**News Releases**

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**A New Target Identified in Treating Mesothelioma**

*University of Hawaii Cancer Center Researcher Leads International Team in Discovery*

**HONOLULU** – An international team of researchers led by Haining Yang, Ph.D. from the University of Hawaii Cancer Center have identified HMGB1 as a critical protein in the pathogenesis of malignant mesothelioma, one of the most dangerous forms of cancer that are highly related to asbestos and erionite exposure. These findings were just published in this month’s on-line issue of Cancer Research. This discovery outlines the process that causes the growth of these cancers and offers scientists a unique opportunity to develop specific therapies to treat mesothelioma.

“We are very excited about this discovery,” said Dr. Yang. “The next step is to translate this discovery into actual treatments for mesothelioma patients.”

Mesothelioma is a very aggressive cancer usually diagnosed at late stages and is resistant to current treatments. The average survival is less than one year. However, 5% of patients diagnosed at an early stage have survivals of 5-10 years or more. Therefore, the identification of new biomarkers for early detection and novel targets for mesothelioma prevention and therapy are sorely needed. The discovery of Dr. Yang will help shed lights on these aspects.

Mesothelioma has been linked to occupational and environmental exposure to asbestos. Erionite, a naturally occurring mineral fiber also causes mesothelioma. In the United States, approximately 3000 cases of mesothelioma are diagnosed each year. It has been estimated that over 25 million people have been exposed to asbestos in the US, while the number of those exposed to erionite is unknown.
The University of Hawaii Cancer Center is a global leader in mesothelioma research. The Center’s thoracic oncology team, led by Director Michele Carbone, M.D. Ph.D., and Dr. Yang have also been instrumental in several other recent discoveries including the identification of the gene that causes mesothelioma, BAP1.

The current study was an international effort and included investigators from the University of Hawaii Cancer Center, the John A Burns School of Medicine in Honolulu, the San Raffaele University and Research Institute in Milan, the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda and the New York University School of Medicine. The abstract for the study can be viewed at:

http://cancerres.aacrjournals.org/content/early/2012/04/25/0008-5472.CAN-11-3481.abstract