CANCER SURVIVOR ADVOCATES FOR CLINICAL TRIALS

"I truly believe that participating in the UH Cancer Center clinical trial saved my life."

STORY ON PAGE 5
It has been seven months since I joined the UH Cancer Center ‘ohana and I could not be more impressed with the exceptional research, outstanding, internationally-renowned faculty, and the overwhelming support from the community.

The mission of the University of Hawai‘i Cancer Center is to reduce the burden of cancer through research, education, patient care and community outreach with an emphasis on the unique ethnic, cultural, and environmental characteristics of Hawai‘i and the Pacific. The Center conducts research that is specifically relevant to the cancer problems affecting the people of Hawai‘i, working to understand the influence of ethnic diversity on both the incidence of cancer and on patient outcomes, to identify the molecular mechanisms involved in the development of cancer, to engage the community in cancer prevention and cancer education programs, and to provide an infrastructure for access to cutting edge clinical trials for patients affected by this disease. A recent visit by the Cancer Center’s External Advisory Board resulted in enthusiastic support and unanimous expectations for continued National Cancer Institute designation.

The UH Cancer Center is intimately involved in the community. In addition to providing oversight of a cancer clinical trials infrastructure for nearly two-thirds of cancer patients in the state, working through an affiliation of hospitals and private practices, the Center is involved in community education, legislative initiatives, and community outreach focused on cancer prevention and control. The Cancer Center’s reach extends beyond Hawai‘i and across the Pacific with research collaborations in Guam, American Sāmoa, and Micronesia.

The UH Cancer Center faculty are also deeply involved in educational activity—over 250 trainees have been mentored by Cancer Center faculty between 2011 and 2016, and approximately 30 of the 45 full-time Cancer Center faculty regularly participate in research training and teaching activities at the University of Hawai‘i.

The UH Cancer Center is indeed a “gem in the Pacific”, and I’m looking forward to working with all of the faculty and our community partners to reach even greater heights.

Randall F. Holcombe, M.D., M.B.A.
Director
CANCER CENTER NEWS

Native Hawaiians have the highest cancer mortality rate in the state according to the latest cancer data released by the Hawai‘i Tumor Registry (HTR) of the UH Cancer Center.

“Lung cancer remains the leading cause of cancer death in Hawai‘i. Native Hawaiians have the highest lung cancer incidence and mortality rates,” said Dr. Brenda Hernandez, principal investigator of the HTR.

The HTR is one of 20 National Cancer Institute Surveillance, Epidemiology and End Results (SEER) Programs nationwide. SEER is the source for cancer statistics in the country. The HTR provides cancer reporting for the entire state.

“The HTR’s Cancer at a Glance allows us and other organizations in our state to do research specific to the needs of our residents in Hawai‘i and the Pacific,” said UH Cancer Center Director Dr. Randall Holcombe.

- Approximately 6,700 Hawai‘i residents are diagnosed with invasive cancer and more than 2,200 die annually.
- Cancer is the 2nd leading cause of death in Hawai‘i.
- Overall cancer incidence in the state declined (1.6 percent per year) in men and increased (0.4 percent per year) in women; overall cancer mortality rates decreased.

Cancer at a Glance in Hawai‘i

- The most common cancer in men is prostate cancer, followed by lung cancer.
- In women, breast cancer is the most common cancer, followed by lung cancer.

The racially-diverse and unique population of Hawai‘i has been an invaluable resource in demonstrating ethnic variations in cancer incidence and survival.

“The HTR has played a vital role in cancer control and research efforts in Hawai‘i by monitoring cancer trends and identifying variations in cancer risk across the multi-ethnic populations of the state,” said Michael Green, HTR project director. For the complete booklet visit www.uhcancercenter.org.

