Tulane Major Player in FDA Approval of New Drug for Advanced Prostate Cancer

Oliver Sartor, M.D., Tulane Cancer Center medical director, was North American principal investigator on the Phase III clinical trial that led to early FDA approval of radium-223 dichloride for the treatment of advanced prostate cancer patients with bone metastases. (Photo by George Long)

Patients fighting prostate cancer will have a new treatment option on the market next month thanks in part to a major clinical trial led by Tulane University cancer specialist Oliver Sartor, M.D.

The U.S. Food & Drug Administration recently approved radium-223 dichloride (Xofigo®) for the treatment of men with symptomatic, bone-metastatic, castration-resistant prostate cancer that has spread to the bones but not other organs.

Kay Yow Cancer Fund Awards $100,000 Lung Cancer Grant

The Kay Yow Cancer Fund®, in partnership with the Women’s Basketball Coaches Association (WBCA) and The V Foundation for Cancer Research, awarded a $100,000 women’s lung cancer research grant to Victoria Belancio, Ph.D., to continue research on the impact of mobile elements on genetic instability in lung cancer.

Annually, the Kay Yow Cancer Fund supports a cancer research-based grant in the host city of the NCAA Women’s Final Four. Susan Donohoe, executive director of the Kay Yow Cancer Fund, presented Dr. Belancio with a ceremonial check at a news conference promoting the 2013 NCAA Women’s Final Four.

Kay Yow Cancer Fund Awards $100,000 Lung Cancer Grant

Victoria Belancio, Ph.D., (center) and Prescott Deininger, Ph.D., (right) accept a $100,000 check from Sue Donohoe, executive director of the Kay Yow Cancer Fund, to support Dr. Belancio’s research into lung cancer genetics. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)
Tulane circadian rhythms researcher David Blask, M.D., Ph.D., and his laboratory manager Robert Dauchy are prominently featured in Lights Out, a documentary that recently premiered on the Canadian Broadcast Company’s The Nature of Things, hosted by David Suzuki.

Produced by Markham Street Films, the documentary, portions of which were shot at Tulane last year, joins four leading scientists in the lab and in the field to explore the effects of light pollution on our health, particularly with regard to cancer and depression. This is the second documentary to feature Dr. Blask and his research in the last two years.

In the film, Blask and his team investigate the reasons why there is an increased incidence of some cancers among night shift workers. They hypothesize that increased exposure to light at night and subsequent disruption of the natural circadian rhythms in these individuals could play a role, and they have developed a novel animal model through which they have tested their theories in human tumors.

In June 2012, the American Medical Association adopted recommendations based on a report co-authored by Blask and three other researchers asserting that certain types of nighttime lighting can adversely affect health and may be linked to breast cancer and other medical conditions. “This was important first because it focused worldwide attention on the potential health risks associated with exposure to light at night,” said Blask, “but also because it may help to influence federal grant money to further study these risks, and the importance of that cannot be underestimated.” In 2007, the cancer research arm of the World Health Organization declared night shift work as a probable carcinogen.

Tulane Cancer Center will host a screening of Lights Out on August 22 as part of our Invited Speaker Series. For more information, please contact Melanie Cross at 504-988-6592.

A third documentary featuring Dr. Blask and his team—shot by a Japanese film crew—also aired a couple of weeks ago as part of a Japanese TV documentary series on The Origins of Disease—Cancer.

Two Tulane Researchers Receive Ladies Leukemia League Grants

Hua Lu, M.B., Ph.D., chair of biochemistry, and Joseph Lasky, M.D., chief of the Section of Pulmonary Diseases, are recipients of 2013 Ladies Leukemia League grants and were honored, along with two other researchers, at the organization’s recent Spring Fling luncheon.

“We had a total of 18 grant applicants this year,” said Meb Cefalu, chairman of the grant selection committee that awards funds to outstanding scientists in the Gulf South area who are working on lymphoma/leukemia research. The organization utilizes a panel of physicians to review and score the applications each year in an effort to fund those most worthy of grant support.

