

25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE LARGEST HEALTH DISPARITY STUDY IN THE WORLD

STORY ON PAGE 4



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII
CANCER CENTER



Randall F. Holcombe, MD, MBA

UH Cancer Center researchers recognized for community-based cancer research contributions

University of Hawai'i Cancer Center researchers and physicians were recognized for their contributions to community-based cancer research, and for their role in enrolling cancer patients to National Cancer Institute (NCI) treatment and cancer control clinical trials. The NCI Community Oncology Research Program (NCORP) recognized people from all over the country for outstanding achievements between 2017 and 2018.

"The six clinical faculty members and researchers honored by NCORP demonstrates the focus of the UH Cancer Center on community-based research and cancer clinical trial participation. We want to make sure that everyone in Hawai'i has access to cancer clinical trials in order to improve response to treatment, increase the chance of cure and prolong survival," said Randall Holcombe, MD, UH Cancer Center director.

The Hawai'i Minority/Underserved NCORP at the UH Cancer Center received recognition in the Platinum Award category. **Wade Kyono, MD**, UH Cancer Center clinical faculty, received a Gold Award, for enrolling 20-39 patients.

The following Hawai'i winners were honored with their Silver Award certificates, achieving more than 10-19 enrollments during the last year:

- ♦ **Jared Acoba, MD**, UH Cancer Center assistant professor
- ♦ **Jeffrey Berenberg, MD**, UH Cancer Center professor and principal investigator of the Hawai'i NCORP project based at the UH Cancer Center
- ♦ **Jonathan Cho, MD**, UH Cancer Center adjunct professor
- ♦ **Ronald Yanagihara, MD**, UH Cancer Center clinical faculty

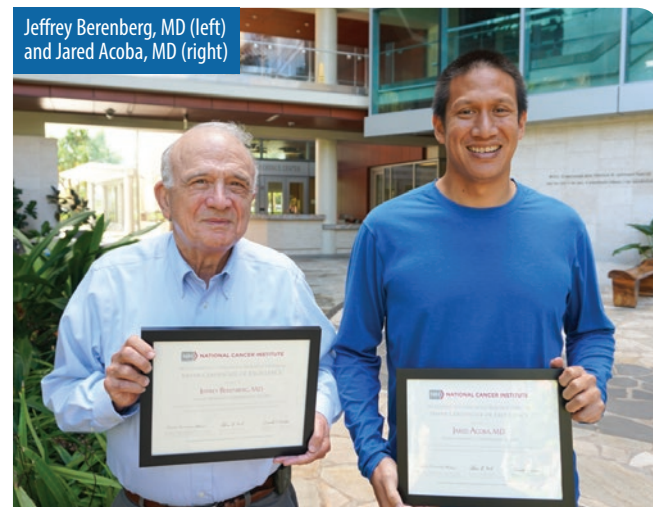
Virginia McMahon, BA, UH Cancer Center assistant clinical manager, received a retirement recognition celebrating her 30-year career contribution to community-based cancer research.

There is perhaps no better example of how research at the University of Hawai'i Cancer Center is focused on the people of Hawai'i than the Multiethnic Cohort (MEC) Study. One of the largest and most ethnically diverse epidemiologic studies has been conducted by researchers at the Cancer Center, with colleagues from USC, for the past 25 years and has led to seminal discoveries about the causes of cancer and how diet and environmental factors influence cancer patient survival. Understanding how breast cancer differentially affects different populations here in Hawai'i, how nicotine metabolism differences affect smoking-related lung cancer, and how internal fat deposition that can lead to liver cancer varies across different populations are just some of the incredible discoveries that have resulted from this study. I am so thankful for the faculty researchers who started, and those who currently conduct this study, but I am even more appreciative of the over 104,000 people in Hawai'i who committed their time and effort to participate in this research. The MEC truly represents an academic-community partnership, and emphasizes the value of a National Cancer Institute-designated cancer center in Hawai'i.

