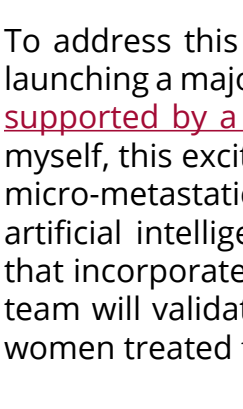


Community for a Cure

Newsletter from the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center

From the Director:



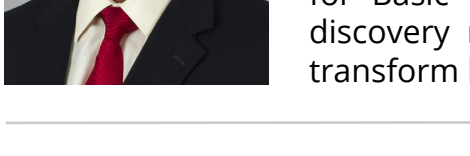
October is breast cancer awareness month and we honor all breast cancer survivors. There are currently more than 3.8 million breast cancer survivors living in the U.S., yet three out of 10 women with invasive breast cancer will develop metastasis in their lifetime, meaning cancer that has spread to other organs. Breast cancers that are not fully eradicated after treatment may be too small to be detected by mammograms or ultrasounds but pose a significant risk of recurrence. This is a source of worry for both patients and families.

To address this challenge, the [USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center \(USC Norris\)](#) is launching a major new initiative - [The Eileen McGeevrey Breast Cancer Survivorship Program, supported by a new 7 million dollar gift](#). Co-led by Drs. Bodour Salhia, Irene Kang, and myself, this exciting new program is validating a novel blood test to detect the presence of micro-metastatic residual breast cancer at the end of therapy. The team will also leverage artificial intelligence/machine learning algorithms to develop a recurrence risk classifier that incorporates additional clinical, environmental, and lifestyle risk factors. The research team will validate this novel blood test and recurrence risk classifier in a cohort of 1,000 women treated for breast cancer.

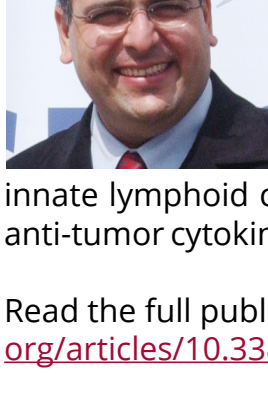
Women who participate in this program will also receive educational resources, supportive care, and surveillance to detect the possible return of cancer earlier, when it may be more treatable.

For more information about this exciting program, please join us for the virtual launch on November 9th at 6 PM PST. To register for the event, please go to <https://bit.ly/2YQPNbo>.

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

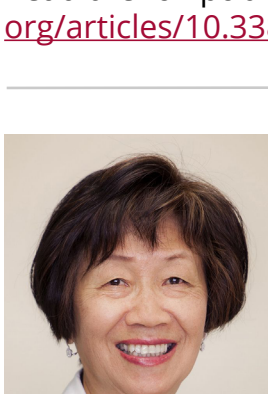


News



Dr. John Carpten appointed by President Biden to chair the National Cancer Advisory Board

Congratulations to Dr. John Carpten who has been appointed as Chair of the National Cancer Advisory Board. In his role as Associate Director for Basic Research at USC Norris, he fosters high-impact cancer discovery research and facilitates interdisciplinary collaboration to transform laboratory discoveries into new cures.



Dr. Omid Akbari, member of the Tumor Microenvironment Program, and his colleagues identified a novel way to delay the progression of metastatic melanoma

Published in *Frontiers in Immunology*, Dr. Omid Akbari and his colleagues demonstrated that blocking checkpoint inhibitor PD-1 on innate lymphoid cells enhances their production of tumor necrosis factor-alpha, a potent anti-tumor cytokine, thereby significantly delaying the progression of metastatic melanoma.

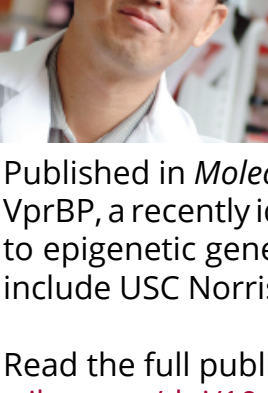
Read the full publication here: <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fimmu.2021.733136/full>



Dr. Amy Lee, associate director for Shared Resources, and her colleagues revealed a new mechanism important in the development and progression of colon and lung cancers

Published in *Cellular and Molecular Life Sciences*, Dr. Amy Lee and her colleagues revealed how colon and lung cancer utilize an unconventional pathway to move GRP78, a glucose-regulated protein that is important for oncogenic signaling, from the endoplasmic reticulum to the cell surface, thereby identifying new approaches to curb these cancers.

