Research Team Honored for Innovative Science to Advance Cancer Research

Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center/University of Washington Team Receives the AACR’s Fifth Annual Team Science Award

ORLANDO, Fla. — The Fifth Annual AACR Team Science Award will be given to a team of internationally renowned molecular biologists, epidemiologists, biostatisticians and clinicians from Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center and University of Washington who have worked together on human papillomavirus (HPV) for more than 20 years.

This award recognizes an outstanding interdisciplinary research team for its innovative and meritorious science that has advanced or will likely advance cancer research, detection, diagnosis, prevention or treatment.

“This team’s work exemplifies how cancer research can dramatically impact public health,” said Margaret Foti, Ph.D., M.D. (h.c.), chief executive officer of the AACR. “The researchers’ long-term collaborations in basic science, epidemiology and clinical research played a vital role in increasing our understanding of HPV and developing the HPV vaccine, which has the potential to prevent more than half a million HPV-associated cancers each year, worldwide.”

By combining molecular assays to detect and characterize HPV infections with epidemiologic approaches, the 12-member team, led by Denise Galloway, Ph.D., head of the Cancer Biology Program at Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, showed that HPVs are associated with nearly all genital-tract cancers and with a significant proportion of head and neck cancers. They conducted what is among the largest case-control studies of HPV-associated cancers and revealed that a variety of exposures — notably a high number of sexual partners and early age at first intercourse — were common across most of the anogenital cancer sites. The researchers also identified factors beyond sexual activity, such as immunosuppression, that contributed to HPV infection.

The team played a pivotal role in making virus-like particle-based vaccines a reality, from the early basic science work to the epidemiology, to the proof-of-principle clinical trial that showed that a monovalent HPV 16 vaccine protected against HPV 16 infection and disease.

“Our team is thrilled to receive such a wonderful honor,” said Galloway. “Credit is due to the entire HPV research community — the investigators, research fellows, students and study participants — who helped to make our efforts a reality. We are delighted to have been able to contribute to an international team of scientists that collectively moved the field from a state in which the etiology of cervical cancer was not known, to now have vaccines to prevent HPV.”

Additionally, Galloway and colleagues developed and tested new strategies for early detection and treatment of HPV-related cancers. Their clinical studies demonstrated the cost-effectiveness of using HPV DNA testing of clinician-collected cervical samples or self-collected vaginal samples in screening programs as well as the potential for using novel biomarkers to more accurately diagnose HPV-related cancers and precancerous lesions.

The AACR Team Science Award, generously supported by a grant from Eli Lilly and Company, is given to affect change within the traditional cancer research culture by recognizing those individuals and institutions that
value and foster interdisciplinary team science. The team will collectively receive a $50,000 prize and will be cited for its leadership role in fostering team science. Honorees include (in alphabetical order):

- **Janet Daling, Ph.D.**, member emeritus, public health sciences division, Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, and professor emeritus, department of epidemiology, University of Washington;

- **Denise Galloway, Ph.D.**, member, human biology and public health sciences divisions, Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, and research professor, departments of microbiology and pathology, University of Washington;

- **James Hughes, Ph.D.**, professor, department of biostatistics, University of Washington;

- **Nancy Kiviat, M.D.**, professor, department of pathology, University of Washington;

- **Laura Koutsky, Ph.D.**, professor, department of epidemiology, University of Washington;

- **Margaret Madeleine, Ph.D.**, assistant member, public health sciences division, Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, and assistant professor, department of epidemiology, University of Washington;

- **Constance Mao, M.D.**, assistant professor, department of obstetrics and gynecology, University of Washington, and director, Harborview Women’s Colposcopy Clinic;

- **Barbara McKnight, Ph.D.**, member, public health sciences division, Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, and professor, department of biostatistics, University of Washington;

- **Peggy Porter, M.D.**, member, human biology and public health sciences divisions, Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, and professor, department of pathology, University of Washington;

- **Stephen Schwartz, Ph.D.**, member, public health sciences division, Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, and professor, department of epidemiology, University of Washington;

- **Hisham Tamimi, M.D.**, professor, department of obstetrics and gynecology, University of Washington; and,

- **Long-fu Xi, Ph.D.**, research associate professor, department of pathology, University of Washington.

The AACR Team Science Award will be presented at the AACR 102nd Annual Meeting 2011 opening ceremony on Sunday, April 3, in the Orange County Convention Center, in Orlando, Fla.