I previously reported that we received favorable comments regarding our NCI designation at the January 2009 site visit. I am now pleased to report that we have also received a favorable score from the study section when it sat in May. Many are now asking, “when will we hear from the NCI about whether we will retain our NCI designation?” The short answer is “it depends.” We should hear soon after the Council sits in mid-June to make official funding/designation decisions based on the scores assigned in the May study section. However, these final decisions cannot be released or announced until internal approvals for their release are given. That means that an announcement could be delayed, perhaps until the fall. I am as eager to know as anyone, but we have done all that we can do and now must wait for word from the NCI, whenever it may come. I remain cautiously optimistic that we will get good news, and that it will have been worth the wait. In the meanwhile, the CTRC Executive Committee has been busy planning a strategy to help develop Cancer Center basic, translational, population-based and clinical programs along lines that best fit our current and anticipated needs and strengths.

A key component of our growth and development strategy relates to how we can be optimally competitive for CPRIT (Cancer Prevention and Research Institute of Texas) funding. A significant and developing story is that the Texas Legislature just voted to release the first $450 million of the proposed $10 billion total to fund CPRIT ventures. We expect to receive rules on how to apply for these funds, and to get a list of CPRIT funding priorities by August 2009. CPRIT board member Lionel Sosa visited with CTRC and UTHSCSA leadership twice in May to give us updates. Our very own Amelie Ramirez has been appointed to the CPRIT Scientific and Prevention Advisory Council. I am working with Debbie Morrill in Development to generate strategies for attracting philanthropic dollars useful to match CPRIT funds, to increase the competitiveness of our proposals. We need your input and suggestions regarding how we can create competitive applications for CPRIT submissions.

Our future continues to look bright in no small measure due to the extraordinary opportunities CPRIT affords. Retaining our NCI designation will also be a great competitive advantage, if we succeed. CTRC members continue to be our most valuable asset. I appreciate the help of all those continuing to position us to capitalize on these significant opportunities.

Sincerely,

Ted Curiel, MD, MPH
A faster and more precise way to kill cancer cells and shrink tumors with radiation was used on a patient for the first time in San Antonio April 22 at the Cancer Therapy and Research Center (CTRC) at The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio. It took less than two minutes to deliver the high-energy X-rays to 67-year-old Air Force veteran Zack Washington, who has early-stage prostate cancer. “I didn’t feel a thing,” Washington told CTRC faculty and staff after his first treatment with the new Varian Trilogy™ linear accelerator with RapidArc™ technology.

The machine makes a single revolution around the patient while aiming very small radiation beams – the size of a pencil tip – at the tumor with varying levels of intensity and from multiple angles. Typical radiation therapy of this type, known as IMRT or intensity-modulated radiation therapy, takes about 10 minutes, because the machine has to stop at numerous intervals as it rotates around the patient.

“A two-minute treatment time means patients do not have to hold still for long, thus reducing the likelihood that patients’ movements could compromise the pinpoint accuracy of the radiation dose,” says Chul S. Ha, M.D., professor and chairman of the radiation oncology department at the UT Health Science Center. He adds that the reduction in treatment time provides more comfort for the patient.

After five days of treatment, Mr. Washington reported no side effects and expressed confidence about a good outcome. More than 90 percent of patients with early stage prostate cancer are cured by radiation therapy. RapidArc high-definition technology makes treatments more precise by shaping the radiation beam so that it conforms closely to the tumor’s three-dimensional shape. Right before treatment, technicians use imaging equipment to view the tumor’s exact location, size and shape. The patient lies on a robotically-controlled table that can be adjusted by touching a button and will align the patient on as many as six different planes (up and down, front and back, left and right) to the precise treatment position.

“Our goal is to deliver the lowest dose possible to the healthy tissue surrounding the tumor, while maximizing the radiation to the cancerous cells of the tumor,” says medical physicist Nikos Papanikolaou, Ph.D., professor of radiation oncology at the UT Health Science Center and chief of the radiation physics division. “RapidArc™ is a revolutionary way to deliver efficient and painless radiation treatments. We are very excited to offer this technology to South Texas.”

Five longtime faculty members of The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio have been invited to join the UT Academy of Health Science Education. Only 12 faculty of UT System health institutions are admitted annually.

