoted to uniting and expanding our role in the burgeoning field of developmental therapeutics. This field creates a continuous synergistic loop linking pre-clinical basic science breakthroughs to the use of novel approaches to prevent cancer, to better predict its causes and behavior, and to develop better treatments for patients who suffer from cancer.

The Northwestern Medicine Developmental Therapeutics Institute (NMDTI) will thrive from the collaboration of Northwestern University and external basic scientists, translational researchers, and clinical investigators who have a shared passion for and particular expertise in, developmental therapeutics. NMDTI will act as a center to optimize our partnerships with peer institutions and biotechnology, device, pharmaceutical, and theranostic companies — all focused on the ultimate goal of developing novel approaches that will improve public health and outcomes in patients, both adult and pediatric, suffering from cancer or other diseases that share relevant features with cancer.

Through the NMDTI, we will enhance our current focus on bringing life-changing discoveries from the laboratory to our patients as quickly and as safely as possible.

The Lurie Cancer Center is pleased to welcome Francis J. Giles, MD, MB, FRCPI, FRCPath, who will serve as Director of the NMDTI. A cancer specialist with more than two decades of experience, Giles has led the development of novel drugs, immunotherapies, and other highly targeted approaches, including cancer-directed viruses, monoclonal antibodies, and molecularly directed agents. He has served as principal investigator on numerous national and international First in Human, Phase I, II, and III clinical studies of many novel agents, and holds numerous patents and technology licenses.

Giles has focused his clinical and research efforts on providing therapy for patients suffering from treatment-resistant or refractory cancer. He has pioneered the use of many agents that are now in regular use as targeted therapies for patients with cancer.

Read more

Note: The Institute will be located on the 5th floor of Prentice Women’s Hospital. Dr. Giles joins Northwestern on April 1st 2013, and will be moving forward with plans to open the NMDTI for patients this summer. Please contact Northwestern Memorial Hospital Director of Oncology, Alex Zafirovski, with questions until e-mail addresses and phone numbers are available.
Renowned Neurosurgeon, Andrew Parsa, Joins Northwestern

ANDREW T. PARSA, MD, PHD, an internationally-renowned neurosurgeon specializing in complex tumors of the brain and spine, will join the Feinberg School of Medicine on July 1 as the Michael J. Marchese Professor and Chair of the Department of Neurological Surgery.

“Dr. Parsa is a pioneering neurosurgeon and innovative scientist whose addition to Northwestern Medicine strengthens our position as a leader in the investigation of neurological cancers,” said Eric G. Neilson, MD, Vice President for Medical Affairs and Lewis Landsberg Dean.

For the past decade, Parsa has been at the University of California San Francisco (UCSF), most recently as Professor, Vice Chair, and Reza and Georgianna Khatib Endowed Chair in Skull Base Tumor Surgery.

“I am truly excited to embark upon this next stage of my career, which will allow me to impact neurosurgery more broadly,” Parsa said. “I will have a unique opportunity to positively shape the training of residents and the development of faculty in neurosurgery at one of the most respected institutions in the country.”

Continuously supported by the NIH since 2002, Parsa’s research on brain tumor immunology has provided landmark insights, including the identification of a novel link between oncogenesis and immune-resistance in brain tumors. He is currently the study chair for the largest randomized brain tumor vaccine trial ever to be funded by the National Cancer Institute.

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Killing Lymphoma Without Chemotherapy

HOW DO YOU annihilate lymphoma without using any drugs? Starve it to death by depriving it of what appears to be a favorite food: HDL cholesterol. A study by C. Shad Thaxton, MD, PhD, and Leo I. Gordon, MD, shows that synthetic HDL nanoparticles killed B-cell lymphoma, the most common form of the disease, in cultured human cells, and inhibited human B-cell lymphoma tumor growth in mice.

“This has the potential to eventually become a nontoxic treatment for B-cell lymphoma which does not involve chemotherapy,” said Gordon. “It’s an exciting preliminary finding.” Gordon is Professor in Hematology/Oncology and Thaxton is Assistant Professor in Urology, both at the Feinberg School of Medicine. Gordon also is Co-Director of the Hematologic Malignancies Program at the Lurie Cancer Center and Thaxton is also a member of the Lurie Cancer Center.

