Treat or Prevent Cancer by Swallowing a Gene?

Can simply swallowing a gene actually treat and prevent cancer? While the scientific jury is still out on that question, cancer geneticists and neuroscientists at Jefferson Medical College (JMC) have seen stunning results in a gene therapy laboratory experiment. Researchers, led by Carlo Croce, M.D., Professor and Chairman of Microbiology and Immunology at JMC and Director of Jefferson's Kimmel Cancer Center, and K. ay Huebner, Ph.D., Professor of Microbiology and Immunology at JMC, have devised a technique to prevent and perhaps treat cancer by giving oral doses of gene therapy. The therapy greatly reduced the incidence of stomach cancer in laboratory mice already genetically prone to develop tumors and which had been exposed to a cancer-causing substance. The work may be a novel early stage approach to preventing and perhaps treating cancer by safe and effective use of gene therapy.

Another FHIT Research Success

The findings represent another research success involving genetically altered mice lacking a gene called FHIT. Located in the human genome's most fragile area, FHIT, when damaged, has already been implicated in contributing to a number of cancers, such as esophageal, stomach, kidney, breast and lung.

In 1996, Dr. Huebner, in collaboration with Dr. Croce, identified and characterized FHIT. Ever since, they have been working to find out if FHIT’s fragility is involved in the start or progression of cancers.

NIMH Grants $2.4 Million to JMC Researcher to Study Link Between Vision Loss and Depression in Elderly

It’s bad enough to lose your vision as you grow old. On top of that, depression resulting from impaired vision may cause as much—if not more—dysfunction in older people as vision loss itself.

That’s the premise of preliminary studies by Barry W. Rovner, M.D., Professor of Psychiatry and Human Behavior at Jefferson Medical College (JMC). Dr. Rovner is Director of the Division of Geriatric Psychiatry, JMC, and Medical Director of the Jefferson Geriatric Psychiatry Program at the Jefferson Hospital for Neuroscience.

Now, a grant of $2,398,737 from the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) will enable Dr. Rovner to test his premise over a five-year clinical trial. In the research study, nurses will provide a preventive psychological treatment for depression to 230 patients of the Retina Clinic at Wills Eye Hospital. These patients already have vision loss in one eye from age-related macular degeneration (AMD), and all are experiencing onset of impaired vision in the second eye.

The clinical trial hypothesizes that in the NIHJ, half of the participants will receive preventative treatment for depression based on Problem Solving Therapy for Primary Care (PST-PC). The other half, a control group, will receive traditional therapy for their AMD.

The clinical trial hypothesizes that in six months those receiving the PST-PC intervention training will have a much lower incidence of depression and less functional decline than the control group.

After six months, the control group will be offered the same PST-PC therapy.

After 12 months, doctors and research assistants will assess the PST training’s effectiveness.

Giving Youth Inside View of Research

Cheltenham High School students gain inside view of careers in biomedical research. See story, Page 3

Jefferson Celebrates National Volunteer Week April 30-May 4

“The time this year for all Jeffersonians to show our appreciation for our 300 dedicated volunteers is April 30 to May 4,” says Patricia Wallace, Manager, Volunteer Services, for Thomas Jefferson University Hospital.

“National Volunteer Week is officially April 22 to 28, but we chose to honor our volunteers with activities the following week,” Ms. Wallace explains, adding that the annual recognition luncheon will be May 1.

Year round, our volunteers perform valuable services. The hours they give demonstrate the community’s support of the hospital. They provide valuable input for programs, help feed patients, comfort families and assist with administrative functions.

Remember to take the time to show your appreciation for our volunteers during the week of April 30 to May 4.

Promoting Health Through Fitness

Jefferson University Hospital was ranked among the nation’s top 100 hospitals by U.S. News & World Report, which hailed its "outstanding care for patients with heart disease". See story, Page 2
No Foolin’... Busy April Days Bring Us a Shower of Events... Here are some of the events and activities by and for Jeffersonians in April.

Co-Create the Global Knowledge Network and Thomas Jefferson Mission with the Rockefeller Foundation

The Rockefeller Foundation has awarded a three-year grant totaling nearly $500,000 to Thomas Jefferson University in support of the Global Network for Perinatal and Reproductive Health (GNPRH). The Center in the Division of Research in Reproductive Health at the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at Thomas Jefferson University, the GNPRH has well-established scientific collaborations with the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at the University of Alabama, the Population Council and other national and international organizations and agencies. Jorge E. Toldos, M.D., M.S., an assistant professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology, is the coordinator of the network and the principal investigator for the grant. Serving as a consultant to Dr. Toldos is Patricia Durand, M.D., an active investigator for the GNPRH and Chairman of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at Kan Kan University in Thailand.

The objectives of the program are to conduct clinical research in the area of reproductive health to advance knowledge of conditions affecting the reproductive health of women and their families, and to identify practical, applicable, and cost-effective interventions that will improve the length and quality of their lives.

"We are very grateful to The Rockefeller Foundation for so generously supporting the goals of the Global Network for Perinatal and Reproductive Health," said Dr. Toldos. "This grant will help to further develop the capacity of the network and will support studies in perinatal and neonatal research and in reproductive tract infections and gynecology, one of the coordinator of the network and the principal investigator for the grant. Serving as a consultant to Dr. Toldos is Patricia Durand, M.D., an active investigator for the GNPRH and Chairman of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at Kan Kan University in Thailand.

