December 02, 2011

EXPERTS EXPLORE GENE-ENVIRONMENT INTERACTION

Micrograph of metastatic melanoma cells, left, that have invaded pancreatic tissue, right.

The University of Hawaii Cancer Center and The Queen's Medical Center hosted an international symposium on December 2 to discuss new information related to the recent discovery of the BAP1 genetic mutation and its link to mesothelioma, melanoma and potentially other cancers.

The Third Annual Translational Cancer Medicine Symposium featured more than 20 global experts in cancer genetics including keynote speaker, Carlo M. Croce, M.D., Director of the Human Cancer Genetics Program of The Ohio State University; Joseph Testa, Ph.D., Director of the Genomics Facility at Fox Chase Cancer Center; and Michele Carbone, M.D., Ph.D., Director of the University of Hawaii Cancer Center whose research team announced in August its discovery of the BAP1 gene mutation's link to mesothelioma and other cancers. "This is an important forum for some of the world’s leading cancer experts to work together to find ways to reduce the suffering and death from cancers caused by this mutation," said Carbone.

The BAP1 cancer syndrome is caused by inherited mutations of the BAP1 gene. Carriers of the BAP1 mutation can develop mesothelioma, uveal melanoma, melanocytic tumors and other carcinomas. When individuals with the BAP1 mutation are exposed to asbestos or erionite, mesothelioma appears to predominate and may be the cause of death in 50% of family members. This discovery provides physicians with a new tool to identify individuals at very high risk of developing these types of cancers. The study on the BAP1 discovery was published online in Nature Genetics on August 28, 2011.

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Cancer Research Fund. This Fund was established in 2008 for the University of Hawaii Cancer Center by Barry and Virginia Weinman to promote translational cancer research aimed at moving cancer research findings to the patient's bedside.