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Researchers at USA Mitchell Cancer Institute receive National Cancer Institute funding for skin cancer and colorectal cancer research

MOBILE, Ala.; May 12 – Two USA Mitchell Cancer Institute (MCI) researchers, Seema Singh, Ph.D. and Yaguang Xi, M.D., Ph.D., were recently awarded funding from the National Cancer Institute of the National Institutes of Health (NCI). The awards will provide funding for two distinct projects over a two-year period, with Dr. Singh’s research focusing on chemoprevention of skin cancer and Dr. Xi’s research focusing on prevention of tumor metastasis in colorectal cancer.

These two recent grant awards demonstrate MCI’s growing recognition as a leading cancer research institute on a national and international level. MCI’s focus on advancing cancer research that directly impacts the citizens of our community and region is evident through these grants that focus on skin cancer and colorectal cancer, two prevalent cancers in our region.

Dr. Seema Singh, Assistant Professor of Oncologic Sciences, has received $151,125 from NCI to explore the chemopreventative abilities of silver nanoparticles to protect skin from ultraviolet radiation that causes skin cancer. “We are devoted to developing safer and more effective ways to prevent and/or treat cancer,” says Dr. Singh. “The long-term goal is to impact public health and patient outcomes by enhancing disease-free survival and by improving the quality of life.”

The general public is currently using topical sunscreen formulas to protect skin from ultraviolet ray damage, however studies have shown that components of sunscreen may produce inflammatory or toxic effects to skin cells. Silver has been used for centuries to treat a variety of diseases, and has been used to heal skin wounds because of its antimicrobial and anti-inflammatory attributes. Dr. Singh and her team will also be researching economic and eco-safe methods to create synthetic silver nanoparticles that are comparable to actual silver.
Dr. Singh will serve as the principle investigator, with collaboration from the following researchers: Ajay Singh, Ph.D. (Mitchell Cancer Institute); Sumit Arora, Ph.D. (Mitchell Cancer Institute); Elliot Carter, M.D. (Department of Pathology, University of South Alabama College of Medicine); and Bin Wang, Ph.D. (Department of Mathematics and Statistics, University of South Alabama College of Arts and Sciences).

Dr. Yaguang Xi, Assistant Professor of Oncologic Sciences, has been awarded $361,000 in funding over a two-year period to research the use of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) for prevention of tumor progression and metastasis in colorectal cancer. This is Dr. Xi’s second NIH award to support his research programs; he is also an awardee of the American Cancer Society (ACS) and American Association of Cancer Research (AACR). “Colorectal cancer continues to be the second leading cause of cancer-related deaths in the United States and in Alabama,” states Dr. Xi. “There is an unmet need to discover new strategies for the prevention and treatment of this deadly disease.” Over the next two years, Dr. Xi will lead his team, consisting of a panel of experts with complementary expertise to pursue the success of this awarded project. These experts include Dr. Xin Chen (Chemist), Dr. Andrea Kahn (Pathologist), and Dr, Bin Wang (Statistician).

Recent clinical studies reported that colorectal cancer patients with metastasis showed significant benefits by taking the NSAID aspirin, with a reduced risk of death over 70 percent. Therefore, Dr. Xi and his team are engaged to unlock the secret by which NSAIDs prevent tumor spreading and discover more effective agents to treat colorectal cancer in the near future.

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.