

INNOVATIONS

Bringing you research news from the University of Hawai'i Cancer Center

FALL 2022



CLINICAL TRIALS: CUTTING-EDGE RESEARCH

THE UH CANCER CENTER BOUNCES
BACK FROM THE IMPACTS OF THE
PANDEMIC TO INCREASE PATIENT
ENROLLMENT IN CLINICAL TRIALS.

STORY ON PAGE 3 →



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII
CANCER CENTER

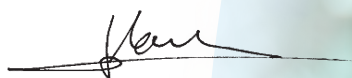
Among the many, and too often tragic, consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, have been delayed cancer care and paused clinical studies. A less talked-about but very disruptive and long-lasting effect on cancer centers across the country has been that of the "Great Resignation" by which, in this case, a large number of clinical professionals left research to work in the healthcare industry. This has certainly been true of our Clinical Trials Office (CTO). This essential program that brings, runs, and manages treatment trials, in collaboration with our community hospital partners, has seen a tremendous staff turnover, with a low in spring 2022 when only half of the staff remained. The CTO, under the exceptional leadership of Dr. Jonathan Cho, has made tremendous strides in the challenging tasks of rebuilding this program by hiring and training new staff at all levels. This would not have been possible without the hard work and dedication of many people at the Center, starting with the remaining CTO staff which had to do more with less, the HR and administrative staff but also some retired CTO personnel who generously agreed to come back to train the new staff. All these individuals have been an inspiration for the entire Center.

Also, foremost on our mind, has been to ensure a smooth transition for our new director, Dr. Naoto Ueno, who will be joining us in mid-December. Dr. Ueno is a breast cancer oncologist, currently at the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center, who is internationally renowned in the areas of clinical trials and pre-clinical research. It is hard to imagine a better suited individual to lead the Center's efforts to further develop clinical research in Hawai'i. Our vision, shared with our community and University partners, remains to improve cancer care by developing and bringing new treatments to Hawai'i, taking in consideration our unique setting and community needs, and to address the shortage of oncology professionals in the state, especially in the more rural areas.

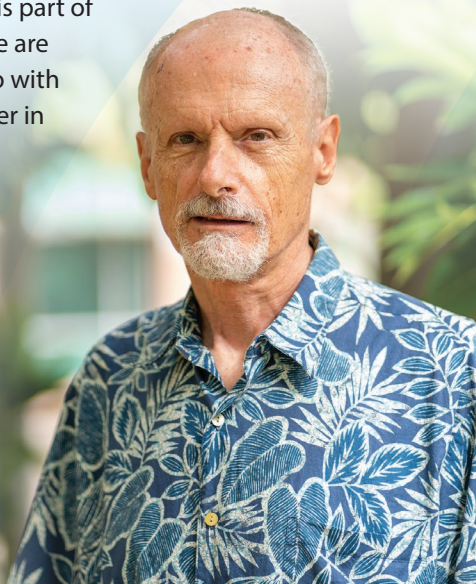
This is a very exciting time for the Cancer Center as we prepare for a new permanent director to take the lead and begin the process to renew our NCI Cancer Center Designation.

I have been privileged to lead the Cancer Center as interim director for the past few months. Reflecting on my tenure, I am reminded that each of you is part of our Cancer Center 'ohana and we are deeply appreciative of all you do with us to reduce the burden of cancer in the islands.

Mahalo,



Loïc Le Marchand, MD, PhD
Interim Director



Warmest Welcome to the Incoming UH Cancer Center Director!

The search is over – Naoto Ueno, MD, PhD, has been selected as the new Director of the University of Hawai'i Cancer Center. Dr. Ueno is currently the Executive Director of the Inflammatory Breast



Cancer Research Program at the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center, where he is also a tenured professor of medicine. He has 15 years of leadership experience and nearly 30 years of experience in research and education, particularly in stem cell transplant, gene therapy, targeted therapy, and immunotherapy.

As a cancer researcher, physician, and survivor, Dr. Ueno brings expertise from both the patient and provider perspectives. The UH Cancer Center is excited to welcome him as he steps into his role in December.