Clinical Trials Participation Award Recipients

At the Annual Hawai‘i Society for Clinical Oncology meeting in November 2016, Jared Acoba, M.D., Christine Hoover, R.N., M.P.H., and Kate Bryant-Greenwood, J.D., M.A., received UH Cancer Center Clinical Trials Participation Awards which are financially supported by the Friends of the UH Cancer Center.

The awardees were recognized for their significant contributions in enhancing clinical trials participation among individuals diagnosed with or who are at high risk for cancer. Their efforts include in-depth counseling of patients and their families regarding eligibility and registration onto clinical trials, treatment or prevention plans, risks and benefits, and regular monitoring of disease and clinical status throughout participation.

Dr. Acoba is assistant professor in the Translational and Clinical Research Services at the UH Cancer Center, and director of research at the Queen’s Cancer Center. Hoover is a research nurse at Tripler Army Medical Center. Bryant-Greenwood is the cancer care delivery research coordinator at The Queen’s Medical Center.

From left to right: Jeffrey Berenberg, M.D., Christine Hoover, R.N., M.P.H., Jared Acoba, M.D., and Kate Bryant-Greenwood, J.D., M.A.
Loïc Le Marchand, M.D., Ph.D., has once again been named to Thomson Reuters’ World’s Most Influential Scientific Minds for 2016. This is Le Marchand’s second consecutive year to be selected as a top cited researcher in the field of cancer research. He is one of three scholars from UH Mānoa to make the list. Thomson Reuters is, “the world’s leading source of intelligent information for businesses and professionals.” Individuals were selected based on having the most highly cited papers among fellow researchers.

UH Cancer Center Physician Receives National Extraordinary Service Award

Jeffrey Berenberg, M.D., was recognized recently by one of the largest physician organizations in the nation for his decades of service and advocacy in the state. He was awarded Mastership by the American College of Physicians (MACP), its highest level of recognition.

Dr. Berenberg is only the fifth physician from Hawai‘i to receive the honor; the first MACP was awarded in 1923. He has practiced medicine in the state since 1983.

2013 Nobel Prize Winner Speaks at Weinman Symposium

The 8th Annual Weinman Symposium covered some of the latest cancer research findings, specifically how genes interact with the environment. Top scientists from across the nation presented, and looked at opportunities for future research collaborations.

“I am grateful to Barry and Virginia Weinman, who entrusted me with their donation to bring to Hawai‘i some of the best scientists of the world. It is a unique opportunity for us to have faculty, post docs, and students discuss science, and collaborate with them to find new ways to prevent and cure cancer. I am also very grateful to the International Association for the Study of Lung Cancer that co-sponsored the meeting,” said Michele Carbone, M.D., Ph.D., UH Cancer Center’s director of Thoracic Oncology.

Randy W. Schekman, Ph.D., the 2013 Nobel Prize Winner for Physiology or Medicine, was recognized with the 8th Weinman Award presented by State Senator Josh Green.
Dawn Kobayashi felt severe stomach pains in 2002. Two years later the pains became unbearable. After she went to the emergency room she received devastating news. “You have stage 3 colon cancer.”

Kobayashi said, “I was shocked, I was only 44-years-old. I didn’t have a family history of cancer. My kids were 7 and 10 years old at the time. We just moved back to Hawai‘i from Japan, and my children were about to enter a new school.”

Kobayashi was given a 50 percent chance to survive.

“My children knew mom was sick, but how would I explain anything to them without scaring them?”

She went to the University of California San Francisco to get a second opinion. The UCSF doctor said there were no available clinical trials at the organization that matched her. Kobayashi feels lucky her Hawai‘i oncologist suggested a UH Cancer Center clinical trial for which she qualified to participate. Her UCSF oncologist said she should jump at the opportunity.

“I thought I might as well give it a chance, it could help. I realize now that I got extra care because I was in a clinical trial. I had to see my oncologist more than others and the follow up was intensive. I don’t think I would have participated in the trial if it wasn’t in Hawai‘i. I wouldn’t have wanted to disrupt my kids’ lives and my life also.”