The Health Science Center’s new members are Susan Naylor, Ph.D., professor; Frank Weaker, Ph.D., associate professor; and Thomas King, Ph.D., associate professor, all from the Department of Cellular and Structural Biology; Michael Lichtenstein, M.D., professor and chief of the Department of Medicine Division of Geriatrics, Gerontology and Palliative Medicine; and Nan Clare, M.D., professor in the Department of Pathology. Dr. Clare is the senior associate dean in the School of Medicine and associate dean for academic affairs.

The five will be inducted for outstanding teaching of tomorrow’s biomedical scientists and health care professionals. This includes direct teaching in the classroom, mentorship of research projects in laboratories and development of innovative health science curricula.
Celebrating Survival: 2009 Surviving and Thriving Conference—A Photo Essay

CTRC staff created a Western-themed weekend getaway for 50 cancer survivors April 17-19 at the YO Ranch and Conference Center in Kerrville. Meandering over the “Trails to Survivorship” exposed guests to a wide range of experiences:

- inspirational presentations from professional speakers who were themselves cancer survivors
- workshops on yoga, intimacy, meditation, tai chi, managing emotions, and other topics
- “competitive” rodeo events
- hayride through a wild animal preserve
- bingo, chocolate fountain, door prizes and fun!
- Western dancing
- free therapeutic massages and Reiki sessions

About half of this year’s survivors were current or former CTRC patients; the rest were from the community. The conference was made possible with support from Citi, the title sponsor, and the Minnie Stevens Piper Foundation, co-sponsor.

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Even the cow chips are bigger in Texas!
Administrative assistant Victor Correa (left) looks a bit stunned as breast cancer survivor Linda Love sends that chip flying!

Kicking up their heels!
Administrative assistant Brenna Lee (left), Maria Zeitz, breast cancer survivor, nurse and counselor.

Accept this humble gift, my queen!
Breast cancer survivor Dolores Castillo (left) laughs as she accepts her door prize from web specialist Todd Baribault.

Bring on the prizes!
80-year-old colon cancer survivor Joy Moore lives up to her given name.

Chowering down!
Research nurse Kelly Burns, resident physician Trey Jones.

Do-si-do and away we go!
Facilitators Rev. Darwin Huartson (left), Miranda Key (center), and event organizer Mary Jackson.

Chill out!
Clinical nurse Karen Olguin (left) visits with longtime patients Martha Arredondo (center) and Heather Hermstad.
Dr. Ian Thompson, chair of the department of urology in the School of Medicine and director of the CTRC GU Clinic, was featured in a special report by the National Cancer Institute’s Cancer Bulletin titled *Decades Later, Seeing the Benefits of Radiation after Prostate Surgery*. The special report highlights Dr. Thompson’s randomized study of 425 men who found men who received radiation therapy within 12 weeks of surgery delayed a recurrence of the cancer, and this led to longer survival compared with men who did not receive the treatment. The study was sponsored by Southwest Oncology Group (SWOG) and appeared in the March *Journal of Urology*. To view the entire special report, please click [here](#).

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**GCCRI research team receives international attention for its viral cloning technique**

Researchers at the Greehey Children’s Cancer Research Institute (GCCRI) are busy fielding requests from scientists in Korea, Germany UK, and the US in the wake of a recent journal article they published. The article, authored by Shou-Jiang Gao, Ph.D. (senior author), along with colleagues Fuchun Zhou (first author), Ph.D., and Quihua Li, M.S., presented a novel method they developed to shortcut the process of discovering and cloning new viruses.

“Our approach is highly efficient and enables scientists to avoid several tedious and time-consuming laboratory processes,” said Dr. Gao, HEB Distinguished Chair for Cancer Research and a professor in the departments of pediatrics, microbiology and immunology, molecular medicine and medicine. “This technique, which has many applications, and most importantly does not rely on any existing sequence information, could be used to discover previously unidentified viruses, particularly those that cause cancer.”

Dr. Gao says the international scientists who have contacted him are interested in obtaining a reagent that his tumor virology program developed to clone viruses that resist standard cloning methods from cells or tissues that harboring viruses. The new discovery builds on several years of laboratory work. In 2002, Dr. Gao and his research team successfully cloned a complete and productive Kaposis’s sarcoma-associated herpesvirus (KHSV), one of the largest known viruses, and the cause of the deadly cancer Kaposis’ sarcoma, commonly seen in AIDS patients. “While we had to spend over one year to clone the first KHSV, we now can achieve it in a few days,” Dr. Gao said.