HAWAII CANCER CONSORTIUM

Hawai'i Cancer Consortium (HCC), led by the UH Cancer Center, enhances our ability to make substantive advances in cancer research, education, community outreach, and improving cancer care to better serve the residents of Hawai'i.

The Cancer Center conducts therapeutic trials with community oncologists through the HCC. This collaboration allows an extension of our clinical trials network, and the development and dissemination of evidence-based interventions.

HCC PARTNERS:

- University of Hawai'i Cancer Center
- Adventist Health Castle
- Hawaii Medical Service Association
- Hawai'i Pacific Health
- Kuakini Medical Center
- The Queen's Health System
- UH John A. Burns School of Medicine

CLINICAL TRIALS AT THE CUTTING EDGE OF RESEARCH

CLINICAL TRIALS ARE “TOMORROW’S STANDARD OF CARE.” WHEN PATIENTS PARTICIPATE IN A CLINICAL TRIAL, THEY MAY RECEIVE CARE THAT WILL BE THE STANDARD 10 YEARS LATER.

Cancer clinical trials are research studies in which volunteers participate in finding new ways to prevent, diagnose, and treat cancer. Patient participation is critical to the success of clinical trials. Although the University of Hawai‘i Cancer Center typically has continuous patient enrollment, participation has declined in recent years due to the COVID-19 pandemic. “This reflects what’s going on in clinical trials across the country,” said Jonathan Cho, MD, Medical Director of the Clinical Trials Office. “There are several potential reasons, including workforce, patient attitudes, and telehealth.”

As the pandemic recedes and restrictions lessen, the UH Cancer Center looks to ramp up enrollment by increasing awareness about the importance of cancer clinical trials through public education. “We are hopeful that since we are in a post-pandemic period, trial participation will increase,” said Dr. Cho. “The UH Cancer Center is also looking at expanding access to the neighbor islands and increasing the number of trials available to the residents of our state.”

“

EVERYONE SHOULD CONSIDER PARTICIPATING IN CLINICAL TRIALS. FOR PATIENTS WITH A CANCER DIAGNOSIS, A CLINICAL TRIAL MAY OFFER THE CHANCE OF RECEIVING BETTER TREATMENT FOR THEIR CANCER.

— JONATHAN CHO, MD

The UH Cancer Center currently provides access to 85 cancer clinical trials and remains dedicated to investigating new ways of delivering cancer care to Hawai‘i’s multi-ethnic population—often underrepresented nationwide in clinical trials. As a result, Hawai‘i can potentially contribute significantly to expanding the knowledge of how various cancer therapies affect different races, including minority populations.

Clinical trials offer patients access to cutting-edge treatments and provide the highest level of care. Outcomes from these trials can result in more patients being cured, living longer, and improving cancer patients’ overall quality of life.



RESEARCHERS MAKE A NATIONAL IMPACT

The work of University of Hawai'i Cancer Center researchers continues to go beyond Hawai'i—their contributions are getting national recognition.



JAMI FUKUI, MD, has been selected to serve a three-year term on the National Cancer Institute Breast Cancer Steering Committee (BCSC). The BCSC addresses areas of unmet clinical needs, important unanswered clinical questions, and potential approaches to disease treatment in breast cancer. Dr. Fukui's participation may lead to advanced developments in minority breast cancer clinical trials that will help improve the outcomes of breast cancer in Hawai'i and the Pacific.



KEVIN CASSEL, DRPH, member of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine's Committee on Environmental Impact of Currently Marketed Sunscreens that authored the report, *Review of Fate, Exposure and Effects of Sunscreens in Aquatic Environments and Implications for Sunscreen Usage and Human Health*. The report's key takeaways include how UV radiation is associated with skin cancer, and how sunscreen use has contributed to risk reduction. The report also recommended that the Environmental Protection Agency conduct an ecological risk assessment of sunscreens to identify the potential risks to aquatic ecosystems and the species that live in them.