Recent studies have shown that B-cell lymphoma is dependent on the uptake of natural HDL from which it derives fat content, such as cholesterol. The nanoparticle—originally developed by Thaxton as a possible therapy for heart disease—closely mimics the size, shape and surface chemistry of natural HDL particles. But it has one key difference: a five nanometer gold particle at its core. Thus, when the nanoparticle is incubated with human B-cell lymphoma cells or used to treat a mouse with the human tumor, it socks lymphoma with a double whammy. After it attaches to the lymphoma cell, the gold particle’s spongy surface sucks out its cholesterol while the gold core prevents the cell from absorbing more cholesterol typically carried in the core of natural HDL particles.

“The lymphoma work has broadened this focus to how the HDL nanoparticles impact both the removal and uptake of cholesterol by cells. We discovered the particles are multi-taskers,” said Thaxton.

» Read more
New Method First to Predict Brain Tumor Outcomes

THE CRITICAL question shortly after a brain cancer patient starts treatment: how well is it working? But there hasn’t been a good way to gauge that.

Kristin Swanson, PhD, Professor and Vice Chair of Research for Neurological Surgery at the Feinberg School of Medicine, has developed a new method—similar to forecasting storms with computer models—to predict an individual patient’s brain tumor growth. This growth forecast will enable physicians to rapidly identify how well the tumor is responding to a particular therapy. The approach allows a quick pivot to a new therapy in a critical time window if the current one isn’t effective.

“When a hurricane is approaching, weather models tell us where it’s going,” said Swanson, who is also a member of the Lurie Cancer Center. “Our brain tumor model does the same thing. We know how much and where the tumor will grow. Then we can know how much the treatment deflected that growth and can directly relate that to impact on patient survival.”

Existing methods for measuring a treatment’s impact ignore the variations in brain tumor growth rate, shape and density; unable to distinguish between a patient with a fast-growing tumor that responds well to treatment and a patient with a slow-growing tumor that responds poorly. Using a personalized, patient-specific approach, the new prediction model is able to make the distinction.

Read more

20th Annual Cancer Survivors’ Celebration & Walk, Sunday, June 2

New This Year: Optional 5K Run Before the Celebration Begins

WE RE CELEBRATING the 20th with a first! A 5K Run along the lake has been added for those who want to get a “running start” on the festivities. Limited to 500 runners, participants must register for the Walk in order to register and participate in the Run.

Close to 4,000 people—cancer survivors, their families and friends, along with the physicians, scientists and health professionals who support them—are expected to come together in Grant Park on Sunday, June 2, 2013 for the 20th Annual Cancer Survivors’ Celebration & Walk!

In addition to the early morning Run and the Walk along Chicago’s lakefront, the Lurie Cancer Center’s signature event will be filled with activities including, a picnic, t-shirt, music, entertainment, kids’ corner, and an opportunity to sign the Dedication Wall. Please join us—so we can honor cancer survivors and celebrate this milestone together.

Details and Registration will be available here within the week.

New Patient Orientation

Knowing what to expect can go a long way; relieving a new patient’s concerns, and ensuring that they’re able to take advantage of valuable resources.

A “New Patient Orientation” has been developed for the Lurie Cancer Center’s website, including videos offering a virtual tour of Northwestern’s medical campus, information about the wide range of support services available, and introducing members of the health care team.

Please encourage new patients and families to explore the orientation videos available at cancer.northwestern.edu/newpatient.
Examining How Skin Cells Communicate

USING THREE-DIMENSIONAL (3D) skin models Spiro Getsios, PhD, Assistant Professor in Dermatology and Cell and Molecular Biology at the Feinberg School of Medicine, is exploring a communications network, the complexities of which are just beginning to be understood. Grown on collagen lattices over the course of two weeks, the 3D skin “raft cultures” — named for the way they float to create an air-liquid interface — are providing new understanding into the way epithelial cells converse with one another.

