

Investigator to Cancer Center Bulletin

A publication of the Harold C. Simmons Comprehensive Cancer Center

Grand Rounds

THE SPEAKER FOR THE UPCOMING SIMMONS COMPREHENSIVE CANCER CENTER Grand

Rounds is Dr. Rowan T. Chlebowski, professor of medicine at the David Geffen School of Medicine at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) and chief of the division of medical oncology/hematology at the Harbor-UCLA Medical Center.

He also is a member of UCLA's Jonsson Comprehensive Cancer Center's healthy and at-risk populations program.

The lecture will be held Feb. 6 from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. in the T. Boone Pickens Biomedical Building and Conference Center (NG) 3.112.

The title of Dr. Chlebowski's lecture is "Breast Cancer Risk Reduction."

Dr. Chlebowski's research focuses on women's health and breast cancer, with a focus on hormonal mediation of cancer, lifestyle change and cancer prevention.

Dr. Chlebowski and his colleagues are participating in and providing leadership direction for large scale, multicenter clinical trials designed to evaluate potential intervention to reduce chronic disease risk. These trials include studies of the Women's Health Initiative evaluating menopausal hormone therapy and dietary intervention in postmenopausal women, and studies of the use of aromatase inhibitors to reduce breast cancer risk (ExCel Trial).

Moncrief Cancer Resources

ALREADY RECOGNIZED FOR PROVIDING SUPPORT SERVICES to cancer patients and their families, [Moncrief Cancer Resources](#) is expanding programs that will serve as incubators to build opportunities for new grant funding as well as to discover effective strategies to prevent and detect cancer.

By partnering with physicians and hospitals in Fort Worth and the surrounding areas, and by drawing on the outstanding basic and clinical sciences programs at UT Southwestern, Moncrief is positioning itself to provide the most advanced cancer population research in Tarrant County.

Dr. Keith Argenbright, medical director of Moncrief Cancer Resources and associate professor in the Harold C. Simmons Comprehensive Cancer Center, is working to promote detection of cancer by endorsing innovative cancer-screening practices and developing new opportunities in cancer control and population science research.

On a daily basis, screenings for all types of cancers are being facilitated by Moncrief Cancer Resources, whether it's in a mobile mammography unit parked outside a supermarket or in a more traditional setting such as a clinic or hospital.

"Screenings have proven to be important public health approaches to reducing deaths from breast, prostate, cervical and colorectal cancers," Dr. Argenbright said. "Our focus is to provide screenings, educate the community about their importance, provide follow-up care after a screening and find out what factors keep patients from being screened or treated."

In an effort to promote these practices in Tarrant County, Moncrief has established a collaborative relationship with the North Texas Primary Care Practice-based Research Network (NorTex), a part of the University of North Texas Health Science Center.

Moncrief has provided the funding to sponsor a randomized study to assess whether an educational DVD intervention about current cancer-screening guidelines will affect clinicians' knowledge and attitudes about cancer screening. The study also will determine whether the information improves overall patient cancer-screening recommendations and screening rates among primary care providers who are members of NorTex.

To analyze the impact of the educational program on clinician cancer-screening patterns, a sample of 150 medical charts from two



Dr. Keith Argenbright

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groups – physicians receiving the DVD and those who do not – will be reviewed. Outcomes will be assessed using clinical notes, physician orders, referrals and test results. The effectiveness of the DVD will be measured by the differences in outcome rates between the intervention and control groups.

In another program, Moncrief has joined forces with JPS Health Network in Fort Worth to develop a colorectal screening program for high-risk patients in historically underserved and disenfranchised communities.

“If you’re black and you get colon cancer in Tarrant County, you’re almost twice as likely to die than if you’re white,” Dr. Argenbright said. “What we don’t

know is, why? And what can we do to fix that?”