Youth Mentor Sonny Hill to Speak on Campus

M. Hill will speak at 12 noon at a site to be announced.

Mr. Hill has been a professional basketball player and later excelled as coach, team owner and media analyst or host, including his present weekly sports show on WIP.

Currently he serves as executive advisor to the President/CEO of the First Union Complex and President of the Philadelphia 76ers, Dr. Elton J.山克。

He is perhaps best known to thousands of Philadelphia youth for creating and running several summer basketball leagues for more than 20 years.

Philadelphia Police Commissioner John F. Timoney was the Violence Prevention Program's keynote opening speaker a year ago.

COPCHs Selected for AOTA Exposure

More than 20 faculty and students from the College of Health Professions (CHP) have been selected by the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) to present work at AOTA's Annual Conference.

Hindson Award Nominations Accepted Until April 20

Mias Hindson's life has been made by the Department of Nursing and will bearing on the nursing units during April. The award will be presented on May 3 at the Nursing Week 2003 ceremonies. For nomination forms, call Barbara D. Schraeder, PhD, RN, at 215-585-4441.

Jeffersonians Playing Key Roles at WHYY Bereavement Teleconference

Terri Maxwell, RN, MSN, Executive Director, Center for Palliative Care, Thomas Jefferson University, will be moderator of the afternoon workshop co-moderator with Brian M. Duke, Director, Genetic Regional Initiative, University of Pennsylvania Health System, of the Hospice Foundation of America's Eighth Annual National Bereavement Teleconference hosted by WHYY on April 18. Emilee S. Pausso, PhD, Thomas Jefferson University Visiting Humanities Council Scholar, will present on the creative workshop, along with Elaine Yuen, PhD, from the Center for Medical Make Your 'Dash for Organ Donor Awareness' be held Sunday April 22, starting at the Philadelphia Zoo.

The "Dash" is a 5K (6.2 miles) run and 3K (1.8 miles) walk designed to help promote organ and tissue donation. Start times are 10 a.m. for the run, 10:30 a.m. for the walk, with onsite registration at 8:30 a.m.

Another dash for April 5: The Global Knowledge Network and Thomas Jefferson University's Center in the Division of Research in Reproductive Health, has been awarded a three-year grant totaling nearly $500,000 to Thomas Jefferson University in support of the Global Network for Perinatal and Reproductive Health (GNPRH). The Center in the Division of Research in Reproductive Health at the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at Thomas Jefferson University, the GNPRH has well-established scientific collaborations with the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at the University of Alabama, the Population Council and other national and international organizations and agencies. Jorge E. Toldos, M.D., M.S., an assistant professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology, is the coordinator of the network and the principal investigator for the grant. Serving as a consultant to Dr. Toldos is Patricia Durand, M.D., an active investigator for the GNPRH and Chairman of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at Kan Kan University in Thailand.

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Jeff JHS Taking Lead in 'Mercury Round-up' and streams, and deposits in the solid waste stream annually. In a pledge of commitment to providing quality and environmentally safe health care, JHS intends to phase out the mercury-containing products by June 2005, says James D. Plumb, MD, Associate Vice President, Community Health. “Incidents of mercury pollution in area streams, lakes and reservoirs have risen in recent years. Mercury from a single thermometer is sufficient enough to contaminate a small lake,” Dr. Plumb says. “This is a health hazard that JHS and its hospitals cannot afford to address.” To kick off the new program, various JHS hospitals will host a week-long, mercury thermometer "round-up," beginning on Earth Day, April 22.

All staff and employees, as well as community members, are encouraged to bring their mercury thermometers from their home medicine chests to designated drop-off sites and receive mercury-free replacements, while supplies last.

Jefferson Drop-off Sites
You can turn in your mercury thermometers from Sunday, April 22 to Friday, April 27, between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m., at Jefferson's Center City campus and from Monday to Friday, April 23-27, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., at the Methodist Division, Ford Road campus and Jefferson Hospital for Neurosurgery.

Watch for more information about specific sites.

“Recycling mercury thermometers into household trash is the single largest source of mercury in solid waste. “Mercury can impact the way we think, see, hear, smell, and touch. Mercury pollutes lakes and streams, and deposits in the fish that we eat,” says Dr. Plumb. “Pregnant women, women of childbearing age, and children are particularly at risk from mercury exposure.”

Jeff JMC, and their wives, Jean Nasca, at left, and Laine Brainard, at right.

Top High School Students Gain Inside View of Biomedical Research Careers

In the introduction to new Federal standards and regulations governing the confidentiality and disclosure of health information, the Department of Health and Human Services ("DHHS") cited a number of examples of privacy breaches that have occurred within healthcare organizations. These are the kinds of breaches that led to new Federal regulations governing the privacy of health information.

Here are several of the more egregious privacy breaches mentioned:

• The health insurance claims forms of thousands of patients blew out on a truck on its way to a recycling center in East Hartford, Connecticut.
• A Michigan-based health system accidently posted the medical records of thousands of patients on the Internet.
• A Nevada woman who purchased a used computer discovered that the computer still contained the prescription records of the customers of the pharmacy that had previously owned the computer.
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• A bank who also sat on a county health board gained access to patients' records and identified several people with cancer and called in their mortgages.

These examples of deliberate and accidental disclosures of information underscore the importance of establishing and maintaining effective processes for handling patient information.

If you have questions or concerns about the way Jefferson is currently handling confidential information, contact the Compliance Office directly, or use the Compliance Hotline (1-888-5COMPLY).