PHOTO CREDIT: AACR/VERA LAMARCHE

LOÏC LE MARCHAND, MD, PhD, was chosen by the American Association for Cancer Research (AACR) as the recipient of the 2022 Distinguished Lectureship on the Science of Cancer Health Disparities. Dr. Le Marchand presented his award lecture during the opening session of the 15th AACR Conference on the Science of Cancer Health Disparities in Racial/Ethnic Minorities and the Medically Underserved in Philadelphia on September 16. His lecture was titled "Translating Multiethnic Epidemiological Research into Innovative Interventions."

CLINICAL TRIALS MYTH BUSTERS

MYTH #1

Is it true that I'll only get a placebo if I participate in a clinical trial for cancer treatment?

TRUTH #1

The truth is, placebos are rarely used in cancer clinical trials, and every patient on a trial receives at least the current standard of care.

MYTH #2

Is it true that if I enroll in a clinical trial for cancer treatment, I'll be locked in and won't be able to change treatment?

TRUTH #2

The truth is, clinical trial participants can choose to stop participating in the study at any time for any reason.

MYTH #3

Aren't clinical trials for cancer treatment really just for advanced stages of cancer when no other treatments are available?

TRUTH #3

The truth is, clinical trials provide the very highest level of care for patients at all stages of cancer, no matter how early or advanced.



PHOTO CREDIT:
KALO CORNETT

CANCER SURVIVOR GIVES BACK

▲ The first Tongan Women's
Auxiliary Education Night

In December 2019, Kalo Cornett was diagnosed with stage one breast cancer. The tumor was removed and she continued with a regular regimen of care. Unfortunately, around a year later, the cancer returned.

Prior to her diagnosis, Kalo ignored her signs and symptoms of breast cancer for eight months. "People of my Tongan community are afraid to see the doctor, which is why so many women present at later stages," said Kalo. "In my culture, people often rely on faith, and holistic or home remedies." Not wanting other women of her community to make the same mistake, she started a monthly Tongan Women's Auxiliary Education Night in her neighborhood on the North Shore of O'ahu, where she speaks about the importance of screening for breast cancer, benefits of participating in clinical trials, and preventative measures women could take to reduce their risk of breast cancer.

Due to Kalo's drive to help other women and her strong connection to her community, Cornett's nurse practitioner and UH Cancer Center associate researcher, Christa Braun-Inglis, DNP, APRN, thought that she