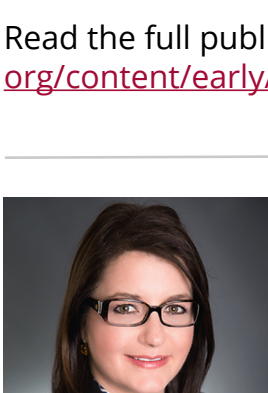
Read the full publication here: <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s00018-021-03849-z>.



Dr. Adam de Smith, member of the USC Norris Cancer Epidemiology Program, and his colleagues identified a genetic risk factor for children with acute lymphoblastic leukemia

Published in the *American Journal of Human Genetics*, Dr. Adam de Smith and his colleagues revealed that children born with a genetic predisposition to produce more lymphocytes, particularly in relation to other types of white blood cells, are at a higher risk of developing acute lymphoblastic leukemia. This finding could help in the development of risk models for newborns that could lead to early intervention strategies.

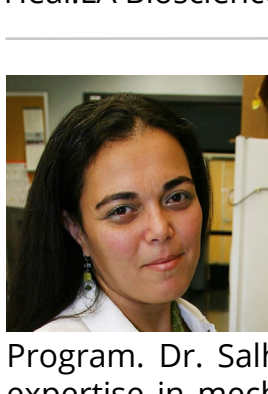
Read the full publication here: [https://www.cell.com/ajhg/fulltext/S0002-9297\(21\)00303-7](https://www.cell.com/ajhg/fulltext/S0002-9297(21)00303-7).



Dr. Woojin An, member of the USC Norris Genomic and Epigenomic Regulation Program, and his USC Norris colleagues revealed that a specific protein is overexpressed in colon cancer and directly contributes to epigenetic gene silencing and the development of colon cancer

Published in *Molecular Oncology*, Dr. Woojin An and his USC Norris colleagues revealed that VprBP, a recently identified protein, is overexpressed in colon cancer and directly contributes to epigenetic gene silencing and the development of colon cancer. Additional contributors include USC Norris members Drs. Heinz-Josef Lenz, Shannon Mumenthaler, and Suhan Rhie.

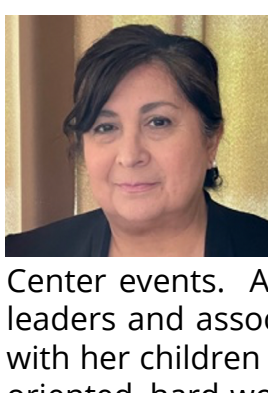
Read the full publication here: <https://febs.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/1878-0261.13068>.



Dr. Evanthis Roussos Torres, member of the Tumor Microenvironment Program, and her colleagues discovered a novel immunotherapy approach to improve clinical outcomes in patients with advanced cancers

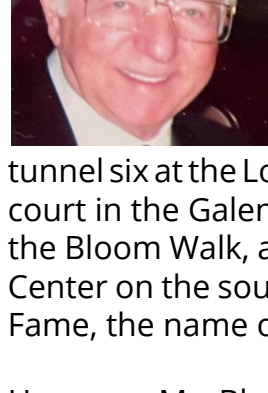
Published in *Clinical Cancer Research*, USC Norris member Dr. Evanthis Roussos Torres and her colleagues discovered that entinostat, an inhibitor affecting gene expression, combined with immunotherapy improves response in patients with advanced cancers.

Read the full publication here: <https://clincancerres.aacrjournals.org/content/early/2021/06/15/1078-0432.CCR-20-5017>.



Dr. Vasiliki Anest has been appointed Chief Innovation Officer for USC Norris

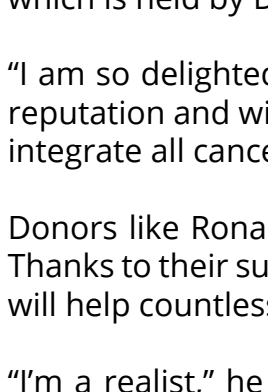
Congratulations to Dr. Vasiliki Anest who has been appointed Chief Innovation Officer for USC Norris. Dr. Anest will work with USC Norris members and leaders to foster innovation across disciplines and build strategic public-private partnerships to advance our mission. Dr. Anest joined USC in 2012 from Life Technologies Corporation, where she held positions of growing responsibilities in R&D (genomics/epigenomics), global market development (oncology), and global external R&D (collaborations and strategic alliances). Her collective experience spans functional and divisional boundaries to formulate unique partnering strategies with universities, government, and the private sector. Dr. Anest is a Board member for the Los Angeles Venture Association (LAVA) and a Strategic Steering Committee member for the Heal.LA Bioscience Accelerator.