“The model we use is a tremendous example of the bedside giving insight to the bench,” Getsios said of the way clinical skin-grafting techniques for burn patients were the inspiration for cell biologists to create better cell culture models in the lab. “Many people who work in skin biology use submerged two-dimensional cultures to understand how normal epithelial cells work. But the architecture and the relationship of cell-to-cell contacts in this multi-layered epithelium can’t be recapitulated in these submerged 2D cultures. The solution is that we build 3D models of human skin where an artificial substrate is used as a platform for keratinocytes — skin cells — to grow on an air-liquid interface.”

“The raft cultures give us a unique tool to regenerate what we think is close to the in vivo state of skin, and then we spend most of our time trying to destroy that normalcy,” said Getsios, a member of the Lurie Cancer Center. “We think that by understanding the skin’s normal biology we will also be able to provide insight into diseases like inflammation and cancer, where cells start to misbehave and divide in the wrong place.”

» Read more

Exploring the Role of MicroRNAs in Cancer

TINY REGULATORS produced by a cancer-causing virus may be the intermediaries in a sequence leading to the most common malignancy in HIV-infected people. Investigating Kaposi’s Sarcoma-associated herpesvirus (KSHV), Eva Gottwein, PhD, Assistant Professor in Microbiology-Immunology at the Feinberg School of Medicine, focuses on the interaction of KSHV microRNAs (miRNAs) and the genes they repress.

KSHV, one of just seven human cancer viruses, represents an important model system for cancer research. It causes two types of cancer in immuno-compromised individuals — Kaposi’s sarcoma (KS) and B cell lymphoma. But how it causes cancer is still not well understood. What is known is that KSHV produces small regulators — miRNAs — which could lead infected cells to acquire cancerous properties.

“MicroRNAs function by repressing the activity of specific genes and consequently altering cellular properties,” said Gottwein, a member of the Lurie Cancer Center. “Our objective is to understand the contribution of the KSHV miRNAs to KSHV-induced cancers. To reach this goal, it is critical to identify which genes are being repressed.”

Gottwein’s primary objective is to develop an initial understanding of the targets and functions of the viral miRNAs expressed in KSHV-infected cells. “We believe this research will lead to critical insights into the biology of Kaposi’s sarcoma and a better understanding of how miRNAs in general can contribute to carcinogenesis. Interestingly, KSHV produces several miRNAs that mimic miRNAs naturally present in human cells,” Gottwein said. “It is particularly important to understand the function of these viral miRNAs, because their naturally occurring equivalents are known or suspected to be involved in the development of other cancers.”

» Read more
Lurie Clinical Cancer Center Awards

Recipients of the Lurie Clinical Cancer Center Awards celebrated with colleagues at an awards ceremony and reception on March 4.

Sonya Browley, RPT, and Anne Elizabeth Young, LCSW, received the 2012 Medical Professional Award. This award was established in 2011 to recognize a clinical professional for their dedication, commitment, thoughtfulness and overall care of patients.

Denise Dale, BSN, RN, received the 2012 Vicki Maurer Clinical Cancer Center Nursing Award. Established in 2004, the donor of this award named it in honor of his nurse, Vicki Maurer, whom he felt exemplified hard work and compassion.

Regine Ngambo received the JoAnn Jones Clinical Cancer Center Staff Support Award for 2012, given to a support staff member for their knowledge, thoughtfulness, and overall care of patients. This award was established in 2008 in honor of former support staff employee JoAnn Jones, who demonstrated all of these qualities.

Terri Dillon has been promoted to Assistant Dean of Development at the Feinberg School of Medicine. Dillon continues to be an integral part of ensuring Feinberg’s success in campaign planning as well as cancer fundraising. She has built strong relationships with key faculty members at Feinberg and colleagues at Northwestern Memorial Foundation, ensuring overall cancer fundraising success in excess of $12 million annually.

Compassionate Care Awards

The Compassionate Care Awards, sponsored annually by the Woman’s Board of Northwestern Memorial Hospital, recognizes a physician on the medical staff, a fellow or medical resident, and a nurse or allied health professional who exemplify and serve as role models for the compassionate care of patients at the Lurie Cancer Center.