As many as 15-20 percent of cancers might be caused by viral infections. For example, about half of AIDS-related lymphomas are caused by infection of KHSV and of Epstein-Barr virus (EBV). Dr. Gao says the causes of most of the other half remain unknown. He hopes this new technique will help discover whether viruses are also responsible for other AIDS-related lymphomas. Dr. Gao is building local collaborations. He works closely with investigators at the Dental School, HIV Clinics and CTRC to study the natural history and etiology of AIDS-related malignancies.


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**San Antonio Business Journal honors six faculty as Health Care Heroes**

The San Antonio Business Journal chose 17 Health Care Heroes for 2009, and six of them are Health Science Center faculty. The annual awards covering several categories of health care recognize outstanding achievements of individuals and organizations. Each honoree was featured in an article in the April 10 issue of the journal. The health science center winners, their categories and selected highlights from each article are detailed below.

- **Tyler Curiel,** M.D., M.P.H.—**Biomedical Research.** Executive Director, CTRC at the UT Health Science Center.
- **William L. Henrich,** M.D., MACP--**Administrative Excellence.** Interim President.
- **G. Richard Holt,** M.D., M.S., M.P.H., M.A. --**Lifetime Achievement.** Professor and founding chair, Department of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery.
- **David F. Jimenez,** M.D., as part of the Brain & Stroke Network – **Health Care Innovator.** Chairman, Department of Neurosurgery.
- **Amelie Ramirez,** Dr.P.H. – **Health Care Provider** (non-physician). Professor and Founding Director, Institute for Health Promotion Research.
- **Steven Wolf,** M.D. – **Outstanding Physician.** Vice Chairman of Research, Department of Surgery.
Most likely, you know parents or grandparents in San Antonio who have cancer. You may not know that CTRC offers a support group for cancer patients’ kids or grandkids who suffer in their own way.

“I Count, Too’ is designed to help kids identify their own feelings about cancer and how it affects them personally,” says Mary Jackson, RN, MSN, director of Patient and Family Services at CTRC. “Kids learn strategies for coping with feelings and taking care of themselves.”

For one hour on the fourth Thursday of every month from 6 – 7 p.m., kids come to the CTRC for free pizza combined with music, games, play and other creative activities. Licensed professional counselors Kathryn Campbell, MA and Christina Villarreal, PhD, work with kids aged 5-11 and those aged 12-17. Kids are welcome to join at no charge and at any time. They meet in the CTRC library, just inside the 1st floor entrance of the Grossman Building.

To sign up or learn more information, contact Mary Jackson at 450-5774.

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Amelie Ramirez recognized as ‘Woman of Vision’ by Hispanic Business magazine

Dr. Amelie G. Ramirez, Director of the Institute for Health Promotion Research (IHPR) at The University of Texas Health Science Center, was recognized as one of several “Women of Vision” in the April 2009 issue of Hispanic Business magazine, which annually honors the significant achievements made by Hispanic women in America.

Dr. Ramirez was recognized for her three decades of outreach, research, speaking engagements, and student training to try to eliminate health disparities. A tireless advocate for Latino health, Dr. Ramirez launched the IHPR (http://ihpr.uthscsa.edu) at the Health Science Center in 2006 specifically to tackle health disparities among South Texans. She also directs two national research networks on Latino health issues, heads several other research programs, authors many scientific journal articles, and speaks at conferences across the nation. To find out more about Dr. Ramirez and her work, visit her Institute for Health Promotion Research at http://ihpr.uthscsa.edu.

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CTRC implements Epic for patient registration and billing

On May 1, 2009, CTRC began using Epic software for patient registration and billing. The purpose of implementing this industry-leading software was to centralize all billing and payment processing services for CTRC and UT Medicine into one common system.

This was the culmination of six months of planning, testing, and training by CTRC and UT Medicine and represents a giant step towards streamlining CTRC’s business operations and enhancing revenues. In addition to the new software, new processes and workflows were implemented to optimize our methods for managing patients and clinical operations.

Mosaiq, CTRC’s EMR, will continue to be utilized for patient scheduling, medical records, dictations, assessments and other EMR functions. In addition, Mosaiq will continue to perform Record &Verify functions for the linear accelerators in Radiation Oncology.

In addition to the Epic software, two electronic interfaces were implemented to allow data to be passed between Epic and Mosaiq. The first interface passes patient demographic information from Epic to Mosaiq so that basic data does not have to be keyed into each system. The second interface passes technical and professional charges from Mosaiq EMR and Harvest LIS to Epic for billing.

