University of Hawaii Cancer Center Announces Recipients of Weinman Innovator Award
$50,000 will help fund translational cancer research

Recipients of 2012 Weinman Innovator Award

HONOLULU – The University of Hawai‘i Cancer Center has awarded researchers Sandi Kwee, MD, Maarit Tiirikainen, PhD, Linda Wong, MD, and Min-Ae Song, MS the 2012 Weinman Innovator Award for translational research. Their proposal “Liver Cancer Detection Using Tumor DNA Isolated from the Blood” was selected from five other proposals.

The team will use this award to isolate and characterize free circulating tumor DNA (ctDNA) from the bloodstream of patients with hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC), the most common type of liver cancer. These efforts could lead to new methods for diagnosing HCC, as well as enhance strategies for customizing treatments based on the individual genetics of a patient’s tumor.

“Our team is truly grateful to the Weinman Foundation for supporting efforts to translate cancer research into cancer care,” said Sandi Kwee.

Kwee is an assistant professor with the Center’s Cancer Biology Program and the John A. Burns School of Medicine’s Internal Medicine program. He is also the director of Positron Emission Tomography research at The Queen’s Medical Center. Dr. Wong is a liver transplant and hepatobiliary surgeon, an associate professor with the Center’s Cancer Biology Program and a clinical professor of surgery with the John A. Burns School of Medicine. Tiirikainen is the faculty director of the Cancer Center’s Genomics Shared Resources where she oversees Research Analyst Song who is also a graduate student in the Department of Molecular Biosciences and
Bioengineering.

The Weinman Innovator Award is presented annually and is a vital piece of philanthropic support that promotes and rewards excellence in translational research among the Cancer Center's faculty and staff. The award is funded through a $1.7 million Weinman Foundation Fund for Innovation endowment provided by Virginia and Barry Weinman to support the development of innovative diagnostic as well as therapeutic approaches to curing cancer.