Dr. Lu’s $35,000 grant will help to fund his investigation into the novel small molecule Inauhin-37 and its potential as a therapeutic target for leukemia and lymphoma. Dr. Lasky’s $25,000 award will support his research into the use of arsenic trioxide and ganciclovir in the induction of cell death in Epstein-Barr virus-driven primary lymphoma cell lines and in an in vivo model of post-transplant lymphoproliferative disease.

The Ladies Leukemia League is an organization of 225 women who have, over the past 44 years, granted approximately $3.1 million in research funds to outstanding leukemia/lymphoma scientists. Their primary fundraiser is the annual Fete de Noel, which will take place on December 10 this year. This holiday-themed extravaganza attracts approximately 1,200—1,500 attendees annually. For more information on this year’s Fete, please contact Meb Cefalu at meb418@aol.com.

Participating in the 2013 LLL grant presentations were (from left) Rosalie Edwards, LLL grant administrator; Dr. Hua Lu; Dr. Joseph Lasky; Li Li, M.D., Ph.D., Ochsner Clinic Foundation; Zhibong Zeng, M.D., of M.D. Anderson Cancer Center; and Meb Cefalu, chairman of the LLL grant selection committee. (Photo provided by LLL)
Perez Family Honors Father by Raising $104,000 for Prostate Cancer Research

Picturesque Stella Plantation in Braithwaite, Louisiana, was the site of Gunning for a Cure, a sporting clays fundraiser held on a beautiful sunny Saturday in March that raised over $104,000 for Dr. Oliver Sartor’s Prostate Cancer Research Fund at Tulane Cancer Center.

The event was planned and hosted by the family and associates of Dr. Sartor’s dear friend and former patient Chalyn Perez. “Following Dad’s prostate cancer diagnosis, Dr. Sartor spent countless hours with our family, answering questions, quelling fears, treating dad, and even attending a hunting trip or two,” said Chalyn Perez, the oldest of the four Perez children. “All of his efforts made us believe that there was a way to live with this disease without sacrificing all that you enjoy about life.” Through this fundraiser, Chalyn and his siblings—Kathlyn, Cherielyn and Carlyn—said they hope to give Dr. Sartor the financial support he needs to continue his research and assist him in his efforts to help other patients and families.

Twenty-five four-person teams, including two women, competed in the event, which featured a professional sporting clays course. As teams completed the course, they enjoyed a buffet-style lunch, music by the Jimmy Maxwell Orchestra, and live and silent auctions, all geared toward raising funds for prostate cancer research.

“The Perez family, like many others in Louisiana, has been deeply impacted by prostate cancer,” said Dr. Sartor. “Their loving father and my dear friend fought hard against this disease. Their experience has motivated them to continue his fight by raising funds to help find new treatment options and hopefully, one day, a cure. I am humbled by their faith and their passion to make a difference, and I will invest their hard-earned funds in research that will hopefully help us to find answers.”

Dr. Sartor’s research is supported by additional sporting clays fundraisers—called the One Man Shoot—in Baton Rouge and Shreveport/Bossier City. The Shreveport/Bossier City event is scheduled to take place on August 3, 2013, and this year’s Baton Rouge One Man Shoot will take place over two days—Friday, October 4 – Saturday, October 5, 2013—in Denham Springs, LA. For more information on the Shreveport/Bossier City and Baton Rouge events, please visit www.onemanshoot.com. For more information on the Plaquemines Parish event, please visit www.gunningforacure.org.

“In the years since Dad’s death, Dr. Sartor has continued his fight against prostate cancer. He has assisted in the development of new treatments which extend patients’ lives years beyond the treatments which were available to my father. It is my hope that through this fundraiser we can give Dr. Sartor the financial support he needs to continue his research and assist him in his efforts to help other patients and families who find themselves faced with fighting this disease.”

- Chalyn Perez
Cancer Crusaders Share Favorite Recipes To Raise Research $$$

Members of Cancer Crusaders, an all-volunteer nonprofit organization that has raised over $3 million for cancer research at Tulane Cancer Center and LSU’s Stanley S. Scott Cancer Center since the mid-1970s, have compiled their tastiest tried-and-true recipes into a cookbook!

“These books not only make ideal gifts or keepsakes, but they also help to raise important funds for cancer research,” said Konni Albert, cookbook chairperson. “We sincerely hope our supporters who purchase them enjoy a lifetime of delicious meals while knowing they are helping to find a cure for cancer.”