Dr. Bodour Salhia has been appointed as the new co-leader for the USC Norris Genomic and Epigenomic Regulation Program

Congratulations to Dr. Bodour Salhia who has been appointed as the new co-leader of the USC Norris Genomic and Epigenomic Regulation Program. Dr. Salhia is a translational genomics scientist with extensive knowledge and expertise in mechanisms that underlie tumorigenesis and tumor biology. Moreover, Dr. Salhia is the creator of the Bench with Bedside Initiative, an innovative program that offers a trans-relational approach to conducting cancer research, where scientists at the bench collaborate and engage with study participants at the bedside.

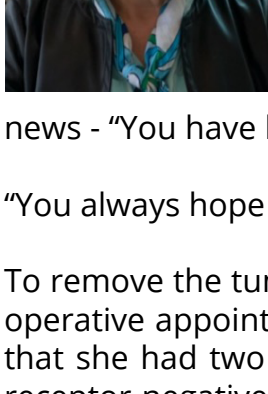
Staff Member of the Month



Isabel Lora, Administrative Assistant, Director's Office

Mrs. Lora has worked at the Cancer Center since January 2005 and for USC since 1986. As an administrative assistant, she organizes USC Norris program retreats, meetings, symposiums, and other Cancer Center events. Additionally, she provides administrative assistance for various program leaders and associate directors. When Mrs. Lora is not at work, she loves spending time with her children and grandchildren. Three words that best describe Mrs. Lora are detail-oriented, hard-working, and team player.

Why Your Gifts Matter:



Ronald Bloom has a long legacy with the University of Southern California (USC), a lifelong relationship that all started when he went to USC as an undergraduate. The Bloom name is a familiar one around the halls, walkways, courts, and particularly football fields of USC, a passion Mr. Bloom has had since he was a student. Fight On!

A few of the places throughout campus where the Bloom Family's generosity is honored include: the Bloom Family Tunnel, which is tunnel six at the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum; the Bloom seating section located at center court in the Galen Center; the Bloom Family Study Room in the basement of Heritage Hall; the Bloom Walk, an important walkway that runs from the Ethel Percy Andrus Gerontology Center on the southwest of campus to the Mudd Hall of Philosophy; and the Bloom Walk of Fame, the name of the street adjoining the John McKay Center.

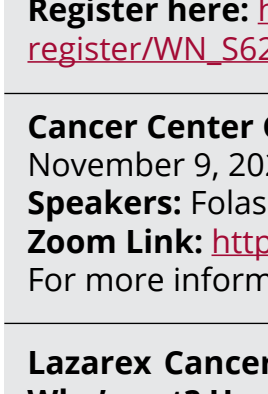
However, Mr. Bloom's philanthropic interests extend beyond the University Park Campus to the Health Sciences Campus and the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center (USC Norris), which Mr. Bloom actively supports. He began contributing to the Cancer Center in 1996 and has endowed multiple chairs at USC Norris. In 2001, with his generosity, we established the Ronald H. Bloom Family Chair in Lymphoma. The chair was dedicated to Sandra D. Bloom, who died of lymphoma in 1998. More recently, with an additional major gift to USC Norris, we established the Ronald H. Bloom Family Chair in Cancer Research which is held by Dr. Steven Grossman, Deputy Director for Cancer Services at USC Norris.

"I am so delighted and proud to be involved with Dr. Grossman who has such a fantastic reputation and will work with Dr. Lerman and health system leaders to further elevate and integrate all cancer services at USC Norris," says Mr. Bloom.

Donors like Ronald Bloom and his family are vital in advancing cancer research forward. Thanks to their support, USC Norris will continue to generate groundbreaking research that will help countless patients and their families for years to come.

"I'm a realist," he says. "I'm doing something that will help, but I don't expect immediate results. But I know that the exceptional scientists at USC Norris will find new cures and better ways to deliver treatment to people with cancer."

