



MCC RESEARCH ROUND-UP



COLORECTAL CANCER IS AFFECTING MORE YOUNGER PEOPLE THAN EVER. WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT IT?

You may have seen more news coverage lately about colorectal cancer affecting younger people at an increasing rate. This is sounding some alarm bells in the medical community because we typically assume that cancer risk goes up with age and that people 65+ are most likely to be diagnosed. But, in the U.S. at least, this trend has been shifting.

Since the late 1990s, colorectal cancer diagnoses in people under 50 years old have risen—today, colorectal cancer is the deadliest form of cancer among men and the second deadliest form of cancer among women. Although experts don't know what exactly is causing the uptick in these cases among younger adults, researchers have pinpointed several actions we can take today that will both help us stop colon cancer from developing and catch it early on.

The term colorectal cancer describes all cases of cancer that start in the colon or rectum. It's one of the few cancer types for which we have accessible, validated, and approved methods of screening for finding the cancer early. And, there are also known prevention guidelines that might help prevent colorectal cancer all together.

When it comes to colorectal cancer screening guidelines, it is recommended that adults 45-75 years old get checked, or screened, for colon cancer with either a colonoscopy every ten years or a stool test every one to three years. The best screening method is different for each person—talk to your doctor about the best test for you.

For prevention tips, check out our Community Resource Library at z.umn.edu/crc-prevention.

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE



ANOTHER HISTORIC YEAR FOR MCC

Whenever I am asked, "What is the Masonic Cancer Center?", I always respond that MCC is not a building, not a clinic, not a department, but a group of people who are dedicated to eliminating cancer.

As spring rolls around in our 26th year as a National Cancer Institute designated Comprehensive Cancer Center, we are reflecting on the progress we've already made this year as we work to advance knowledge and enhance care so that, together, we can write another page in cancer's last chapter.

Every day, I get to witness our staff, faculty, researchers, students, trainees, and community partners push their limits and collaborate to make groundbreaking discoveries and change the lives of our patients.

We could not do this work without you. Thank you for being part of our community.

Douglas Yee, MD
Director

AIR POLLUTION AND CHILDHOOD CANCERS



In a new study led by the Masonic Cancer Center and the U of M Medical School, researchers found that exposure to air pollution and vegetation may impact childhood cancer development.

The study, led by cancer center researchers Lindsay Williams and David Haynes, examined over 6,000 children with cancer and 109,000 children without cancer in Texas. The study team found that, from 1995-2011, increased exposure to a kind of air pollution called PM2.5 during the birth year increased the risk of developing childhood cancer.

The good news? The study team may have found an antidote.

Williams and her team found that being exposed to residential greenness—green space and vegetation around the home—reduced the risk of the two most commonly diagnosed types of brain tumors in children!

Though more studies are needed to look at the complex chemical mixture that is air pollution, this is promising knowledge as we work to reduce the risk of cancer for Minnesotans and beyond via changes in our environments and behaviors.

WHAT ARE THE TYPES OF CANCER RESEARCH?



Researchers study every stage of the cancer journey. What we know about cancer—how to reduce cancer risk, how it develops, how to treat it, and how to help people cope with it—all depends on different types of research and what is discovered from those studies as a result.

MCC is a community of over 600 researchers who study cancer in a variety of areas.

The research our doctors, scientists, and educators do can be broken down into four main types: basic, clinical, population-based, and translational.

These four types of cancer research are crucial team players in helping us develop whole-of-life methods that decrease the burden of cancer on everyone who calls Minnesota home.

Learn more about the types of research at: cancer.umn.edu/news

CAN WE PREDICT TREATMENT OUTCOMES FOR OVARIAN CANCER PATIENTS?

In a major scientific breakthrough, newly published research from MCC has the potential to transform the landscape of ovarian cancer treatment.

Findings indicate that ovarian cancer patients with high levels of stroma—the non-cancerous tissue that provides support to tumors—are twice as likely to show something called chemoresistance to the typical ovarian cancer treatment.

Chemoresistance is the ability of cancer cells to cope with the presence of therapeutics—a key challenge oncologists seek to understand and overcome.

CANCER DISPARITIES AND HPV PREVENTION



February was National Cancer Prevention Month! For our February Fireside Chat with the Office of Community Outreach and Engagement, we sat down with doctors April Wilhelm and Serena Xiong to chat about cancer disparities and HPV prevention.

During the chat, both April and Serena brought up how important HPV vaccines are as a tool for preventing HPV. In the U.S., these vaccines are recommended for children aged 11-15. The HPV vaccine can be given in your local clinic or at school-based health clinics.

When asked about the importance of representation in medicine,

Doctors Martina Bazzaro and Emil Lou found that a biomarker called high tumor stroma proportion (TSP) identified during routine biopsy and surgical samples from patients with ovarian cancer is a powerful predictor of patient outcomes and chemoresistance in ovarian cancer. Tumors with high TSP were associated with patients with poorer outcomes who were more likely to develop resistance to chemotherapy.

Read the whole story at z.umn.edu/ovarian-cancer-predictor

both doctors emphasized that representation is crucial. In order to establish equitable care, patients must feel like they are in a safe space—one where they can see themselves represented in the care team.

This is why involving community members in our work and giving them a seat at the table is so important for MCC. Whether it is our Community Impact Board, in-person events, or our virtual Fireside Chats, our door is always open!

Learn more about how you can get involved and engaged with us at cancer.umn.edu/coe.



Photo/Heather Vanis

THRIVING AFTER BREAST CANCER

A letter from breast cancer survivor Heather Vanis to Dr. Anne Blaes

Dear Dr. Blaes,

Just over nine years ago, I walked into the M Health Fairview Masonic Cancer Clinic for a mammogram and ultrasound to “ease my mind” after discovering a lump in my breast. A week later, I walked into your office, my mind spinning with questions and worry. I couldn’t fathom how breast cancer had found its way into my life at such a young age, with twin two-year-olds waiting for me at home.

You delicately delivered my diagnosis, fully aware of the impact it would have on my life. You patiently guided my husband and me through an enormous amount of information and tirelessly answered all our questions. Your confidence and expertise shone through as you assured us that you and your team had a treatment plan.

Your wonderful care extended far beyond that first day. [...] Cancer treatment takes a toll on the body, but I remember you telling me that what I went through should never stop me from doing what I want to do. Thank you for everything you’ve done for me and so many others.

**YOUR GIFT POWERS HOPE.
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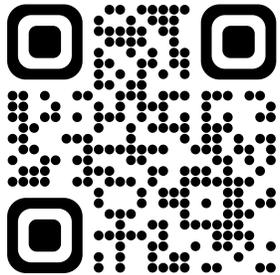
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We are Minnesota's cancer center.

Together, we're advancing knowledge and enhancing care that reduces the burden of cancer on Minnesotans.

Peek inside for the latest news from us.

CONNECT WITH US:



Upcoming Event | Doors Open Minneapolis

**DOORS OPEN
MINNEAPOLIS**

May 18-19, 2024



Cancer and Cardiovascular
Research Building,
University of Minnesota

