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IU tests radioactive 'tag' for cancer

IUSM is testing a diagnostic procedure for ovarian cancer that may provide earlier and better detection of the disease commonly known as "the silent killer."

The procedure, called FolateScan, is designed to determine if a mass or tumor in the pelvis or abdomen is cancerous or benign.

Many cancerous tumors have an unusually large number of binding proteins or receptors for vitamins such as folic acid on their cell surfaces. Folic acid, a member of the vitamin B family, is critical to the process of cell division.

Researchers have developed a way to attach or "tag" a radioactive imaging agent to the folic acid causing the cancerous cells to be highlighted when scanned. Folic acid is much more likely to bind to a cancer than to normal tissues or a benign tumor.

If the scan is positive, women with ovarian cancer could be better prepared for surgery, which would include determining the extent to which the cancer has developed and, if necessary, whether special techniques to remove the cancer completely are necessary.

This is a Phase I/II trial. If successful, the detection procedure should be available for general use within two or three years.

Principal investigator Gregory Sutton, MD, says the procedure holds great promise for detection and treatment of a disease that affects 23,100 women in this country each year. There are 14,000 deaths in the U.S. each year from ovarian cancer.

"FolateScan may lead to new methods for treating ovarian cancer," said Dr. Sutton. "If scanning proves successful, it may be possible to link radioactive or chemotherapeutic agents to folic acid in order to deliver these effective treatments directly to tumor cells.

"Folate scans also may show physicians if and where ovarian cancer has spread within the abdominal

cavity, whether treatment is effective in eradicating cancers, and if and when ovarian cancer recurs. The scan may also be applicable to other cancers of the abdomen and pelvis."

This technology could be very important because there are few, if any, symptoms until the cancer has spread.

FolateScan was developed at Endocyte, a biotechnology company located at the Purdue Research Park. Endocyte licensed the patents for the technology for tagging the folic acid with a radioactive imaging agent from Purdue University. This trial, which is also in progress at Washington University in St. Louis and M.D. Anderson Hospital and Tumor Institute in Houston, Texas, is funded in part by the National Cancer Institute and is the first time folic acid has been used to detect

Briefs

JSB speaker

Lucy Jane King, MD, will present "Indiana Hospital for the Insane: Doctors and Patients 1880" at the Monday, Feb. 21, session of the John Shaw Billings History of Medicine Society meeting. The presentation begins at 4 p.m. in room 301 of the Ruth Lilly Medical Library.

Dr. King is a professor emerita in the IU Department of Psychiatry.

Editorial shift

Robert Rogers, MD, has hung up his stethoscope and his quill. In December, Dr. Rogers retired as a professor emeritus in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology. He also became the former editor of one of the longest running departmental newsletters on campus, *The Monthly*, with the January-February issue.

For 21 years, *The Monthly* has kept faculty and the campus informed on the highlights of the ob/gyn department. Dr. Rogers was the founding editor.

Kudos also go to Connie Myers, the associate editor of *The Monthly* since its inception, who is still hard

at work editing copy and laying out the publication.

Directing the efforts into the 21st century will be the second editor of the well-received newsletter, Jeffrey Rothenberg, MD.

U.S. deputy assistant health secretary is inaugural speaker at women's health CoE lecture

Federal initiatives to protect and improve health care services for women were highlighted Feb. 17, by Wanda Jones, DrPH, deputy assistant secretary with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Dr. Jones was the inaugural speaker at the Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield Annual Lecture in Women's Health presented by the IUSM National Center of Excellence in Women's Health.

Dr. Jones made her presentation "Health for All Women in the 21st Century" at the Indiana Historical Society in Indianapolis and at the Summit Club in Fort Wayne.

In addition to addressing demographic trends in diversity and aging, Dr. Jones discussed the creation of a new model of excellence in women's health care and the role played by the IUSM National Center of Excellence in Women's Health. As director of the HHS Office of Women's Health, Dr. Jones oversees the 17 centers of excellence in women's health in the United States.

Combined Seminar Series speakers for March announced

The March agenda for the Combined Seminar Series, conducted on Wednesdays from 4 p.m. to 5 p.m. in the Cancer Research Institute auditorium includes:

March 1 -- Thomas Gardner, MD, assistant professor of urology, microbiology and immunology, IUSM, "Adenoviral Gene Therapy for Treatment of Prostate Cancer."

March 8 -- Robert Bigsby, PhD, director, IUSM research laboratory obstetrics and gynecology, "Estrogens: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly."

March 15 -- Dr. Kenneth Anderson, associate professor, Harvard Medical School Dana Farber Cancer

Center, "Novel Biologically Based Therapies for Myeloma."

March 22 -- Mark Majesky, PhD, associate professor, Department of Pathology Center for Cardiovascular Development, Baylor College of Medicine, "Molecular Pathways Controlling Coronary Smooth Muscle Differentiation from Proepicardial Cells."

March 29 -- Dr. Michael Clarke, professor of medicine, University of Michigan, "Molecular Analysis of Hematopoietic Stem Cells."

Founders Day honorees from medicine, nursing

Two IUSM faculty members and one from the School of Nursing will be among those honored Sunday, March 5, at the annual Founders Day ceremony when Indiana University honors outstanding faculty members and students. This year's event will begin at 2 p.m. at Assembly Hall on the Bloomington campus.

Distinguished Professor of Medicine Lawrence Einhorn, MD, will receive the Frederic Bachman Lieber Memorial Award. This is the oldest of IU's teaching honors. Dr. Einhorn has been an IU faculty member since 1973 and is being recognized for his dedication and commitment to the education of medical students and residents.

Hugh C. Hendrie, MBChB, the Albert Eugene Sterne Professor of Psychiatry and chairman of the Department of Psychiatry, will receive the John W. Ryan Award for Distinguished Contributions to International Programs and Studies.

Dr. Hendrie is being recognized for unique and exceptional contributions to international epidemiological research in his numerous collaborations with scientists and clinicians in Africa, Canada, China, England, and the United States. His collaborations have added greatly to the body of research into the risk factors for Alzheimer's disease and other aging-related brain diseases.

Pamela Jeffries, DNS, assistant professor of nursing, IU School of Nursing, will be the recipient of a 1999 President's Award. Lauded as a highly effective teacher and a leader in the scholarship of teaching, she is earning an international reputation for the development, testing, and implementation of creative approaches to enhance the learning of students in academic settings and of registered nurses in service settings.

Submissions to Scope

Scope wants your news items.

There are three easy ways to submit story ideas or information to SCOPE:

- -- fax the information to 278-3502;
- -- e-mail the information to mhardin@iupui.edu;
- -- or mail the information to Mary Hardin, LO 401, IUPUI.

The deadline for copy is 8:30 a.m. Mondays, the week prior to publication.

<http://www.medicine.indiana.edu>
