



Medicine that touches the world.



UAB Comprehensive Cancer Center Wins \$11.5 Million NCI SPORE Grant Renewal



Kirby I. Bland, MD

The National Cancer Institute recently awarded UAB's Comprehensive Cancer Center (CCC) a 5-year, \$11.5 million renewal of its Breast Cancer Specialized Program of Research Excellence (SPORE).

Principal investigator is Fay Fletcher Kerner Chair of Surgery Kirby I. Bland, MD. Coprincipal investigator is Distin-

guished Professor and Cancer Center Director Emeritus Albert F. LoBuglio, MD.

The award cements UAB's standing as one of the nation's leaders in breast cancer research. Only 10 other institutions hold a Breast Cancer SPORE. UAB also holds SPORE grants in brain and pancreatic cancer.

CCC Director Edward E. Partridge, MD, called the SPORE grant renewal "major recognition" for the center's women's cancer program.

"This means that women who come to UAB with breast cancer or with risk factors for the disease are potentially eligible for leading-edge treatments not available at any other Alabama cancer center," Dr. Partridge says. "We can now say that this is the premier cancer center in the Deep South."

Other institutions with Breast Cancer SPORE grants are the University of

California, San Francisco, Baylor University, Vanderbilt University, Duke University, University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center, Dana Farber Comprehensive Cancer Center in Boston, Mayo Clinic, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, University of Chicago, and Johns Hopkins University.



Edward E. Partridge, MD

UAB to Open New Clinic for Rare Genetic Disease

UAB (University of Alabama at Birmingham) will open the first clinic in the southeast dedicated to treating a rare genetic condition known as tuberous sclerosis (TS). The clinic will serve patients from Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Arkansas. There are an estimated 700 TS patients in Alabama alone.

Tuberous sclerosis is a genetic disorder that causes tumors to form in many different organs, primarily in the brain, eyes, heart, kidney, skin, and lungs. It is estimated that there are 50,000 individuals in the United States and more than one million worldwide with TS. It occurs in both sexes and in all races and ethnic groups.

"Because TS is a lifelong condition and can affect multiple family members and generations we have structured the clinic to provide services throughout an individual's life," said clinic director Martina Bebin, MD, associate professor of neurology at UAB. "We rely on the collaborative efforts of the UAB subspecialists who coordinate each patient's care and working with each patient's primary care physician."

The clinic, which offers a fully integrated, multi-disciplinary approach to treating TS patients for total, lifelong care, is a collaboration between UAB and Children's Hospital of Alabama. The clinic will provide patient services and genetic counseling for both children

and adults with TS. Subspecialties involved in TS care include genetics, neurology, cardiology, dermatology, ophthalmology, pulmonology, nephrology, neurosurgery, psychology, psychiatry and urology.

The disease affects some people severely, while others are so mildly affected that it can go undiagnosed. Some people with tuberous sclerosis experience developmental delay, mental retardation and autism.

The TS clinic will be held in the genetics clinic in the Hugh Kaul Genetics Building, 720 20th St. South and began meeting on a monthly basis in April 2007.

Bone Marrow Transplantation and Cell Therapy Program



William P. Vaughan, MD

Survival Rates for Matched Unrelated Donor BMT Highest in Region

UAB's 1-year survival rates for matched unrelated donor bone marrow transplants are the highest among major transplant centers in the region, outranking centers such as M.D. Anderson Cancer Center, Emory University, and Vanderbilt University.

The National Marrow Donor Program (NMDP), which locates almost all donors for matched unrelated bone marrow transplants performed in the United States, analyzes each center's case mix to produce expected 1-year survival rates and reports the actual outcomes of all transplants it facilitates. UAB's predicted 1-year survival for patients undergoing transplant during the last 5-year period analyzed

(2000-2004) was 51.8%. Actual survival was 57.8%, exceeding the rate of the center with the next highest actual survival rate by more than 5% (see box on page 2).

The success of UAB's Bone Marrow Transplantation and Cell Therapy Program (BMT&CT) is due largely to its single-staff model of care, says Director William P. Vaughan, MD, MBA, who instituted the system when he established UAB's program in 1991.

"Under the single-staff model, a patient is cared for, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, by the same team of physicians and nurses at every visit, whether inpatient or outpatient, or emergency visits," Dr. Vaughan says.

He adds, "Patients also benefit from a highly structured set of transplant procedures and a stable faculty and staff, some of whom have been with the program since its inception."

