



PRESS RELEASE

International Conference to Take a Fresh Look at a Cancer-Causing Protein

MYB Conference to foster new research efforts to study protein mutation that causes cancer

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

July 1, 2013 — Albuquerque, NM (UNM Cancer Center) — How do our cells know what to do and when to do it? To answer this fundamental question, biologists have learned much in searching for, cataloging, and discovering the complicated interplay of the proteins within our cells. They've discovered that some proteins appear to control others and thus direct how a cell behaves. One protein called MYB, for example, controls how adult stem cells grow and multiply. To further study this protein and what may cause it to lead to cancer, Scott Ness, PhD, is convening an international conference at the University of New Mexico Cancer Center.

Dr. Ness is a UNM Professor of Molecular Genetics and Microbiology at the UNM School of Medicine, and is Director of the Keck-UNM Genomics Resource and Associate Director of Shared Resources at the UNM Cancer Center. His research focuses on how MYB functions inside adult stem cells. "MYB regulates other genes," he says. "It regulates many cell types like hematopoietic (blood) cells, epithelial cells and neural cells. It's active in all cells that are dividing. But if it is mutated it becomes oncogenic."

Mutated proteins are incorrectly-constructed proteins. The cellular process to construct a protein is complicated because several specialized proteins, along with DNA and RNA, interact. So to study MYB mutations, researchers use an arsenal of tools: powerful imaging techniques that allow them to see proteins on a cell's surface; entire-genome sequencing that can show where changes to a cell's DNA lurk; and high-throughput screening methods that can rapidly show a vast array of protein-protein interactions. Biologists also study the mutations in different animals, like flies.

"We think that the MYB protein is important in a variety of human cancers," says Dr. Ness. He adds, "Adenoid cystic carcinoma is a relatively rare tumor, but in that case we know that MYB is directly affected." So the conference will foster new joint research efforts between people around the world who study this protein by bringing them together to talk about their work. "We want to encourage new kinds of collaborations and strategies for designing ways to target MYB," Dr. Ness explains, "and to treat these kinds of tumors."

About the International MYB Conference

The UNM Cancer Center and the Adenoid Cystic Carcinoma Research Foundation are sponsoring the International MYB Conference to be held July 22 and 23, 2013 at the UNM Cancer Center. The

conference brings together international experts on the activities, functions and mechanisms of MYB protein regulation. Speakers and participants will explore research confirming MYB as an important driver mutation in human cancers and the use of high-throughput screening technologies in increasing translational research work. To learn more and to register, visit the conference website:

<http://cancer.unm.edu/research/international-myb-conference/>

About the Adenoid Cystic Carcinoma Research Foundation

Adenoid Cystic Carcinoma affects 10,000 people in the United States and 1,200 new cases are diagnosed each year. The disease may strike anyone. It tends to grow along nerves and metastasize in the lungs. The Adenoid Cystic Carcinoma Research Foundation (ACCRF) supports research into adenoid cystic carcinoma that will accelerate the development of improved therapies and a cure for the disease. To learn more, visit: <http://www.accrf.org/>

About the UNM Cancer Center

The UNM Cancer Center is the Official Cancer Center of New Mexico and the only National Cancer Institute-designated Cancer Center in the state. One of just 67 premier NCI-Designated Cancer Centers nationwide, the UNM Cancer Center is recognized for its scientific excellence, contributions to cancer research, the delivery of high quality, state of the art cancer diagnosis and treatment to all New Mexicans, and its community outreach programs statewide. Annual federal and private funding of over \$72 million supports the UNM Cancer Center's research programs. The UNM Cancer Center treats more than 60 percent of the adults and virtually all of the children in New Mexico affected by cancer, from every county in the state. It is home to New Mexico's largest team of board-certified oncology physicians and research scientists, representing every cancer specialty and hailing from prestigious institutions such as M.D. Anderson Cancer Center, Johns Hopkins University, and the Mayo Clinic. Through its partnership with Memorial Medical Center in Las Cruces, the UNM Cancer Center brings world-class cancer care to the southern part of the state; its collaborative clinical programs in Santa Fe and Farmington serve northern New Mexico and it is developing new collaborative programs in Alamogordo and in Roswell/Carlsbad. The UNM Cancer Center also supports several community outreach programs to make cancer screening, diagnosis and treatment available to every New Mexican. Learn more at www.cancer.unm.edu.

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