Aloha,

Randall F. Holcombe, MD, MBA

Randall F. Holcombe, MD, MBA
Director



Jeffrey Berenberg, MD (left) and Jared Acoba, MD (right)

UH Cancer Center coordinated breast cancer clinical trials may improve routine care

The UH Cancer Center is coordinating breast cancer clinical trials that may critically improve routine care and treatments.

“These trials are very important because breast cancer is a significant issue in Hawai‘i. Racial and ethnic minority groups are severely under-represented in breast cancer clinical trials in the rest of the United States, so participation of patients from Hawai‘i is doubly important,” said Randall Holcombe, UH Cancer Center director.

Aspirin Breast Cancer Clinical Trial

The ABC Trial

The ABC trial is an NCI-sponsored national clinical trial provided locally by the UH Cancer Center to determine if the addition of daily aspirin for five years will decrease the likelihood of cancer returning post-treatment for breast cancer patients who are at significant risk of recurrence despite completing all standard treatments.

“There is significant data to support the potential benefits of aspirin in breast cancer survivors. Aspirin is inexpensive and widely available, so this treatment could be used worldwide to improve breast cancer outcomes. The results will help determine if aspirin can become part of routine care for breast cancer patients. The only way to evaluate this is to conduct this very important clinical trial,” said Jessica Rhee, MD, medical director of the UH Cancer Center Clinical Trials Office.

“Highly skilled medical professionals and women who participated in earlier research and trials are foundational to my remission of cancer. It is now my responsibility and opportunity to participate in ongoing research, namely the aspirin trial, to benefit others diagnosed, and to contribute to the quest of conquering cancer,” said Sandra Hee, ABC clinical trial participant.

Digital Mammography Breast Cancer Clinical Trial

Tomosynthesis Mammographic Imaging Screening Trial (TMIST)

Tomosynthesis, also known as 3-D mammography, was FDA approved in 2012 and is becoming more widely used in the United States. However, 2-D mammography has been the standard method for breast cancer screening since 2005. The TMIST trial compares the two different mammography technologies to determine which is better at detecting breast cancers, and more impactful in reducing breast cancer deaths.

Although screening mammography has been shown to reduce breast cancer death rates, there has been recent controversy regarding the benefits and recommended schedule of screening mammograms especially in women younger than 50 years of age. This clinical trial will provide relevant information so women and their physicians better understand the impact of modern breast cancer screening.

“After helplessly watching my mother’s own cancer struggle, I decided to participate in the TMIST clinical trial during my regularly scheduled mammogram at the Queen’s Women’s Health Center. It was only a few questions and a blood test. I felt happy to help because not enough people are taking advantage of this opportunity to be part of a clinical trial sponsored by the National Cancer Institute and provided here as fruit of the partnership between The Queen’s Medical Center and the University of Hawai‘i Cancer Center,” said Cathy Morris, TMIST clinical trial participant. “It was something I could do to have an actual impact on the fight against cancer. The researchers and doctors need our help to give them the data they need to study. I wish more women knew how easy it is to help through TMIST.”

Jami Fukui selected for NCI Breast Immuno-Oncology Task Force

Jami Fukui, MD, University of Hawai‘i Cancer Center assistant researcher, was selected as a National Cancer Institute (NCI) Community Oncology Research Program (NCORP) Representative on the NCI Breast Immuno-Oncology (BIO) Task Force of the Breast Cancer Steering Committee (BCSC).

The BIO Task Force gives preliminary feedback on important questions, and helps identify the most significant scientific advances in breast cancer immunotherapy trials. The Task Force will aid in the support and selection of new, well-designed clinical trials.

Jami Fukui, MD



25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE LARGEST HEALTH DISPARITY STUDY IN THE WORLD

The UH Cancer Center proudly celebrated the 25th anniversary of the Multiethnic Cohort (MEC) Study on September 15. There were over 400 study participants, guests, speakers, researchers, staff and volunteers in attendance at the UH Cancer Center. The MEC Study is the most ethnically diverse epidemiologic study in the world that investigates the roles of lifestyle, diet, and genetics in cancer and other chronic diseases.