Allogeneic bone marrow transplantation has curative potential for various leukemias and lymphomas and a number of other malignant and nonmalignant disorders. However, only one in five patients will have a sibling who is a good human leukocyte antigen match.

Although the NMDP has more than 4 million registered volunteer donors, and the BMT&CT can access European registries, Dr. Vaughan says that

suitable donors, particularly those from minority populations, always are in short supply.

UAB's BMT&CT pediatric faculty and Children's Hospital recently orchestrated a successful volunteer donor drive. The drive added more than 500 new blood and marrow donors to the NMDP registry in 2 days – the largest number of new donors produced by any comparable drive in the nation, Dr. Vaughan says. He notes that the drive's donor pool included a large proportion of minority volunteers.

Matched Unrelated Donor BMT Outcomes			
<i>1-year survival by site for patients transplanted 2000-2004</i>			
Site	Actual	Predicted	Volume
UAB	57.9%	51.8%	55
Site 1	52.5%	44.4%	91
Site 2	49.7%	48.6%	391
Site 3	45.8%	43.5%	61
Site 4	45.1%	52.7%	105
Site 5	42.1%	46.0%	57
Total US	48.5%	48.5%	7,312

Sites 1-5 (listed below in alphabetical order): Emory University; H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Center and Research Institute; M.D. Anderson Cancer Center; Shands Cancer Center; and Vanderbilt University
Source: NMDP

UAB Hospital Named Alabama Quality Award Recipient

UAB Hospital will receive the Progress Toward Excellence Award from the Alabama Productivity Center Nov. 29 as part of the 2007 Alabama Quality Awards.

The award recognizes representatives throughout Alabama from small businesses, healthcare, service, manufacturing and non-profit sectors. The criteria for receiving this honor include excellence in leadership, strategic planning, attention to customers

and other stakeholders, market focus, process management and analysis of organizational performance.

The Alabama Quality Awards is the state's top honor for quality performance and excellence. The awards recognize organizations that use effective productivity and quality improvement strategies as well as techniques or practices. These then can be shared with other organizations to help contribute to the overall economic well-being in the state of Alabama.

The Alabama Quality Awards are modeled after the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award and administered on three levels of excellence by the Alabama Productivity Center, a nonprofit organization established in 1986 by the University of Alabama and Alabama Power Company. The awards were presented at the Alabama Quality Award Annual Conference and Award Ceremony.

UAB Hospital is 'Consumers Choice'

UAB Hospital again is the only hospital in the Birmingham area to earn a National Research Corporation (NRC) Consumer Choice Award. The award means UAB Hospital is among the nation's 225 top hospitals in terms of consumer perceptions of quality and image.

In what NRC calls "the nation's most comprehensive consumer assessment of the health care industry," consumers named 3200 hospitals in 190 markets throughout the contiguous United States. The annual survey represented 450,000 individuals in 200,000 households.

UAB is the only Birmingham-area

hospital to make the list of top institutions. Two other Alabama institutions were recognized: Huntsville Hospital and Providence Hospital, Mobile.

"We are extremely proud to receive this honor," says Michael R. Waldrum, MD, chief executive officer of UAB Hospital. "We strive day and night to provide the highest quality of care possible to the patients that trust us with their health. This is another important recognition for our professionals in their efforts to provide excellent care, and it is especially meaningful that it comes directly from the people utilizing our services."



Michael R. Waldrum, MD

UAB Awarded Funding to Support Rheumatology Research

Three researchers from UAB have been awarded a combined \$1.2 million to study the underlying causes of rheumatoid arthritis (RA) and to help find a cure for the disease. The grants were among 15 awarded nationwide through the American College of Rheumatology (ACR) Research and Education Foundation.

At UAB, these funds will be used to better explore the molecular development of RA to find new therapies that slow or halt the disease and identify hereditary and biological differences in patients that may improve diagnosis and treatment.

Three physicians working in the UAB Division of Clinical Immunology and Rheumatology each were awarded \$400,000. Robert H. Carter, MD, and John Mountz, MD, won grants in the innovative basic research category; S. Louis Bridges, MD, won a grant in the

translational research category.

"One of the strengths of these studies is being able to take the strides that have been made in the treatment and management of rheumatoid arthritis and build on that knowledge as we continue working toward better treatments and curative care," said Dr. Carter, division director.

