

## THE WEEK'S TOP STORIES

### INTERNATIONAL STUDY SHOWS IMMUNE RESPONSE TO OVARIAN CANCER MAY HELP PREDICT SURVIVAL

A type of white blood cell called tumor-infiltrating lymphocytes has been found present in the tumors of patients with high-grade ovarian cancer, according to a team of international cancer researchers led by investigators from Mayo Clinic and the University of New South Wales Sydney. The discovery may help predict a patient's survival.

"We know that a type of tumor-infiltrating lymphocyte called cytotoxic CD8 are present in the tumors of patients with high-grade ovarian cancer," said Matthew Block, MD, PhD, an oncologist at Mayo Clinic that co-led the research team. "However, little was known about the role in fighting high-grade ovarian cancer, compared to other clinical factors."

The researchers studied more than 5,500 patients from nine different countries, 3,196 of whom had high-grade ovarian cancer, to discover more about the role of these lymphocytes. They discovered that patients with high-grade ovarian cancer showed the most infiltration with tumor-infiltrating lymphocytes, which were associated with longer overall survival.

"This study shows the higher the level of cytotoxic CD8 tumor-infiltrating lymphocytes in a tumor, the better the survival for patients with high-grade ovarian cancer," said Block. "Developing a better understanding of factors that increase cytotoxic CD8 tumor-infiltrating lymphocytes will be the key to developing treatments to achieve better outcomes in treating patients with high-grade ovarian cancer."

Full results of the study by the Ovarian Tumor Tissue Analysis Consortium were published on Oct. 20 in JAMA Oncology.

"This is by far the largest study of this type and would not have been possible without scientists from North and South America, Europe, and Australia all working together," said Susan Ramus, PhD, of the University of New South Wales Sydney.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### UMN MEDICAL SCHOOL LAUNCHES PIPELINE PROGRAM

The University of Minnesota Medical School has launched its BA/MD pipeline program in partnership with the University's Office of Undergraduate Admissions and the College of Liberal Arts. Its first group of students began in the program this fall.

The program follows a cohort model with up to ten incoming high school freshmen students selected each fall to participate in a seven-year early assurance program that leads to matriculation into the University of Minnesota Medical School after the third year. Those accepted into the program will declare undergraduate majors in biology, society, and environment, or physiology. They are expected to meet rigorous standards and achieve certain milestones while maintaining good GPAs and earning competitive MCAT scores. The program is meant to enable students to gain the knowledge and confidence needed to thrive during their medical training and careers.

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**LIFE LINK III AIR MEDICAL TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM AWARDED**

Life Link III has been named Program of the Year by the Association of Air Medical Services (AAMS). The award recognizes a national or international emergency medical transport service that has demonstrated a superior level of patient care, management prowess, high quality leadership, customer service, safety consciousness, marketing ingenuity, community service, and commitment to the medical transport community as a whole.

The company provides air medical transportation for patients in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and North Dakota, and throughout the U.S. via helicopter and airplane. It also provides on-scene emergency response and inter-facility transportation. Life Link III is one of the largest hospital-based non-profit consortium programs in the country, with nine healthcare systems comprising the Life Link III Consortium that guides the company's clinical and business practices.

**STUDY SHOWS LOW AWARENESS OF BREAST CANCER SCREENING RISK AMONG U.S. WOMEN**

Most women in the U.S. aren't aware that routine mammograms can lead to overdiagnosis and overtreatment of breast cancer, according to results of a new study conducted in collaboration with the University of Minnesota School of Public Health.

A survey was conducted to assess women's awareness and perceptions of two of the main potential harmful effects of breast cancer screening—overdiagnosis, which refers to detection of cancers that grow so slowly that they will never cause health problems during a woman's life, and overtreatment, which refers to unnecessary treatments such as surgery or medications that expose women to various potential complications and side effects while offering minimal health benefits.

The results showed that only approximately 16 percent of the women were aware of the potential risk of overdiagnosis from breast cancer screening and 18 percent were aware of the concept of overtreatment. Women under the age of 40 were the least likely to have heard about overdiagnosis.

When presented with statements about overdiagnosis and overtreatment, most women had negative perceptions of the messages—one in four agreed with and found statements about overdiagnosis and overtreatment to be believable. Even fewer women evaluated them as strong arguments to consider in their own decisions about mammograms. Those who recently had a mammogram were even less convinced by the statements. In addition, women with a routine source of medical care, such as a family doctor or neighborhood clinic, were less likely to believe statements regarding overdiagnosis.