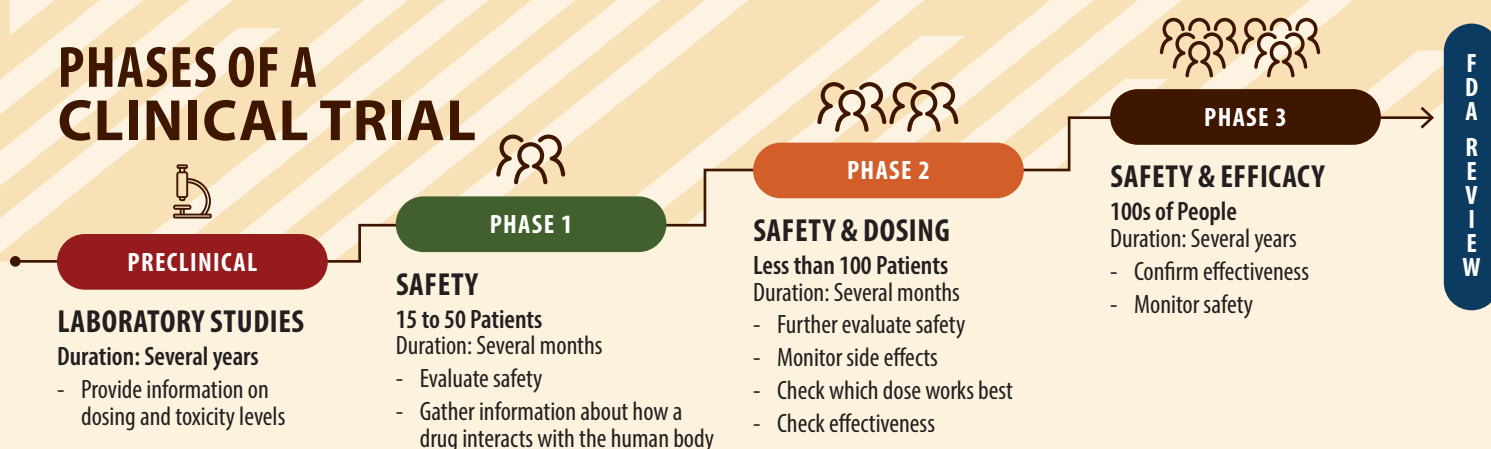


Kalo Cornett

would be a valuable asset to recruit Pacific Islander women for a UH Cancer Center study, Tomosynthesis Mammographic Imaging Screening Trial (TMIST). TMIST is a research study that compares 2D and 3D mammography to learn the best way to find breast cancer in women who have no symptoms. "Having someone like Kalo, who is connected to the community and understands what it is like to experience a cancer diagnosis and undergo treatment, is extremely helpful for our outreach," said Dr. Braun-Inglis.

Kalo now works for the UH Cancer Center to promote screening and early detection of breast cancer as a Community Health Educator for the TMIST study. She participates in community events to help women schedule mammogram appointments, and determine whether they qualify for the TMIST study. Transportation is a common barrier to healthcare access. Many women of Kalo's community don't have the funds for transportation costs and lack vehicle access, which leads to lengthy times to reach needed services. To help overcome these barriers, Kalo provides free rides to and from women's hospital visits.

PHASES OF A CLINICAL TRIAL





IN YOUR CORNER FIGHTING CANCER

Clinical Research Professionals (CRPs) are responsible for coordinating, monitoring, and improving outcomes for patients who participate in clinical trials. They help patients navigate their cancer journey, making the process a lot easier. “You really felt like someone was there fighting with you and for you every step of the way,” as one patient described.

Care coordination, the way a patient’s medical care activities are organized, is often complex and involves numerous health providers, specialists, and care settings. CRPs play an integral role in cancer patients’ care coordination experiences by being their point of contact, facilitating communication with other members of their care team, assisting with scheduling appointments, and coordinating office visits.

A study led by UH Cancer Center assistant researcher Izumi Okado, PhD, found that Hawai’i cancer patients who were enrolled in therapeutic clinical trials, reported significantly more positive care coordination experiences which they attributed to the support provided by the CRPs. Patients who participated in this study often referred to CRPs as their “care coordinators,” illustrating the important role that CRPs play in their care.

CRPs are a vital part of the UH Cancer Center’s clinical trials team to ensure the best care for participants in clinical trials who contribute to advancing cancer outcomes for future generations.

DID YOU KNOW A MAMMOGRAM WAS ONCE A CLINICAL TRIAL?

Before a mammogram became the standard of care for detecting breast cancer, it began as a clinical trial. Mammograms are low-dose X-rays of the breast tissue that can help find breast cancer at an early stage. They date back to the early 1900s when simple radiography was used to examine mastectomy specimens to identify the difference between cancerous and non-cancerous tumors in the breast. The work was revitalized decades later when scientists incorporated breast compression techniques to enhance image quality.

Since then, a series of clinical trials have been conducted, forming the foundation for mammography’s clinical use. One of the first large-scale clinical trials, began in 1963 by researchers Sam Shapiro, Philip Strax, and Louis Venet, and spanned over 20 years. Their research concluded that women between the ages of 40-64, who received annual mammogram screening, were less likely to die from breast cancer than those who did not get mammograms regularly; and provided evidence of the utility of mammograms for breast cancer prevention.

The development of digital imaging resulted in digital mammography in the late 1990s and, more recently, three-dimensional (3D) digital breast tomosynthesis—a technological advance that captures multiple breast images using different angles.

Today, a mammogram is the gold standard for screening for early stage breast cancer. The American Cancer Society recommends annual mammograms for women 45 to 54 years of age and every other year for women 55 and older.

Looking to the future, UH Cancer Center researchers are working to improve breast cancer imaging technologies. John Shepherd, PhD, Interim Deputy Director and Chief Scientific Officer, leads a team of healthcare professionals to improve existing clinical practices that can help to increase the ability to detect breast lesions and classify them as invasive cancer while reducing the need for unnecessary biopsies.