"The MEC Study is being conducted to understand the differences in risk that exist for cancer and other chronic diseases among the main ethnic/racial groups living in Hawai'i and California," said Loïc Le Marchand, MD, PhD, UH Cancer Center epidemiologist and principal investigator of the study.

The MEC Study, which started in 1993, follows a group of individuals over time to see how the cohort members, who develop cancer or other health conditions, differed in various risk factors several years before diagnosis. At the start of the study, over 215,000 Hawai'i and Los Angeles residents, aged 45 to 75, were recruited when they completed a 26-page questionnaire about their dietary habits and lifestyle, as well as their medical history. Information about the participants is updated through follow-up questionnaires sent every five years. The cohort is comprised of men and women primarily of Japanese, Native Hawaiian, African American, Latino and Caucasian origin.



Top: Unhee Lim, PhD, explains findings from the Obesity and Cancer study.
Bottom: MEC Study participants display memorabilia from their 25th anniversary gift bags.



Loic Le Marchand, MD, PhD, speaks at the MEC event.



"After all these years, over 70 percent of all cohort members still fill out their questionnaires, demonstrating the participants' exceptionally high level of commitment to the study," said Le Marchand.

Biological specimens from cohort members (mainly blood and urine samples) were collected mostly in 2001-2006. Samples on more than 70,000 cohort participants are being stored in special low temperature freezers in Hawai'i and California. "Dozens of investigators and close to a hundred trainees have used MEC study data and samples for their research," said Lynne Wilkens, DrPH, UH Cancer Center biostatistician and Co-Principal Investigator of the study.

"For 25 years now the MEC Study has continued to fulfill its mission to make a significant contribution to the goal of correcting cancer health disparities and preventing cancer and other chronic diseases in all populations," said Randall Holcombe, MD, MBA, UH Cancer Center director. "We are proud to lead a study with such significant impact at the UH Cancer Center. The MEC Study has gained national and international recognition among biomedical scientists, and is an example of the world-class research conducted at the University of Hawai'i."

The MEC Study has brought more than \$150 million in federal research funding to the University of Hawai'i. It has been funded since 1993 by the National Cancer Institute and is jointly conducted by the UH Cancer Center and the Keck School of Medicine at the University of Southern California (USC) in Los Angeles.

The MEC Study data has resulted in more than 600 published scientific articles on topics including smoking, diet, alcohol, coffee, meat cooking methods, physical activity, hormones, reproductive factors, genetics, inflammation, infections, sleep, air pollution, gut microbes, obesity and diabetes.

Toshiko Ono, age 99.

Toshiko worked as a registered nurse then as a public health nurse for the State of Hawai'i, Department of Health. She retired about 34 years ago and continues to live at home in Kaimuki.

Q:

HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT BEING A PART OF THE MEC STUDY?

I felt it kept my mind alert. I was happy to participate and filling out the questionnaires kept me very much alive. When you get to be close to 100 years old like me, you need to try to keep your mind active.

Whatever I could answer on the questionnaire, I would fill in the answers.

Q:

WHY DO YOU CONTINUE TO PARTICIPATE?

Now I would have a harder time doing it at my age because I have trouble remembering things. I would like to participate as much as I'm able to.

Q:

WHAT DO YOU HOPE COMES OUT OF PARTICIPATING IN THE STUDY?

I don't know what the results of the study were. But I'm happy to help if it will help others.

Laurence N. Kolonel Endowed Research Professorship

The UH Cancer Center has embarked on a goal to raise \$500,000 through philanthropy in honor of Laurence N. Kolonel, MD, PhD, professor emeritus at the UH Cancer Center.