Lurie Cancer Center Director, Steven T. Rosen, MD, presented the awards at the meeting of the Woman’s Board on January 17th to:

- Julian Schink, MD, Chief, Division of Gynecologic Oncology, Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology
- John Galvin, MD, Fellow, Division of Hematology/Oncology, Department of Medicine
- Victoria Maurer, RN, BSN, OCN, Nurse Clinician, Department of Medicine

“The Compassionate Care Awards allow us to recognize the commitment demonstrated every day by our extraordinary team of caregivers,” said Rosen.

Nichole Blatner, PhD, Research Assistant Professor at the Lurie Cancer Center, was awarded a 2013 Dixon Translational Research Grant. Northwestern Memorial Foundation and the Northwestern University Clinical and Translational Sciences Institute (NUCATS) give the award annually to Northwestern investigators for highly innovative, multi-disciplinary clinical and translational research collaborations that accelerate the identification and implementation of new treatments to improve human health.

Yanming Zhang, MD, has been appointed Cytogenetics Chair of ECOG-ACRIN. The cooperative cancer research group formed from the merger of the Eastern Cooperative Oncology Group (ECOG) and the American College of Radiology Imaging Network (ACRIN).
THE LURIE CANCER CENTER is committed to educating the public about cancer prevention and treatment, and offers a wide range of community events and patient programs throughout the year. Below is a list of programs scheduled through May 2013.

LEARN MORE AND REGISTER AT cancer.northwestern.edu or call 312.695.1304.

Cancer Connections
Saturday, March 9, 2013
Prentice Women’s Hospital, 3rd floor
Patients and families learn about techniques and services to help them eat well, move more, and manage stress and fatigue during and after treatment. In addition to workshops the interactive program includes opportunities to connect with support programs and experience the benefits of massage therapy.

Thyroid Cancer Public Education Symposium
Saturday, April 6, 2013
Robert H. Lurie Medical Research Center, Baldwin Auditorium

Gastrointestinal Stromal Tumors: Day of Learning
Sunday, May 5, 2013
Robert H. Lurie Medical Research Center, Baldwin Auditorium

Foundation for Peripheral Neuropathy Public Forum
Saturday, May 11, 2013
Robert H. Lurie Medical Research Center, Baldwin Auditorium

Save the Date: 20th Annual Survivors’ Celebration & Walk
Sunday, June 2, 2013

We’re celebrating the 20th with a first—a 5K Run before the celebration begins! Make plans now to help us celebrate this milestone! Registration opens this week.

Dancing With Chicago Celebrities

Friday, March 8, 2013
Hyatt Regency Chicago
151 E. Wacker Dr.
Chicago

Lurie Cancer Center Director, Steve Rosen, MD, will be among those hitting the dance floor to raise funds for breast cancer research at Northwestern.

6th Annual Irish Fest & Soda Bread Contest

Saturday, March 9, 2013
Charleston’s Bar & Grill
2101 Calistoga Dr.
New Lenox

Proceeds benefit the Northwestern Brain Tumor Institute in memory of Lynn Bennett.

Twist Out Cancer Presents: Brushes With Cancer

Wednesday, April 17, 2013
Floating World Gallery
1925 N. Halsted St.
Chicago

Celebrates survivorship and hope through art, music and storytelling.

Magellan Development Chicago
Spring Half Marathon, 10K and Junior Dash

Sunday, May 19, 2013
The Park at Lake Shore East
Chicago

Run and support the Northwestern Brain Tumor Institute!
Professional Programs

THROUGHOUT THE YEAR, the Lurie Cancer Center offers professional education on various cancer related topics. Below is a list of programs scheduled through March, 2013.

LEARN MORE AND REGISTER AT cancer.northwestern.edu or call 312.695.1304.