Terri McCoy's

Zest for Life

Continues to Help Others

“I was stunned,” Les McCoy says about seeing Terri, an acquaintance he’d been out of touch with for 20 years. Les was in San Diego taking command of a naval aircraft squadron, and his brother invited friends from their high school to attend his promotion ceremony.

“After the ceremony, Terri and I talked for the rest of the day,” he says. “All I could think was ‘Wow!’ I knew this was it. We got married three years later.”

New military assignments sent Terri and Les to Hawai‘i, Cuba and Florida. Terri liked Hawai‘i so much she hunted down a job in Honolulu for Les after his retirement from military service. He says, “She found my Naval Academy classmate from 27 years before and told me to ask him about jobs. We returned to our home in the islands.”

A zest for life

“One of the most devastating things to hear is when your spouse tells you they have cancer,” says Les. “She never told us about the type of cancer or the mortality rate. She refused until her last breath to accept that this disease might kill her.”

Les says in times like this, you truly see a person’s character. “In extremis, she was determined to win. At the end, they

couldn’t control her blood pressure while she was on pain meds, so she went off medication to keep herself alive. Watching her suffer was heartbreaking.”

Supporting research & education

So others might avoid Terri’s suffering, Les established the Terri M. McCoy Memorial Endowed Fund for Breast Cancer Research and Education, supporting research and community education at the UH Cancer Center, including projects related to breast cancer risk and the importance of screening.

Les says, “I knew when Terri died, this is the kind of thing she’d like to do. This is how she was made. If we can have an impact on others, I feel we’ve done well.”

“I spent 26 years protecting Terri from anything and anybody. Suddenly, I couldn’t do anything. I had to watch her die slowly over several years,” says Les. “I held her hand for three years at every chemo session, but she never let me attend meetings with the doctor after the first conversation. She was determined to protect me, her daughter Tamara, and her granddaughter, Kyiah. Now, with this fund, Terri might provide countless women with better odds of detecting and surviving this terrible disease.”

If you would like to support the UH Cancer Center, please contact Elizabeth Kuioka at ekuioka@cc.hawaii.edu or 808-356-5764.



Top left photo: Dr. Jami Fukui (Terri’s oncologist) stands with Les McCoy at the endowment signing.

FRIENDS OF THE UH CANCER CENTER

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Innovations is a community publication of the University of Hawai'i Cancer Center, produced with support from the Friends of the University of Hawai'i Cancer Center. If you have comments or suggestions, please call 808-586-3010 or visit uhcancercenter.org.

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Permit No. 753

CLINICAL TRIALS CORNER

THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI'I CANCER CENTER HAS A LONG HISTORY OF CONDUCTING CLINICAL RESEARCH AND CONTINUES TO BE COMMITTED TO IMPROVING CANCER CARE IN HAWAI'I.

Our clinical trials program currently offers more than 85 different clinical trials, providing the residents of Hawai'i access to the newest and most innovative cancer screening, early detection, and treatment methods.

One indicator of the success of the clinical trials program is the number of participants. To increase enrollment, we are expanding our program portfolio and working towards breaking barriers that limit access to clinical trials. To accomplish this, we require collaboration between our healthcare systems, providers, and the community.

Like many NCI-Designated Cancer Centers, during the COVID-19 pandemic, we experienced a decline in clinical trials participation. As we slowly return to normalcy, we remain dedicated to continuing our efforts to enroll patients in clinical trials.

Jonathan Cho, MD
*Medical Director of the
Clinical Trials Office*



Ho‘ōla

WORKING TO FIND THE CURE

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President's Message

Aloha, friends and supporters of the UH Cancer Center!

During this season of thanks and joy, I am grateful for your continued support of the University of Hawai'i Cancer Center. I am also looking forward to welcoming Dr. Naoto Ueno as the new Director of the Center.

The pandemic heavily impacted our clinical trial office in Hawai'i, as well as those across the nation, due to staffing shortages and lack of patients.

Dr. Jonathan Cho, a former Friends board member, is the Medical Director of the Clinical Trials Office. In support of his mission to increase the number of participants in clinical trials, we're encouraging all of you to help get the word out to friends, family, and co-workers to think about joining a clinical trial.