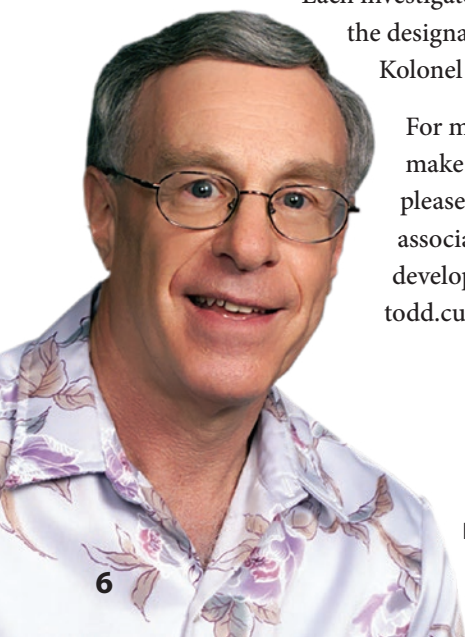
Kolonel served for 30 years as director of the epidemiology program at the Cancer Center. He is a world-renowned scholar in the fields of epidemiology and prostate cancer, and has published more than 500 articles in peer-reviewed scientific journals.

Kolonel was honored by the National Institutes of Health for his world-class research on diet and cancer. In 2013, he received the prestigious American Cancer Society Award for Research Excellence in Cancer Epidemiology and Prevention from the American Association for Cancer Research. He is also the co-founder of the Multiethnic Cohort Study, which follows more than 215,000 participants for health events in Hawai'i and California. He has been the esteemed mentor of many trainees and junior faculty in population sciences at the University of Hawai'i and elsewhere.

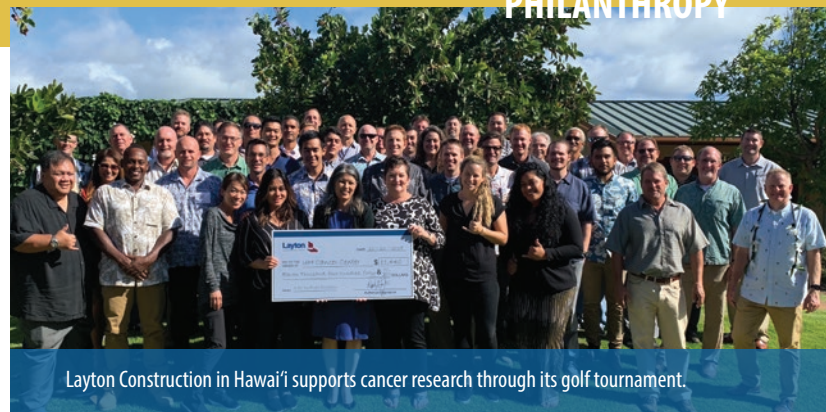
Funds will establish the Laurence N. Kolonel Endowed Research Professorship at the Cancer Center. This endowed professorship will provide support for a promising junior faculty researcher in cancer epidemiology. The recipient of the professorship will receive annual support from the proceeds of the endowment for three years to aid in his or her career development and provide research support critical for a junior academic investigator. After three years, the professorship will rotate to another junior researcher. The selection committee will be comprised of members of the Cancer Epidemiology Program at the UH Cancer Center.

Each investigator selected will carry the designation as a Laurence N. Kolonel Scholar.

For more information or to make a monetary donation, please contact Todd Cullison, associate director of development at 808-356-5757 or todd.cullison@uhfoundation.org.



Laurence N. Kolonel, MD, PhD



Layton Construction in Hawai'i supports cancer research through its golf tournament.

Layton Construction supports UH Cancer Center research

Layton Construction in Hawai'i and its employees donated more than \$11,000 to the UH Cancer Center from participating in the 5 for the Fight program to raise money for cancer research. 5 for the Fight encourages employees to contribute \$5 per pay period for cancer research. Local Hawai'i employees from Layton Construction are the newest contributors to this effort. In addition to continuing employee giving, plans are underway to hold two golf tournaments in 2019, one on Kaua'i and the other on O'ahu for increased cancer research support.

"When Layton Construction heard about 5 for the Fight, we decided to go all in and engage all employees, subcontractors, architects and engineers and all others within the Layton community," said Dave Layton, Layton Construction president.

"We appreciate the creative ways in which companies can encourage their employees to give," said Randall Holcombe, MD, UH Cancer Center director. "There simply is not enough federal funding to drive cancer research at the rate needed to make real impacts. Support from Layton employees helps move discoveries forward."

To learn more about this opportunity or to have your company contribute, please contact Todd Cullison at 808-356-5757 or todd.cullison@uhfoundation.org.



