

Community for a Cure

Monthly Newsletter from the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center

From the Director:



At USC Norris, we are transformative in every sense of the word. To share the transformative discoveries of our investigators and disseminate important cancer information globally, we have launched our redesigned USC Norris website. The new website highlights the exceptional research, educational and community initiatives, clinical trials, and resources available at USC Norris and offers a streamlined, modern design, improved functionality, and easy access to essential information. Find out what's new at <https://uscnorriscancer.usc.edu>.

I would like to sincerely thank everyone who has worked diligently over the last few months to bring this to fruition, particularly Hinde Kast, MA, our USC Norris communications coordinator. We also hope you enjoy this November Newsletter which discusses The Bench with Bedside Initiative™ as well as exciting new faculty and honors received by the USC Norris team.

Please also follow and “like” us on [Facebook](#) and our newly launched [Instagram](#) page where we present highlights from members’ research as well as other important news at the Cancer Center. To follow and “like” us on Facebook, click the link below that will lead you directly to our page. Once on this page, click the “**Follow**” and “**Like**” buttons located at the top of the page. Similarly, to follow us on Instagram, click the link below and click “**Follow**.”
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/uscnorriscancercenter>
Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/uscnorriscancercenter/>

I hope you and all of your loved ones had a happy and healthy Thanksgiving. I am thankful for so many things, including the honor of leading one of the very best Cancer Centers in the nation. I am especially grateful for our incredible team of faculty and staff, and our philanthropic friends who make a difference in the lives of our patients by making our research possible.

Caryn Lerman, PhD
Director, USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center
Associate Dean for Cancer Programs
H. Leslie and Elaine S. Hoffman Cancer Research Chair



Predicting Breast Cancer Recurrence: The Bench with Bedside Initiative™

There is an opportunity for cancer researchers to increase their interactions with the patients and the public they serve, thereby putting a human face to cancer research. The Bench with Bedside Initiative™ was created by USC Norris researcher, Dr. Bodour Salhia, associate professor of Translational Genomics at the Keck School of Medicine. This innovative program offers a trans-relational approach to conducting cancer research, where scientists at the bench collaborate and engage with study participants at the bedside.

This initiative is being leveraged for an important new project to predict breast cancer recurrence, funded by the National Cancer Institute. Approximately 90% of breast cancer deaths result from metastatic disease. However, there is a crucial clinical dilemma: breast cancers may not respond fully to chemotherapy and radiation, resulting in micrometastatic residual disease. Because micro-metastatic is very small, it is undetected by ultrasounds and mammograms, yet it poses significant risk of recurrence to other organs. Dr. Salhia will validate a new blood-based liquid biopsy test to detect micro-metastatic by examining genomic alterations in circulating tumor DNA (shed from residual cancer cells).

“The Bench with Bedside Initiative™ is all about patients and scientists working together,” says Dr. Salhia. “I truly believe that patients who so graciously are willing to give a blood sample, tissue sample, a urine sample, or whatever sample they choose to give, have the right to know what happened to that sample. This is what The Bench with Bedside Initiative™ will allow.”

To learn more about Dr. Salhia’s Bench with Bedside™ Initiative, please click below. If you are interested in participating in this initiative, please contact Dr. Salhia at salhia@usc.edu.

[LEARN MORE >>](#)



Swing Against Cancer with Bill Poland

“When it comes to your care, who do you place your trust in?”

That was the critical question Bill Poland asked himself when he was diagnosed with prostate cancer in 2013. He completed extensive research and visited several clinics along the Pacific Coast, but it wasn’t until his visit to USC Norris at Keck Medicine that he knew he found the

right team.

STORY CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE...

“Within fifteen minutes, I knew I was in good hands,” said Bill. “Drs. Agus and Gill are true experts in their field, and their dedication to finding the best possible outcome was why I ultimately chose USC Norris for my care. I felt that same dedication from my entire care team. They truly understand the patient perspective, and that helped ease my worries.”

After a successful prostatectomy, Bill is living today cancer-free. He now returns to see his cancer care team every six months for a follow-up.