The books are spiral bound with hard covers and feature a myriad of favorite recipes, from dips to soups and salads to breads and entrees to cookies and desserts.

Cancer Crusaders Cookbooks are $15 each and can be purchased (via cash, check or credit card) at any Cancer Crusaders event or by contacting Konni at mskonni@aol.com or 504-487-3313.

“We also offer gift certificates, including a special holiday gift certificate, for those who want to purchase the books as gifts for family members or friends,” said Albert.

Honor Dad With Reminders to Take Care of Himself this Father’s Day

Why not honor dad with a gift that gives back this Father’s Day? “This handsome necktie was created to help raise as much awareness among men about prostate cancer as the pink ribbon did among women for breast cancer,” said Prescott Deininger, Ph.D., director of the Tulane Cancer Center. “With Father’s Day approaching, we want to remind men to be proactive in taking care of themselves and challenge them to associate the ritual of tying their neckties with prostate cancer awareness and the importance of early detection.”

The American Cancer Society estimates that 238,590 men in the U.S. will learn they have prostate cancer this year, and approximately 29,720 will die from the disease. Research into new methods of treatment and diagnosis can make a difference, and so can you. This 100% silk tie is given as a thank-you to anyone wishing to support the Tulane Cancer Center Prostate Cancer Research Fund at the $50 level. All contributions are tax-deductible.

“These ties are a great opportunity to recognize Dad while contributing to prostate cancer research as well,” said Deininger. “And don’t forget to remind Dad to schedule an appointment at one of our free monthly prostate cancer screenings.”

Screening participants will be asked to complete a short questionnaire regarding family history and to provide a small blood sample. All participants will be notified of their PSA (prostate specific antigen) test results via telephone and registered letter, and those requiring follow-up will be directed to see their physicians. (Photo by Jerry Ward)

REMINDER...

The Tulane Cancer Center
Comprehensive Clinic offers complimentary Prostate Cancer Screenings on the second Tuesday of each month.

The screenings involve a simple PSA (prostate specific antigen) blood test. Participants are notified of their results by telephone and certified mail.

Appointments are required. Make yours today by calling the Tulane Call Center at 504-988-5800 or 1-800-588-5800.

To honor your dad with a donation to Tulane Cancer Center’s Prostate Cancer Research Fund, contact

Melanie Cross
504-988-6592
mcross@tulane.edu

or send a check (made payable to the Tulane Cancer Center) to

1430 Tulane Ave., SL-68
New Orleans, Louisiana 70112
ATTN: K. Green

Don’t forget to provide a mailing address if you wish for the tie to be mailed.
Four, which was held in New Orleans this past April.

“Lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer deaths in women, and we are pleased to support Dr. Belancio and her research team’s efforts,” Donohoe said, “We are also proud to continue to uphold Kay’s wishes of making an impact at the site of the NCAA Women’s Final Four each year. Research programs such as this one are critical in order to find a cure.”

Dr. Belancio is investigating genetic instability in lung cancer via the mobile element LINE1 (L1). Mobile elements are segments of DNA that can jump within a cell’s genome, reshuffling genetic material as it copies and reinserts itself. The process can cause mutations in DNA that spur tumor development. Lung cancer is particularly prone to this form of genetic instability.

Dr. Belancio’s research aims to establish a direct link between L1 activity and lung cancer development. This could help doctors better predict which tumors are most prone to genetic instability, improving projections for patients’ survival and response to therapy.

“This is a truly groundbreaking new project that has tremendous potential to open major new research avenues for Dr. Belancio and other teams at Tulane with whom she collaborates,” said Prescott Deininger, Ph.D., director of the Tulane Cancer Center. “Tulane has always had a strong team studying lung biology, but this award and Dr. Belancio’s research will help to strengthen our focus on lung cancer as well.”

The late Kay Yow, former NC State University head women’s basketball coach, was first diagnosed with breast cancer in 1987, and battled the disease until her passing in 2009. In her 36 years as a head coach at the college level, Yow was one of only six Division I head women’s basketball mentors to achieve 700 career victories. She was an Olympic Gold Medal Coach in 1988.

