FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

USA Mitchell Cancer Institute Researcher Ajay Singh Receives $1,570,000 Award From the National Cancer Institute to Study Racial Disparities in Prostate Cancer

MOBILE, Ala.; May 14 – USA Mitchell Cancer Institute (MCI) researcher, Ajay Singh, Ph.D. was recently awarded funding of $1,570,000 over a five year period from the National Cancer Institute of the National Institutes of Health (NIH/NCI) to study the molecular causes of racial disparities in prostate cancer.

This award represents his second and the fourth NCI grant awarded to MCI researchers this year totaling over $ 3.5 million. This is a clear indication of MCI’s growing recognition in the scientific community as a leading cancer research institute. MCI’s focus on advancing cancer research that directly impacts the citizens of our community and region is evident in this grant that investigates the underlying molecular basis of racial disparity in prostate cancer. African American men are disproportionately affected with prostate cancer having nearly two-thirds higher incidence and over two-times greater mortality as compared to European American men. While socioeconomic factors might play a role, it is now being increasingly appreciated that there may be a biological basis for such pronounced racial disparities in incidence and clinical outcome. Despite this recognition, no major scientific leap has been made that could enhance our understanding of the molecular causes associated with such disparities. A team of investigators at MCI led by Dr. Ajay Singh has identified a protein (MYB) that is significantly overexpressed in prostate cancer with relatively greater expression and overall incidence in African Americans as compared to their European American counterparts. As part of this federally-funded project, they will now investigate the functional and clinical significance of MYB overexpression in prostate cancer aggressiveness and therapeutic resistance- the two major reasons for the poor clinical outcome in African American patients. The outcomes of this study will establish MYB as a marker to allow distinction between clinically indolent and aggressive prostate tumors, and pave the way for novel target-based therapies. In the long-term, the resulting information will be useful in reducing the racial disparities in clinical
outcomes of prostate cancer by establishing the clinical utility of MYB as a risk predictor and/or therapeutic target for the aggressive disease to enable its effective management. To ensure success of this ambitious project, Dr. Singh will be collaborating with Dr. Seema Singh, Ph.D. (Mitchell Cancer Institute); Dr. Elliot Carter, M.D. (Department of Pathology, University of South Alabama College of Medicine); Dr. Bin Wang, Ph.D. (Department of Mathematics and Statistics, University of South Alabama College of Arts and Sciences); Dr. William Grizzle, M.D., Ph.D. (University of Alabama at Birmingham); and Dr. Clayton Yates, Ph.D. (Tuskegee University).

Singh’s lab is focused on developing an improved understanding of the molecular mechanisms promoting tumor progression, metastasis and therapeutic resistance. “Know your enemy very well before you plan on attacking it,” states Singh. “The knowledge that we are developing today in the lab would lay the foundation for novel and effective cancer treatment and prevention strategies of the future.”

“Prostate cancer continues to be the second leading cause of cancer-related deaths for men in the United States and in Alabama,” states Dr. Singh. “An estimated 233,000 new cases of prostate cancer will be diagnosed in the US in 2014, and an estimated 29,480 men will die from this disease. This exciting research has the potential to positively impact the treatment of this deadly disease that impacts African American men at a rate double that of European Americans.”

About the University of South Alabama Mitchell Cancer Institute (USAMCI)

MCI’s vast research initiatives are a key component of our commitment to provide the most advanced and most comprehensive cancer care. These initiatives, combined with the commitment to translate these findings into enhanced diagnostic, prognostic and prevention strategies, enables MCI to battle cancer on all fronts. This formidable combination is the core of MCI’s commitment to providing the Gulf Coast region and the citizens of Alabama with not only the absolute best cancer care possible, but also new early detection tools and new cancer treatments that can ultimately save lives. More information about the USA Mitchell Cancer Institute is available at [www.USAMCI.com](http://www.USAMCI.com).