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UT Southwestern participates in nationwide study offering free lung tumor genetic testing

DALLAS – May 11, 2010 – UT Southwestern Medical Center is the only site in North Texas participating in a national study that offers advanced lung-cancer patients free screenings of their tumors for genetic mutations, some of which might be targets for treatment with existing or experimental therapies.

UT Southwestern's Harold C. Simmons Comprehensive Cancer Center is one of 14 medical sites in the U.S. to participate in the Lung Cancer Mutation Consortium Protocol, a federally funded study coordinated by researchers at the University of Colorado.

Dr. Joan Schiller, chief of hematology/oncology and deputy director of the Simmons Comprehensive Cancer Center, is the principal investigator of the study at UT Southwestern.

"The aim of the project is to identify mutations in malignant lung tumors," Dr. Schiller said. "Ultimately, we hope to use this information to develop therapies that specifically target or disable those mutations, providing an opportunity to customize treatment to each patient's tumor characteristics. This will lead to more effective and less toxic therapies."

The study's investigators believe that identifying mutations in malignant lung tumors will help advance understanding of the frequency of mutations, their relationship to each other and their association with the tumor's clinical features.

Study participants will have their tumors tested at no cost to them and will have access to their results. In addition, medical professionals will guide participants to any current clinical trials of drugs that target specific mutations found in their tumors. Researchers at the 14 consortium sites also will compile a database so that as new therapies are developed, they can contact patients and link them to clinical trials investigating their specific tumor mutations.

Lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer death in the U.S., and the second-most diagnosed form of cancer. More than 60 percent of patients diagnosed with lung cancer have never smoked or quit smoking decades ago.

Individuals interested in participating in this study locally should contact Erin Fenske, clinical research manager for the lung cancer program, 214-648-1688.

(MORE)

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The study is made possible by a \$5.2 million Grand Opportunities grant to the University of Colorado, funded through the National Institutes of Health by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. Information about additional study sites is available at <http://www.uccc.info>

Visit <http://www.utsouthwestern.org/cancercenter> to learn more about clinical services for cancer at UT Southwestern.

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