These new systems and workflows will help CTRC become more efficient at registering patients and verifying insurance so we can better serve our patients. In addition, these systems and processes will help us become more efficient at capturing and processing charges so we can increase our revenues.

If you have any questions regarding Epic, please contact Don York at 450-1938.
Save the Date

16th Annual Vulcan Fun Shoot to benefit CTRC
Saturday, September 12, 2009
National Shooting Complex

For more information or for registration questions, please contact: 210-524-3500

This team skeet shooting event has raised more than $1.3 million for CTRC over the past 15 years.

Reserve Your Spot for the Book & Author Luncheon!

The 18th Annual San Antonio Express-News Book & Author Luncheon is set for Wednesday, October 21, 2009 at the Marriott Rivercenter, the luncheon will begin at 11:30 a.m. with book sales opening at 10:00 a.m. This event features six prominent authors who will entertain the audience with captivating tales from their latest releases as well as autograph their books purchased at the luncheon.

Proceeds from this fundraiser benefit The CTRC at The UT Health Science Center’s Institute for Drug Development Phase I Clinical Research Program. This is the largest integrated and most comprehensive Phase I oncology program in the world!

Luncheon co-chairs Margie Klesse, Mary Henrich and Rose Marie Banack want to remind you that this event sells out quickly, so make your reservation today! The Book & Author Luncheon Committee is also looking for underwriters, program advertisers and prize donors.

For more information, or for a 2009 Reservation form, please visit www.CTRC.net or call/email Sabrina Paniagua at (210) 450-5553 or Paniaguas2@uthscsa.edu.

10th annual Partners Shopping Card Program
Save Money, Save Lives!
October 23—November 1, 2009

Each year through this unique program, the Cancer Center Council raises thousands of dollars for CTRC. Since the program’s inception, more than $1.3 million has been raised in support of CTRC.

Excitement over the 2009 Partners Shopping Card program is already building and we hope we will be able to count on your support.

1. Purchase a Partners Shopping Card for $50
2. Shop at more than 300 participating stores and receive a 20% discount during the ten-day period (October 23 – November 1, 2009)
3. Save Lives—your $50 donation will directly support CTRC

For more information, call (210) 450-5571 or email ccc@uthscsa.edu.
PUBLISHED PAPERS


Hallam, C and Keller, C. Bringing strategic planning to the research lab. NCURA Magazine (National Council of University Research Administrators), Volume XI, No.2, April/May 2009 pp. 42-43 [ Feature ]


**PRESENTATIONS**


Curiel, Tyler. Moderated the session “Developing a successful career in academic medicine” at the American Association for Cancer Research in Denver, CO April 2009.


Keller, Charles. Rhabdomyosarcoma: Stem Cell & Myofiber Origins and Therapeutic Targets 02/10/2009. (Pediatric Cancer Biology Program, Department of Pediatrics, Stanford University)

Keller, Charles. Rhabdomyosarcoma: Cell(s) of Origins and Therapeutic Targets 03/18/2009 (Boston Biomedical Research Institute, Boston, MA)


Velez, Luis, IHPR. “Keeping Our Children Away from Tobacco/Manteniendo a Nuestros Niños Lejos del Tabaco.” Hispanics Unidas (Escuelitas Program) in several different San Antonio ISD and area schools, including Ball Elementary School (April 2), Crockett Elementary School (April 9), New Frontiers Charter School (April 20), and Loma Park Elementary (April 22).


**GRANTS AND AWARDS**


Weintraub, Susan. Thermo Fisher Orbitrap high-resolution, high-mass accuracy spectrometer, nano-flow HPLC, and accessories. NIH High-end Instrumentation Grant.

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**Funding Opportunities**

**American Association for Cancer Research**

[www.aacr.org](http://www.aacr.org)

**American Cancer Society** (October 1 deadline for most, with grant applications available July 1)

[www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)

**Concern Foundation**

[www.concernfoundation.org](http://www.concernfoundation.org)

**Department of Defense Congressionally Directed Medical Research Program (CDMRP)**

[http://cdmrp.army.mil](http://cdmrp.army.mil)

**Joan Scarangello Foundation to Conquer Lung Cancer**

[www.unitingagainstlungcancer.org](http://www.unitingagainstlungcancer.org)

**Leukemia and Lymphoma Society**


**National Cancer Institute**


**Susan G. Komen for the Cure**

[http://ww5.komen.org](http://ww5.komen.org)

**Voelcker Foundation**