The Patient Perspective



Sylvia Kast is many things, a mother of three, a grandmother, a beloved wife, a cherished friend and sibling, and a retired USC employee, but she is also a breast cancer survivor. In October 2015, Sylvia noticed that her skin was deforming on her left breast and felt a lump underneath. Having come from a family that has a history of breast cancer, Sylvia knew the importance of consulting a doctor quickly. She made an appointment at the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center immediately to get a mammogram and was given devastating news - "You have breast cancer."

"You always hope it's something different, like a cyst," says Sylvia. "But it wasn't."

To remove the tumors, Sylvia underwent a full mastectomy on her left breast. In her post-operative appointment, her physician at the time, Dr. Heather McDonald, revealed to her that she had two different cancers at the same time in the same breast. One was triple receptor-negative, the other one was ER/PR positive. Thanks to Dr. Heather McDonald, Dr. Janice Lu, and all of the exceptional physicians, nurses, and staff at USC Norris, Sylvia is now a breast cancer survivor who has been cancer-free for 6 years this month.

"I love USC Norris. My physicians, surgeons, all the staff, everyone at USC Norris was fantastic. I felt confident that I was in good hands, and I was very well taken care of. They saved my life."

After recovering from breast cancer and going into remission, Sylvia wanted to do something to give back to the Cancer Center, a place that had given her so much and helped her through such a difficult time in her life. To give back, she started volunteering at the Cancer Center regularly and continues to do so, helping patients that are going through their own cancer diagnosis and treatment.

"I was so grateful to USC Norris and the care they gave me during my breast cancer journey that I wanted to give something back," said Sylvia. "I know how much a cancer diagnosis can change your life, and I wanted to help provide support to patients that are going through their own cancer journey."

Sylvia continues to get exceptional care at USC Norris from her oncologist, Dr. Janice Lu. When asked what she would say to a breast cancer patient that was receiving their diagnosis, she said: "As a breast cancer survivor, I say that your life will never be the same, but there is always hope. Get your screenings regularly and if you receive a breast cancer diagnosis, surround yourself with as many loved ones and as much support as you can, you'll be okay. Fight on, stay strong, and don't lose hope."

Upcoming Events

Breast Cancer Survivorship Webinar

November 9, 2021, at 6 PM PST

Event Description: Scientists and clinicians at USC Norris will share progress in developing a new blood test to identify women at risk for breast cancer metastasis. In addition, you will hear about strategies to enhance wellness and cancer survivorship for breast cancer that are relevant also for cancer prevention. A panel of experts will answer your questions during an open discussion period.

Register here: https://ksom-usc.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_S626gGftJWZMMP23h90Hw.

Cancer Center Grand Rounds: Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Colorectal Cancer

November 9, 2021, 12-1 pm

Speakers: Folasade May, MD, PhD, MPhil

Zoom Link: <https://usc.zoom.us/j/92317156672>

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

Lazarex Cancer Foundation Cancer Wellness HUB Speaker Series: Who's in and Who's out? How we decide who enrolls in clinical trials

November 9, 2021, 12-1 pm

Speaker: Jorge Nieva, MD

Register here: https://usc.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_Q9F5nqnSQs-byrZeCSTwmw

Cancer Center Grand Rounds: Fasting Mimicking Diets in Cancer Treatment

November 16, 2021, 12-1 pm

Speakers: Valter Longo, PhD

Zoom Link: <https://usc.zoom.us/j/95390898800>

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

7th Annual Swing Against Cancer Golf Tournament

November 19, 2021 at Rancho La Quinta Country Club

Event Description: Enjoy a day of brunch, golf, and dinner that includes great prizes, auction items, and speaker testimonials. This event supports lifesaving cancer research at the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center.

Registration at: <https://uscnorriscancer.usc.edu/2021/06/24/swing-against-cancer/>

Cancer Center Grand Rounds: Improving the Use and Effectiveness of Treatments for Nicotine Dependence

November 30, 2021, 12-1 pm

Speakers: Robert Schnoll, PhD

Zoom Link: <https://usc.zoom.us/j/97688978027>

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

Cancer Center Grand Rounds

December 7, 2021, 12-1 pm

Speakers: Matthew Meyerson, MD, PhD

Zoom Link: <https://usc.zoom.us/j/92317033750>

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

Cancer Center Grand Rounds

December 14, 2021, 12-1 pm

Speakers: Peter Vogt, PhD

Zoom Link: <https://usc.zoom.us/j/93815698426>

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

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

Please contact Minhaal M. Nathani, Senior Director of Development, at minhaaln@usc.edu to learn more about giving to USC Norris.