“Dawn Kobayashi is extremely courageous. By her participating in a UH Cancer Center-sponsored clinical trial she not only received the highest level of care possible, she also helped improve cancer care for countless other patients with colon cancer,” said UH Cancer Center Director, Dr. Randall Holcombe.

“I truly believe that participating in the clinical trial saved my life, it let me live to see my children grow up and live a full and happy life. I’m grateful that I had the opportunity to participate in something so important, and life-saving. I thank my lucky stars every single day.”

Kobayashi is now an advocate for clinical trials. She shared her story at the 2017 Helping Enhance Research in Oncology (H.E.R.O.) appreciation event honoring UH Cancer Center clinical trial participants.

“Some people are scared of clinical trials because they think they will be experimented on. Dawn’s experience shows that clinical trials provide benefits for participants, and because the UH Cancer Center is supported by the National Cancer Institute, it is assured that all patients receive at least the standard of care for their cancer and many receive improved treatments that will be standard of care in the future,” said Dr. Holcombe.

The UH Cancer Center coordinates about 150 active national clinical trials of new treatments and technologies for adults and children. The Center is currently monitoring about 1,000 participants and enrolling more than 300 new clinical trial participants annually. The clinical trials are administered at local hospital partners through the Hawai‘i Cancer Consortium and other community-based oncology providers. The members of the Hawai‘i Cancer Consortium include the UH Cancer Center, Hawai‘i Pacific Health, The Queen’s Medical Center, Kuakini Medical Center, and John A. Burns School of Medicine.
$3M to Research Cancer Treatment Potential of Ironweed Plant

The National Cancer Institute awarded a five-year $3 million grant to UH Cancer Center researcher, James Turkson, Ph.D., to study how natural compounds in ironweed plant extract can be used to treat breast and brain cancers.

“It would be life changing for cancer patients if ironweed extract could help fight aggressive types of breast and brain cancers. Since the compounds are found in the plant, they are less toxic than traditional forms of treatment such as chemotherapy,” said Turkson, director of the Cancer Biology Program.

Ironweed plant extract used in study from the Big Island and Thailand

“The vast natural resources of Hawai’i give our researchers a rare opportunity to make scientific discoveries of unique and significant proportions in treating cancer,” said Randall Holcombe, M.D., M.B.A., UH Cancer Center Director.

Turkson’s collaborators include Leng Chee Chang, Ph.D., Dianqing Sun, Ph.D., and Supakit Wongwiwatthanukit, Pharm.D., Ph.D., at the University of Hawai’i at Hilo Daniel K. Inouye College of Pharmacy.

Breast and Brain Cancers in Hawai’i (According to Hawai’i Tumor Registry)

• Breast cancer is the most common cancer diagnosed in women in Hawai’i.
• An average of 125 women die from the disease each year in the state.
• On average 41 people in Hawai’i die each year from brain cancer.

Highlighted UH Cancer Center Study and Clinical Trials

Young Adult Health Behavior Study

The young adult observational study researches tobacco product advertising and health behavior. Qualified individuals complete online surveys over an 18-month period. The Principal Investigator is Pallav Pokhrel, Ph.D., M.P.H.

Online and Mobile Mindfulness Intervention to Improve the Well-Being of Cancer Survivors

The clinical trial examines the impact of mindfulness meditation on the quality of life of cancer survivors. Participants are randomized to one of the following groups for eight weeks: a guided mindfulness meditation intervention, use of a mobile app for mindfulness meditation, or no treatment. Participants complete self-report measures before randomization, at eight weeks, and again at 16 weeks. The Principal Investigator is Erin O’Carroll Bantum, Ph.D.

Yoga for Cancer Survivors

The clinical trial is looking to reduce sleep problems among cancer survivors. Participants are randomized into three groups: yoga, health education, or cognitive behavior therapy. It is a nationwide collaborative study with the University of Rochester Cancer Center. The study is for people who experience problems sleeping, and have completed cancer treatment in the past. The Principal Investigator is Jeffrey Berenberg, M.D.