The researchers say there is a growing expert consensus that the phenomenon of cancer overdiagnosis is real and may require a re-evaluation of aggressive breast

**NEWS IN BRIEF**

"This program is designed to produce physicians from broadly diverse backgrounds to serve our increasingly diverse population in the state," said Taisha Mikell, director of pipeline programs for the University of Minnesota Medical School. "We are hoping the mentorship and exposure will encourage students to stay in practice in our state's healthcare workforce."

**ONCOLOGIST RECOGNIZED FOR RESEARCH ON CANCER AMONG NATIVE AMERICANS**

Judith Kaur, MD, a medical oncologist at Mayo Clinic, has received the Richard Swanson Humanitarian Award from Augustana College for her work studying cancer among Native Americans. She serves as hospice medical director, professor of oncology, and medical director for the Native American Programs in the Mayo Clinic Cancer Center and is involved in national research and outreach programs to American Indians and Alaska Natives.

Kaur, a member of the Choctaw Tribe, aims to improve cancer screening, access to care including clinical trials, and efforts to increase survival rates in native populations. Her recent research looks at the role of diet, exercise, smoking, alcohol, and genetics. She is also analyzing possible health similarities between U.S. tribes and other countries, including China and Africa.

She earned her medical degree at the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center.

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cancer screening strategies. They also believe their findings have implications for communicating with patients about the potential harms of breast cancer screening and emphasize that women with a strong history of following advice to get mammograms may be an important target for interventions to improve informed decision-making.

### CLINICAL TRIAL TESTING STEM CELLS TO HEAL WOUNDS LAUNCHES AT SANFORD HEALTH

Sanford Health is conducting a clinical trial that will use adipose-derived stem cells for people with non-healing leg wounds.

The phase 1 trial, which opened in September with expanded criteria, will study the safety and efficacy of using this stem cell therapy as a treatment for non-healing leg ulcers (an open sore that has been present for at least three months). It will accept 36 participants ages 18 and older who have a wound between three and 25 square centimeters (about 1 to 9 inches) and have an A1C less than nine. The research team will conduct follow-up visits with participants after receiving the initial treatment.

“This clinical trial can help explore treatments for people with non-healing wounds, including people who have diabetes and others with conditions that affect their quality of life,” said David Pearce, PhD, executive vice president of innovation and research at Sanford Health.

This is the second clinical trial using adipose-derived stem cells at Sanford Health. Recently, it conducted a study using them for people with rotator cuff injuries that was the first FDA-approved clinical trial using a person’s own fat-derived adult stem cells to treat shoulder injuries.

“The researchers of Sanford Health are dedicated to safely testing how adipose-derived stem cells can heal the body,” said Pearce. “We aim to truly legitimize the use of adult-derived stem cells for healing purposes in the United States.”

### MINNESOTA RESEARCHER ELECTED TO NATIONAL ACADEMY OF MEDICINE

Leif Solberg, MD, senior research investigator and senior adviser at HealthPartners Institute, is one of 80 new members that have been elected to the National Academy of Medicine in recognition of their outstanding professional achievement and commitment to service. He is the only new member from Minnesota.

New members are elected by current members through a process that recognizes individuals who have made significant contributions to the advancement of the medical sciences, health care, and public health. The 80 new members bring the National Academy of Medicine’s total membership to 2,127.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### PHYSIATRIST RECOGNIZED BY CANCER LEGAL CARE

Nancy Hutchinson, MD, a physiatrist at Allina Health specializing in cancer rehabilitation, has received the 2017 Medical Champion of the Year award from Cancer Legal Care for her contributions to the Minnesota-based organization.

“Nancy isn’t content with the status quo and at every turn seeks to change systems and policies that are unjust, impractical, and just plain don’t make sense,” said Lindy Yokanovich, founder and executive director of Cancer Legal Care. “In referring many of her patients to Cancer Legal Care over the years, Nancy is a go-to champion for us, writing letters of support to accompany our grant funding requests and advocating for the cancer-related legal needs of her patients.”

Hutchinson served as medical director of cancer rehabilitation at Allina Health from 2005 through 2016. She is on the Steering Committee of the Minnesota Cancer Alliance, where she is charged with implementation of the state cancer plan. She is also a certified lymphedema therapist through Klose Training and holds certification by LANA, the Lymphology Association of North America. Hutchinson earned her medical degree from Wake Forest University School of Medicine in Winston-Salem, NC.

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