Bill was so grateful for his care that he wanted to find a way to support the critical work of USC Norris. An avid golfer since the age of 11, Bill decided to give back by hosting an annual golf tournament fundraiser in his hometown of La Quinta, CA. Now in its sixth year, Bill chairs the Swing Against Cancer Golf Tournament, where participants enjoy an afternoon of golfing, dining, and entertainment. This year, Bill took the event virtual and raised over \$125,000 bringing their total raised to date to more than \$750,000, with all proceeds benefiting cancer research and the development of new cancer therapies at USC Norris. The most recent event on November 13, 2020, featured distinguished speakers, including Dr. Caryn Lerman, director of USC Norris; Dr. Steven Grossman, the new cancer physician in chief for USC Norris; Dr. John Carpten, co-leader of the USC Norris Translational and Clinical Sciences Program and chair of the Department of Translational Genomics at the Keck School of Medicine; Dr. Heinz-Joseph Lenz, USC Norris associate director for clinical research; Dr. Bodour Salhia, USC Norris researcher and associate professor of Translational Genomics at the Keck School of Medicine; and many more. To see the full video of the live stream of the event, click below.



Bill understands that it will take tremendous resources to eradicate cancer, and he hopes that this golf tournament brings USC Norris one-step closer to their goal to make cancer a disease of the past.

[VIEW FULL LIVE STREAM >>](#)



Lourdes Baezconde-Garbanati earns AACR Distinguished Lectureship

Lourdes Baezconde-Garbanati, MPH, PhD, USC Norris associate director for Community Outreach and Engagement, was the recipient of the 2020 American Association for Cancer Research (AACR) Distinguished Lectureship on the Science of Cancer Health Disparities.

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Baezconde-Garbanati presented her award lecture during the opening session of the virtual AACR Conference on the science of cancer health disparities in racial/ethnic minorities and the medically underserved on October 2, 2020. Her lecture was titled "Optimizing Engagement to Reduce Disparities Among Hispanic/Latinos/Latinx and Other Underserved Communities."

"It was so exciting and very humbling as well to earn this distinguished lectureship. Being recognized by my peers for the impact my research has had in reducing cancer disparities was very uplifting and rewarding. To see my name among those who have received this recognition in the past, individuals I consider my sheroes and heroes, was very overwhelming! When I think of the difference we are making, even in the middle of a pandemic, it makes all of our hard work and dedication worth it. I couldn't do this without our team. They are creative, devoted, passionate, always striving for excellence, and creating culturally unique ways to make our work impactful in the community. I feel privileged to be part of the USC Norris team."

This AACR lectureship recognizes an investigator whose novel and significant work has had or may have a far-reaching impact on the etiology, detection, diagnosis, treatment, or prevention of cancer health disparities.

Congratulations Dr. Baezconde-Garbanati!

[**READ AACR RELEASE >>**](#)

New Faculty Spotlight

Jennifer Tsui, PhD



Jennifer Tsui, PhD, joined USC Norris and the Keck School of Medicine on June 30, 2020, as a new faculty member in the Department of Preventive Medicine. Prior to joining USC Norris, Dr. Tsui served on the faculty at Rutgers University. Her research focuses on disparities in cancer care delivery and cancer outcomes, specifically among racial/ethnic minority and low-income populations. Her recent work utilizes cancer registry information, population-based surveys, geographic/spatial data, and Medicaid claims to understand multilevel influences on patterns of care and care quality for cancer patients. Dr. Tsui has worked in cancer prevention and control at the local, national, and international levels, including at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the World Health Organization. She leads two major cancer disparities grants from the National Cancer Institute and the American Cancer Society.

Upcoming Events

Grand Rounds: Defining the Actionable Genome

December 1, 12-1pm

Speaker: David Solit, MD

Zoom link: <https://usc.zoom.us/j/98769573199>

For more information, click [HERE](#).

Grand Rounds: A Moving Target: Tracking Cancer Plasticity in Cells and in Patients

December 15, 12-1pm

Speaker: Amir Goldkorn, MD

Zoom Link: <https://usc.zoom.us/j/92567343976>

For more information, click [HERE](#).

Have something to contribute to Community for a Cure? Send it to Hinde.Kast@med.usc.edu

Please contact Robert Weiner, Assistant Vice President of Development, at Robert.Weiner@med.usc.edu to learn more about giving to USC Norris.

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