Whenever you or a loved one needs treatment for cancer, a clinical trial is an option to consider. **Trials are available for all stages of cancer.** It is a myth that they are only for people who have an advanced cancer that is not responding to treatment.

In a clinical trial, you will have **access to treatments and better care** that is not available to others. If the trial is more effective than the standard care you receive from your doctor, you may be one of the first persons to benefit. Clinical trial doctors and clinicians will be monitoring you so you will also receive more attention and enhanced care.

When you take part in a clinical trial, you add to the Center's knowledge and **help improve cancer care for future patients.**

Take a look on the next page for a short list of trials that need patients. Please encourage those you know to consider joining a clinical trial.

Mahalo,

Christopher M. Yasuma

CHRISTOPHER M. YASUMA

President, Friends of the UH Cancer Center



A Run for Hope

After a two-year hiatus, the 25th Annual Run for Hope weekend took place on September 9-11. It was hosted by the Four Seasons Resort Hualalai on Hawai'i Island to benefit cancer research. The event activities included a golf tournament, a tennis tournament, and the Run for Hope—a 10K run and 5K run/walk. Supported by the Friends of the UH Cancer Center, seven Cancer Center staff volunteered at this event along with volunteers from the American Cancer Society (ACS).

Volunteers at Run for Hope: Rachel Taketa, Dr. Jonathan Cho, Daveline Ching, ACS volunteer and Hero of Hope, Cliff Martin, Crissy Kawamoto, Todd Kawamoto, Paula Higuchi, and Erin Fukaya (not pictured).



Current Recruitment for Clinical Trials

**Interested in participating in a clinical trial
at the University of Hawai'i Cancer Center?
Here is a list of some of the trials that are open for enrollment.**

COLON CANCER

Improving Quality of Life for Colon Cancer Patients and Their Caregivers (NCT04713007)



A supportive care study that compares two distinct methods of providing information and caregiving resources, affect quality of life scores for both colon cancer patients and their informal caregivers, such as family members. Dr. Kevin Cassel at the UH Cancer Center is the lead investigator for this study, which is open to colon cancer patients and their caregivers living in Hawai'i.

BREAST CANCER

Tomosynthesis Mammographic Imaging Screening Trial (TMIST) (NCT03233191)

A breast screening clinical trial that compares 2D and 3D mammography. TMIST will help researchers learn about the best ways to find breast cancer in women who have no symptoms.

Effect of Exercise on Body Composition of Breast Cancer Patients (NCT04013568)



A supportive care study looking at the effects of a 12-week exercise program on body composition and health in breast cancer survivors. Dr. Jami Fukui at the UH Cancer Center is the lead investigator for this study, which is open to newly diagnosed breast cancer patients only in Hawai'i.

Icon Key



Study originated in Hawai'i

NON-SMALL CELL LUNG CANCER

Testing the Addition of the Drug Atezolizumab to A Randomized Phase III Trial of Induction/ Consolidation Atezolizumab & SBRT vs. SBRT Alone in High Risk, Early Stage NSCLC (NCT04214262)

A treatment study looking at whether giving patients atezolizumab (immunotherapy with monoclonal antibodies) and radiation therapy works better than radiation therapy alone in treating patients with early NSCLC.

LIVER CANCER

Phase II Study of TSR-022 (Cobolimab) in Combination with TSR-042 (Dostarlimab) for the Treatment of Advanced Hepatocellular Carcinoma (NCT03680508)



A treatment study to test whether two immunotherapy agents in combination work to shrink tumors in patients with advanced hepatocellular carcinoma. Dr. Jared Acoba at the UH Cancer Center is the investigator for this study, which is open to hepatocellular cancer patients.

PROSTATE CANCER

Multiparametric MRI (mpMRI) for Preoperative Staging and Treatment Planning for Newly Diagnosed Prostate Cancer (NCT03697148)

A diagnostic trial to test how well mpMRI works in evaluating cancer stage and helping to plan treatment for prostate cancer patients.

Each clinical trial study has different enrollment criteria. If you are interested in participating, meet with your physician to help identify a suitable trial.

**If you would like more information on these clinical trials, please call the
Clinical Trials Office at (808) 586-2979.**