From the Director:

I'm delighted to share with you the inaugural USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center Community for a Cure Newsletter. Our first issue focuses on cancer health disparities and how USC Norris is working to address these. At USC Norris, we serve a unique population that is diverse in terms of race and ethnicity, as well as culture, language, socioeconomic status, and access to health services. Our geographic location in the fourth most diverse city in the nation and the robust USC environment create both an opportunity and a mandate for USC Norris to lead in research that addresses the cancer-related needs and cancer disparities in all communities.

Like COVID-19, cancer disproportionately impacts certain communities with higher death rates in certain racial and ethnic groups. This may be due to differences in genetics, environmental exposures, and access to care. Engaging these populations is vital to ensure representation of diverse populations in cancer research – not doing so disadvantages underrepresented ethnic and minority groups by limiting data to learn about the benefits and risks of new approaches to cancer prevention and treatment. Using a community-centered engagement approach, we leverage the exceptional USC Norris Office of Community Outreach and Engagement, led by Dr. Lourdes Baezconde-Garbanati. At the national level, USC Norris faculty are also leading the way. As one example, Drs. John Carpten and Mariana Stern played a leadership role in the historic release of the inaugural American Association for Cancer Research (AACR) Cancer Disparities Progress Report on September 16, 2020. This new initiative is designed to increase public understanding of cancer health disparities and the importance of cancer health disparities research. You can read more about this work and other exciting updates in this issue of Community for a Cure.

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

**USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center receives $5 million for cancer drug discoveries**

USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center recently announced a $5 million gift from the Rosalie and Harold Rae Brown Charitable Foundation. The gift was received from Harold R. Brown, trustee of the foundation, to create and support the Rosalie and Harold Rae Brown Center for Cancer Drug Discovery within the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center.

"The importance of developing more effective and less toxic cancer therapies cannot be overestimated," said Dr. Caryn Lerman, director of USC Norris. "This gift will enable us to leverage the talent of USC Norris scientists and dedicated clinicians to ensure that our groundbreaking discoveries move not from bench to bookshelf, but from bench to bedside, transforming cancer care and survivorship for all people."

This gift will have an immediate impact by supporting the development of new clinical trials that build on USC Norris discoveries of the underlying causes of cancer and disease progression. Initial projects will be sharply focused on cancers that disproportionately affect members of the community for whom there are dramatic ethnic and racial disparities, such as breast cancer, prostate cancer and colorectal cancer, and blood cancers.

**NCI U54 CaRE2 Center for Health Equity**

Dr. John Carpten, Chair of the Department of Translational Genomics at the Keck School of Medicine and Co-leader of the USC Norris Translational and Clinical Sciences Program, and Dr. Mariana Stern, USC Norris Associate Director for Population Sciences, have teamed up with the University of Florida and Florida A&M University, a historically Black college, via the Florida-California Cancer Research, Education and Engagement Health Equity Center (CaRE2). Funded by the National Cancer Institute, this center addresses cancer disparities with a focus on prostate and pancreatic cancer among African Americans and Latinos, though not limited to those cancers. The program trains underrepresented minority faculty (and graduate and post-doctoral trainees) to conduct research on cancer health disparities and community outreach and engagement.

LEARN MORE >>
AACR Report on Cancer Disparities

This landmark AACR Report on cancer disparities was released on September 16 during a congressional briefing where Dr. John Carpten delivered the keynote address. Four members of congress delivered remarks, and our USC Norris patient navigator Dr. Ghecemy Lopez shared her personal survivorship story. To read the full report, click below.

READ FULL REPORT >>

New Faculty Spotlight

Steven Grossman, MD, PhD

Steven Grossman, MD, PhD, an internationally recognized clinician and scientist in gastrointestinal cancers, joined USC Norris and Keck School of Medicine (KSOM)/Keck Medicine on September 15, 2020 as the inaugural Cancer Physician in Chief. Prior to joining USC Norris, he served as the Deputy Director of the Massey Cancer Center and Chief of Medical Oncology, Hematology, and Palliative Care at the Virginia Commonwealth University. In this critical role, he will provide oversight for the USC Norris/Keck Medicine Cancer Service Line and will expand our Multidisciplinary Cancer Clinics to provide seamless patient-centered cancer care experiences.

Yali Dou, PhD

Yali Dou, PhD, joined USC Norris and KSOM on June 1, 2020 as Co-leader of the USC Norris Genomic and Epigenomic Regulation Research Program. Prior to joining USC Norris, Dr. Dou served on the faculty at the University of Michigan. She studies the processes by which normal cells become cancer cells in order to develop new treatments that disrupt the initiation and progression of cancer. A national scientific leader, Dr. Dou currently holds four research grants from the National Institutes of Health.
Upcoming Events

Swing Against Cancer | Friday, November 13, 2020 starting at 6:15 PST

Swing Against Cancer is a live virtual event that gives you the opportunity to support USC Norris by purchasing outstanding silent auction items, funding a USC Norris need, or raising your auction paddle to make a donation. To learn more about this event, visit http://bidpal.net/swingagainstcancer now and click “Sign In” at the top right of the screen to get registered! Help us towards our mission to make cancer a disease of the past.

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.

USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center | http://uscnorriscancer.usc.edu | Follow Us on Facebook

###

END OF NEWSLETTER