Dr. Carter said UAB's research enterprise and the rheumatology and immunology laboratories' ability to accelerate new innovations into the testing and patient-care setting were instrumental in receiving this grant. The UAB awards were part of a larger grant announcement for projects totaling \$6 million.

The three projects that earned ACR funding are:

- **Autoantigen-specific B cells.** Testing will continue on this type of white blood

cell to pinpoint its autoimmune function, its contribution to the production of antibodies and other arthritis-inducing actions. Dr. Carter is the principal investigator.

- **Autoantibody production.** This project will target new drugs that alter cell pathways leading to autoantibodies, molecules that attack human tissues, especially a group of proteins called chemokines that trigger inflammation leading to arthritis. Dr. Mountz is the principal investigator.

- **Genetic profiles and C-reactive protein.** This research will explore the genetic, racial and ethnic differences among rheumatoid arthritis patients to explore hereditary or biological links to arthritis severity and the gene that encodes C-reactive protein, a common marker of inflammation. Dr. Bridges is the principal investigator.

UAB Doctors Called the 'Best'

UAB faculty-physicians comprise more than 60% (277) of all Birmingham metropolitan-area medical specialists (460) on the latest list of "Best Doctors in America."

Best Doctors is an independent, knowledge-based medical referral service located in Aiken, S.C. Its surveys ask peer physicians, "If you or a loved one needed a doctor in your specialty, to whom would you

refer them?" Only about 3% to 5% of all specialists worldwide make the list, which currently contains the names of about 50,000 physicians.

Nominations for the list are anonymous, and doctors' evaluations are confidential, according to the company. The system of review, based on methodology invented in 1992, includes a method of catching and correcting bias, for or against par-

ticular physicians or groups of physicians. Listings cannot be purchased.

More information is available at www.bestdoctors.com.





J.C. Herring, Director

Happy Holidays from the Managed Care Contracting Staff

Our Newsletter byline, "Medicine that touches the world," is used throughout UAB Health System media campaigns. I have had the opportunity to experience the reality of that byline in 2006 and 2007.

My wife was diagnosed with a serious cancer in July 2006. Obviously, I have learned more about the cancer than any of us want to know. But, I have also learned about the physicians and nurses and technicians who provide care for my wife in The Kirklin Clinic® and in UAB Hospital. One experience that touches my heart is that each time my wife goes to the IV therapy clinic, the IV technician gives her a hug when she arrives and when she leaves. Frequently, her physicians hold her hands while they talk to her in the clinic or in the hospital. Similar "touches" are made by the numerous nurses who provide care to my wife.

Cancer, or any illness, can be a lonely time. I hope and trust that if you or a member of your family or a member of your health plan has to come to UAB that you will experience the caring "touches" that have comforted and encouraged my wife.

We hope for your happiness during the holidays and your success in 2008.

Check it Out

UAB Health System
www.health.uab.edu

Cystic Fibrosis Research Gets \$6 Million Boost

UAB's Gregory Fleming James Cystic Fibrosis Research Center is one of four selected by the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK) to establish a research and translation core center to facilitate collaboration among investigators.

The center will receive nearly \$4 million during five years from NIDDK to improve understanding of the disease and apply this information to experimental therapies. "The UAB Core Center will serve as a means of rapidly testing exciting advances, particularly from the perspective of clinical translation," said Eric Sorscher, MD, who directs the UAB CF Center.

The new project will feature three cores: a cell model and assay core under the direction of Kevin Kirk, PhD, professor of physiology and biophysics; a mouse models core, led by David Bedwell, PhD, professor of microbiology; and a clinical core, directed by J.P. Clancy, MD, professor of pediatrics-pulmonary medicine.

Spain Rehabilitation Offers Private Rooms

Spain Rehabilitation Center (SRC) now provides 47 private rooms for its patients, enhancing families' ability to participate in patients' care. The private rooms also provide space for patients who require isolation, and are expected to increase patient satisfaction, says SRC Medical Director Robert C. Brunner, MD.

The private rooms are made possible by relocation of the Spinal Cord Injury Model Systems unit to the third floor of the Center for Psychiatric Medicine.

SRC features a model system of care for traumatic brain injury patients on its third floor. Stroke and general rehabilitation patients are assigned to the facility's fourth floor.

"These changes will enhance patient and staff satisfaction at Spain Rehabilitation Center, whose staff remains focused on restoring patients' function and health," Dr. Brunner says.

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