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UAMS, University of Tennessee Health Science Center Researchers Receive CORNET Award Funding Cancer Research

LITTLE ROCK — Four research teams, comprised of scientists from the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) and University of Tennessee Health Science Center (UTHSC), have received funding for cancer research through the UTHSC/UAMS Collaborative Research Network (CORNET) Awards in Cancer.

Each team, made up of one UAMS researcher and one UTHSC researcher, will receive between $41,000 and $50,000 in pilot funding for one year, combining for a total of $191,000 in cancer research. The UTHSC/UAMS CORNET Awards in Cancer are designed to provide seed money to stimulate innovative, interdisciplinary, team-based cancer research, and prompt future extramural funding. Each institution contributed to the funding.

The research teams and topics are as follows:

- **HPV Genotypes Associated with Esophageal Cancer Excess in Poultry Workers** – David Shibata, M.D.; Eric Johnson, Ph.D., M.P.H., professor in UAMS College of Public Health’s Department of Epidemiology
- **TNF-α Targeted Nanomedicine for Improved Chemotherapy and Radiation Treatment in HNSCC** – Murali M. Yallapu, Ph.D.; Robert Griffin, Ph.D., associate professor in the UAMS College of Medicine’s Department of Radiation Oncology
- **Online vs. In-person Lay Health Advisor Training for Weight Loss** – Llana Graetz, Ph.D.; Karen Yeary, Ph.D., associate professor in the UAMS College of Public Health’s Department of Health Behavior and Health Education
- **An Investigation of the Microbiome and Mucosal Immune System in Breast Tumor and Normal Tissue from African American and non-Hispanic White Women** – Athena Starlard-Davenport, Ph.D.; Barbara Fuhrman, Ph.D., assistant professor in the UAMS College of Public Health’s Department of Epidemiology
“I believe we are seeing the beginning of several new collaborations involving investigators from UAMS and UTHSC that will advance our understanding of cancer as well as lead to new treatments and diagnostics,” said Lawrence Cornett, Ph.D., UAMS vice chancellor for research. “It’s been gratifying to see the response of cancer investigators from these two institutions following the 2017 Cancer Research Conference in Memphis.”

More than 100 cancer researchers met in May for the inaugural Cancer Research Conference at UTHSC to encourage partnerships and announce the UTHSC/UAMS CORNET Awards in Cancer.

“UTHSC and UAMS are both very strong research institutions that are close in physical proximity and have overlapping scientific areas of excellence,” said Steven R. Goodman, Ph.D., UTHSC vice chancellor for research. “Dr. Cornett and I are providing a platform on which our respective faculty can find research synergies where the sum is greater than the individual parts. We expect that these CORNET awards will be a springboard towards greater collaborative efforts leading to groundbreaking research and better treatments and cures for many forms of cancer.”

The UTHSC/UAMS CORNET Awards were conceived by Cornett and Goodman. While these are the first CORNET Awards in Cancer, the two institutions awarded funding to two researchers last year for substance abuse research.

Cynthia Kane, Ph.D., a professor in the UAMS College of Medicine’s Department of Neurobiology and Developmental Sciences, and Kristin Hamre, Ph.D., an assistant professor in anatomy and neurobiology at UTHSC, received $50,000 for a one-year study on the impact of alcohol on fetal brain development.

UAMS is the state’s only health sciences university, with colleges of Medicine, Nursing, Pharmacy, Health Professions and Public Health; a graduate school; a hospital; a northwest Arkansas regional campus; a statewide network of regional centers; and seven institutes: the Winthrop P. Rockefeller Cancer Institute, the Jackson T. Stephens Spine & Neurosciences Institute, the Myeloma Institute, the Harvey & Bernice Jones Eye Institute, the Psychiatric Research Institute, the Donald W. Reynolds Institute on Aging and the Translational Research Institute. It is the only adult Level 1 trauma center in the state. UAMS has 2,870 students, 799 medical residents and six dental residents. It is the state’s largest public employer with more than 10,000 employees, including about 1,200 physicians who provide care to patients at UAMS and its regional campuses throughout the state, Arkansas Children’s Hospital, the VA Medical Center and Baptist Health. Visit www.uams.edu or www.uamshealth.com. Find us on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube or Instagram.

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