Tyler Dillon, Hawai'i executive vice president of operations and Will Summerhays, Hawai'i executive vice president for pre-construction at Layton Construction present check to Todd Cullison, UH Cancer Center associate development officer.

2nd Annual Oral Cancer Foundation Walk for Awareness

On Sunday, September 9, participants and organizers of the 2nd Annual Oral Cancer Foundation (OCF) Walk for Awareness raised \$20,000 for the organization. Event organizer Joanne Ebesu became an advocate for this cause after being diagnosed with tongue cancer in April 2016. As a non-smoker and rare alcohol consumer, she was devastated and shocked to learn her diagnosis. Oral cancer is aggressive and kills roughly one person every hour of every day. While tobacco use and alcohol use are still primary causes of oral cancer, Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) is a growing cause of this disease in patients under 50.

During Ebesu's recovery from major surgery and radiation, she learned about the Oral Cancer Foundation (OCF). OCF is a small national non-profit, public service charity dedicated to save lives through increasing education, research, and early detection of oral cancer. Ebesu organized the walk to make a difference.

The event was held in partnership with the UH Cancer Center, John A. Burns School of Medicine and Hawai'i Dental Hygienists' Association at the UH Mānoa Campus Center in honor of oral cancer patients and survivors. Medical and dental professionals from The Queen's Medical Center's Head and Neck Institute and Dental Clinic and other dental practices provided free oral cancer screenings to participants and the public.



UH Cancer Center employees and their families smiling after completing the Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure 10K and 5K events.



UH Cancer Center staff member Crissy Kawamoto reports for bussing duty at the Run for Hope weekend's "Taste of Hawai'i Island Dinner" on September 7. Each year Cancer Center staff and friends support the Four Seasons Hualālai's fundraising events for cancer research.



Shelle Santoki of the UH Cancer Center engaged a kupuna at the 34th Annual Hawaii Seniors' Fair at the Blaisdell Center in September. Over 20,000 people attended this event! Over 3,200 pieces of educational material from the National Cancer Institute and the UH Cancer Center were disseminated! Mahalo to Good Life Expo Inc. for sponsoring the Cancer Center booth!



Participants at the 2nd Annual Oral Cancer Foundation Walk for Awareness.



Left to right: Speakers Michael Ling, MD, Sandra A. Dreike, MS, CGC, Howard Jung, MD, Clayton Chong, MD, MPH, and Charles Kim, MD at the 5th Annual Prostate Cancer Forum on September 19.



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 www.uhcancercenter.org.

Randall F. Holcombe, MD, MBA, Director
University of Hawai'i Cancer Center

Adelia Dung, President
Friends of the University of Hawai'i Cancer Center

Sharon Shigemasa, RN, MS – Editor
Events and Information Coordinator
University of Hawai'i Cancer Center



UNIVERSITY
of HAWAII
MĀNOA

An Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Institution

Nonprofit
Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Honolulu, Hawaii
Permit No. 753

Recruiting for smokers study

Worldwide, lung cancer is still the most common cancer and the leading cause of cancer-related deaths. Cigarette smoking remains the primary risk factor for this disease. We have learned from the Multiethnic Cohort (MEC) Study that compared to Caucasians, Native Hawaiians have a 50 percent greater risk of developing lung cancer, and Japanese Americans have a 25 percent lower risk.

The objectives of this study are to identify lung cancer risk biomarkers and to improve our understanding of the mechanisms underlying ethnic/racial differences associated with smoking. The identification of risk biomarkers can aid in the development of targeted lung cancer screening efforts and novel interventions within high risk populations.

The study is currently recruiting 300 volunteers of Japanese, Caucasian or Hawaiian ancestry who are cigarette smokers and are 21 years of age or older. Participants are asked to complete a one-time study visit and will be compensated for their time and effort.

Anyone interested in more information can contact us at:
(808) 237-3901 or smokersstudy@cc.hawaii.edu.



Study coordinator Leslie Welsh explains the smokers study to an interested kupuna at the Senior Fair.