Genetic counseling is also an important component for detecting and preventing cancer. At the Cancer Genetics Clinic at Moncrief, UT Southwestern genetic counselors meet with patients who may have an inherited predisposition for cancer and help them understand their risk, as well as their options for more aggressive surveillance and surgery. Moncrief’s genetic risk assessment service offers the only board certified program in Tarrant County.

A grant from Susan G. Komen for the Cure has allowed the genetic counseling program to expand to the JPS Health Center for Women and provide these services to patients with a significant or family history of breast and ovarian cancer. Recently, the Texas Department of

State Health Services sought the expertise of the UT Southwestern/Moncrief Cancer Resources genetic counselors to provide content and advice about genetic counseling as the agency redesigns its Web site.

Closer to the UT Southwestern campus, Moncrief and the medical institutions it has partnered with are helping the Simmons Comprehensive Cancer Center’s Tissue Resource by providing patient specimens for a project to develop new serologic markers of colorectal cancer.

By collecting blood from patients undergoing colonoscopies in Tarrant County, researchers at UT Southwestern will be able to test for markers known to be associated with colorectal cancer. This sample bank can be made available to researchers on campus as well as at other research institutions.

ACS funds cancer disparities research

Grant Winners

TWO MEMBERS OF THE HAROLD C. SIMMONS COMPREHENSIVE CANCER CENTER recently were awarded American Cancer Society Institutional Research grants for cancer disparities research.

The awards provide newly independent scientists at UT Southwestern with one year of support for research focused on disparities in cancer control, prevention and treatment among minorities, the indigent and underserved populations.

Dr. David Gerber, assistant professor of internal medicine, and Dr. Jasmin Tiro, assistant professor of clinical sciences, received funding for their research projects.

Dr. Gerber will use his grant to study potential explanations for income and education-based differences in outcomes for patients

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— DR. DAVID GERBER

with non-small cell lung carcinoma (NSCLC).

Dr. Gerber and his team will collect and analyze the associations of patient performance status, co-morbidities, pulmonary function tests and treatment type with patient outcomes.

In an earlier study of about 500 patients being treated for NSCLC at

private and public hospitals in Dallas, Dr. Gerber found that overall survival was significantly associated with race, income, education level, stage of disease and hospital type. When controlling for stage of disease, lower income and education levels remained significantly associated with decreased overall survival, whereas hospital type and race did not.

“We hypothesize that the income and educational-based differences in NSCLC outcomes we have observed arise from differences in treatment selection. These, in turn, arise from differences in baseline patient health status,” Dr. Gerber said. “This study will lead to an improved understanding of the role of socioeconomic status in NSCLC disparities and, ultimately,

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Dr. David Gerber

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prospective efforts to resolve these disparities.”

Dr. Tiro is developing a pilot project to identify barriers to human papillomavirus (HPV) immunization in minority and underserved populations in Dallas, who suffer disproportionately from cervical cancer morbidity and mortality. HPV immunization is complex, requiring communication and coordination among adolescent patients, their parents, primary care providers and clinical settings. Thus, educational interventions targeted at underserved populations may improve the vaccine’s potential to reduce morbidity and mortality.

One of the primary goals of Dr. Tiro’s study is to assess HPV vaccine uptake and identify associated patient, provider and clinic

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— DR. JASMIN TIRO

characteristics in a sample of racially and ethnically diverse adolescent females being treated at primary care clinics in Dallas. Dr. Tiro and her research team will use a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, including medical record review, interviews and focus groups with primary care physicians and

clinic staff, to identify characteristics associated with low immunization rates as well as promising strategies for delivering evidence-based interventions in health care settings.

Recently, Dr. Tiro was awarded funding from the Commercial Real Estate Women of Dallas to conduct a complementary study to investigate the impact of media messages about HPV on adolescent patients and their family’s decision to get the vaccine.

“By understanding patient and clinic characteristics associated with vaccine use and the needs of providers, these studies have potential to create innovative patient, provider and system-directed approaches to maximize vaccine use in adolescents who need protection from HPV and cervical cancer the most,” Dr. Tiro said.



Dr. Jasmin Tiro

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