“Tulane Major Player in FDA Approval of New Prostate Cancer Drug
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“This is an important addition to the treatment of advanced prostate cancer,” said Sartor, Tulane Cancer Center medical director and North American principal investigator for the pivotal phase III clinical trial of the drug. “It is immensely satisfying to be part of something that helps move medicine forward and provides new treatments to those who need it most.”

Patients from Seattle to Florida were treated at Tulane, which was the leading trial site in North America. The trial involved a total 921 patients in more than 100 centers in 19 countries who were randomly assigned to radium-223 or a placebo plus best standard of care.

“Most men with castration-resistant prostate cancer develop bone metastases, which can decrease overall survival,” Sartor said.

Radium-223 is an alpha particle-emitting radioactive therapeutic agent that seeks out regions of the bone affected by metastatic tumors. This allows delivery of radiation directly to tumors and limits damage to the surrounding normal tissues. It is administered via injection. Trial results showed that men receiving radium-223 lived a median of 14.9 months compared to a median of 11.3 months for those receiving a placebo.

Radium-223 was approved more than three months ahead of schedule under the FDA’s priority review program, which expedites the review of drugs that appear to provide safe and effective therapy when no satisfactory alternative exists, or offer significant improvement compared to existing treatments.

The commercial production of radium-223, which is being co-marketed by Bayer and Algeta, is underway with market availability expected within weeks.
Real Estate Professionals Plan Cochon de Lait to Benefit Patient Relief Fund

REPAC. He decided to reach out to his colleagues in real estate to begin a non-profit organization to raise funds for cancer research and to provide much-needed aid to those affected by cancer and its residual financial responsibilities. The organization donated $2,073 to Tulane Cancer Center’s Patient Relief Fund following their inaugural fundraiser in 2012.

The Patient Relief Fund assists Tulane’s cancer patients with special needs to meet unexpected expenses associated with their care so that they can concentrate on getting well. It’s often the only source available to our social worker to solve an urgent financial problem for patients. Over the years, it has provided help with everything from transportation, meals and short-term housing to rental assistance for patients facing eviction. Through the Patient Relief Fund, proceeds from this REPAC event will have an immediate positive impact on the lives of cancer patients at Tulane.

In addition to cochon de lait, jambalaya, gumbo, and beverages, the event will feature music by Ivy, a parade of prizes and much more. Casual dress is recommended. Tickets cost $30 each in advance and $35 each at the door. For more information on purchasing tickets, please visit www.repac1.com or contact Mike Boyer at 504-258-4612 or m.boyer@cox.net.

TULANE CANCER CENTER

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Calendar of Events

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<td>Father’s Day</td>
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<td>One Man Shoot—Shreveport/Bossier City</td>
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<td>Lights Out Documentary Viewing</td>
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Accolades

- Hana Safah, M.D., director of Tulane Cancer Center’s Stem Cell Transplant Program, will co-host the BMT Winter Workshop here in New Orleans on December 6 in association with the 55th Annual Meeting of the American Society of Hematology. The workshop is an opportunity for ASH participants in the area of bone marrow transplantation to have a separate more focused “retreat” experience through which they can learn more about late-breaking research specifically in the area of BMT.

- Tulane’s Department of Urology will welcome the 31st World Congress of Endourology to New Orleans October 22-26, 2013. Benjamin Lee, M.D., is organizing secretary and Raju Thomas, M.D., president of the organization whose meeting is the largest dedicated to minimally invasive urological techniques in the world.

- Courtney Parke, Ph.D., a postdoctoral fellow in the laboratory of Arthur Lustig, Ph.D., recently received an F32 award from the NIH. The award will support her work on the characterization of mutants induced for hyper-recombination between telomeres.

- Jeffrey Wickliffe, Ph.D., was accepted recently for participation in the Early Career Reviewer (ECR) Program at the Center for Scientific Review (CSR), National Institutes of Health.

Patient Appointments

To make an appointment to see a Tulane Cancer Center physician, please call the Tulane Cancer Center Comprehensive Clinic at 504-988-6300

How to Help

To learn more about how to make a donation to the Tulane Cancer Center please visit www.canceriscurable.com and click on “Giving.”