For more information visit www.uhcancercenter.org.
Community-minded Young Philanthropists

Lokelani Intermediate students from Maui, Austin Ruppenthal and Lily Oldham, raised funds for the UH Cancer Center by doing a clothing drive for their school’s student council in the fall of 2016. The young community-minded philanthropists, gathered and sold used clothes to Savers. Funds raised were given to their student council and to the UH Cancer Center. On February 16, 2017, they presented a $400 check to UH Cancer Center Director, Dr. Randall Holcombe during the President’s Speaker Series on Healthcare in Hawai‘i at Maui Community College.

Creative Giving by Lester and Brandie Inouye

Lester and Brandie Inouye generously chose to support the UH Cancer Center by donating their IRA Charitable Rollover. Like many people in Hawai‘i, the Inouyes have been touched by cancer with several family and friends being diagnosed with the disease. With their deep ties to Hawai‘i, Lester growing up on Kaua‘i and a UH alumnus, they felt it was important to support the local efforts of the Cancer Center.

During a visit with their financial advisor, it was suggested to the Inouyes to continue their charitable giving using their IRA. At first they thought they would spread giving to several charities, but ultimately they decided to make a larger impact by supporting just the UH Cancer Center.

When asked what it means to them to support the work locally, Brandie Inouye said, “It makes us feel good contributing to the efforts to find a connection to the cause or a cure for cancer.”

The Inouyes are supporting the work of the Cancer Center with their required minimum distribution (RMD) and in doing so, are not being taxed on the charitable contribution. The RMD can be gifted to the University of Hawai‘i Foundation as a tax-deductible contribution to be used within the University of Hawai‘i system, in the Inouye’s case, the Cancer Center.

“Cancer affects all people, regardless of age or race, so many of our friends and family have had cancer. Because of this it was important to keep our donation local”, said the Inouyes.

If you are interested in learning more about this option or other options to support the Center, please contact the UH Cancer Center’s Associate Director of Development, Todd Cullison, at 808-356-5757 or todd.cullison@uhfoundation.org.
At the 60th Hawai‘i State Science & Engineering Fair on April 10-12 at the Hawai‘i Convention Center, three high school students were presented with UH Cancer Center senior research division awards.

These generous awards were made possible through the Friends of the UH Cancer Center. The winners were selected based on their project’s originality, presentation skills, and poster design. Judging was conducted by Gertraud Maskarinec, M.D., Ph.D., professor in the Cancer Epidemiology Program and Yvette Amshoff, coordinator of the Continuing Umbrella of Research Experiences (CURE) Internship program at the Center.

First Place ($300 award): Aslan Cook, 10th grade, Kamehameha Schools Kapalama. Project: “Anticancer Properties of Poison Dart Frog Secretions.”

Cook learned that the diet of the Poison Dart frog is different in Hawai‘i, so the secretions are less toxic, leading her to test the effect on cancer cells. She tested the secretions on both human ovarian and myeloma cancer cells and learned that they inhibited myeloma cell growth.


Santos became interested in testing bee pollen, BioAstin, and cat’s claw on three different cell lines: CEM, HEK293, and HeLa Cells. She found BioAstin to be the most effective in inhibiting cell growth in all cell lines due to the antioxidant properties of the supplement.

Third Place ($100 award): Tanner Cleven, 9th grade, Kailua High School. Project: “Observing How Plants React to Electronic Smoke vs. Cigarette Smoke.”

Cleven studied how tobacco cigarettes and electronic cigarettes affected the environment. He exposed two hardy plants—arugula and Manoa lettuce—to smoke from e-cigs and cigarettes, which he collected with a syringe. He observed the plants over many days and discovered that e-cigs had a more harmful effect on the plants than tobacco cigarettes.