Northwestern Brain Tumor Institute CME Symposium 2013
Saturday, March 23, 2013
Prentice Women's Hospital, 3rd Floor, Room L
Chairs: James Chandler, MD, and Jeffrey Raizer, MD

Malkin-Kraft Lectureship
Tuesday, May 21, 2013
Medical Research Center, Hughes Auditorium
Chicago Campus
Wednesday, May 22, 2013
Tech Auditorium, Lecture Room 3
Evanston Campus
Speaker: Stuart L. Schreiber, PhD

8th Annual Northwestern Radiosurgery Symposium
Thursday & Friday, May 30-31, 2013
Prentice Women's Hospital, 3rd Floor, Room L
Co-Chairs: John Kalalpurakal, MD, and James Chandler, MD

Cancer & Fertility Virtual Grand Rounds

The Oncofertility Consortium has created a series of Virtual Grand Rounds, primarily for the clinical community, to increase reproductive education among oncology and reproductive providers. Learn more about how specific chemotherapeutic drugs and radiation treatments used to treat brain cancer, can impact fertility. Providers can also get information about the latest fertility preservation options, get access to reproductive specialists in their region, and receive free CME credits through this program, which is accessible via computer or mobile device.

Illinois oncology providers interested in connecting with other providers and reproductive specialists in the Illinois area can participate in the Consortium’s pilot program to increase oncofertility communication and education.

E-mail Angie Krausfeldt or call her at 312.503.2506 to learn more.

» View the Oncofertility Virtual Grand Rounds Schedule here

Grand Rounds & Tumor Cell Biology

GRAND ROUNDS
Fridays: 8:00 a.m. to 9:00a.m
Robert H. Lurie Medical Research Center
303 E. Superior, Chicago
Gray Conference Room (unless otherwise noted)

Presented by the Division of Hematology/Oncology and the Lurie Cancer Center, the weekly Grand Rounds update physicians and healthcare personnel on developing trends and techniques in medicine.

» View the Grand Rounds Schedule here

TUMOR CELL BIOLOGY
Thursdays: 1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.
Robert H. Lurie Medical Research Center
303 E. Superior, Chicago
Baldwin Auditorium (unless otherwise noted)

The Tumor Cell Biology Seminars present weekly updates on novel translational cancer research in the areas of tumor biology, biomedical informatics and cancer prevention and diagnosis.

» View the Tumor Cell Biology Seminar Schedule here

If you would like to receive weekly reminders about the Grand Rounds and/or TCB Seminar schedules please contact Denise Marshall at d-marshall4@northwestern.edu.
Funding Opportunities

Basic Sciences Research Division

H Foundation Incentive Awards provide funding for faculty who have submitted and received a score on a RO1 grant to the NCI for the first time in their career. If additional funds are available, awards will be made to other faculty for new, first-time NCI RO1 submissions, which are scored but not yet funded.

H Foundation Bridge Awards provide up to $20,000 of support for competing renewals of NCI-sponsored RO1 research that missed the payline.

Applications for H Foundation Incentive and Bridge Awards are reviewed on a rolling basis and accepted until funds for the year are expended.

» Details and Application Process

Lea Charitable Trust Equipment Grants
Through the generous support of the Lea Charitable Trust, a pool of funds is available to full members of the Lurie Cancer Center affiliated with one of the Basic Sciences Research Programs for use by multiple investigators or to support small equipment grants for collaborative research projects.

Lea Charitable Trust Equipment Grants are made on a rolling basis as funds become available.

» Details and Application Process

NU-PSOC Pilot Projects
As part of its charter, the Northwestern University Physical-Science-Oncology Center (NU-PSOC) offers pilot project funding for up to two projects each year to researchers for innovative projects that are closely aligned with the central research mission of the Center. Selected projects are funded for one year up to $100,000 direct costs.

The NU-PSOC, one of 12 national centers funded by the National Cancer Institute, is focused on research organized under the theme of “Coding, Decoding, Transfer and Translation of Information in Cancer.”

Proposal submission deadline is March 12, 2013

» Details and Application Process

what’s new

News of the Robert H. Lurie Comprehensive Cancer Center of Northwestern University
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Help Wanted: Reporters

PLEASE SEND SUGGESTIONS for this newsletter to Jennifer Bowker, j-bowker@northwestern.edu

Lurie Cancer Center Weekly Updates

INFORMATION TO BE CONSIDERED for inclusion in the Lurie Cancer Center’s weekly e-mail updates must be received at least one week in advance. Submit suggestions to Denise Marshall at d-marshall4@northwestern.edu.