Donors Make a Difference: Largest Gift in Institution’s History

Among Friends: James A. Baker, III

MD Anderson Celebrates 70th Anniversary and a Winning Team:

Anne and John Mendelsohn
A Passion for Making Cancer History®

MD Anderson’s third president will step down to resume personalized cancer therapy research

By Laura Harvey

To John Mendelsohn, M.D., president of MD Anderson, Making Cancer History® is more than a mission or a marketing tagline. It’s been his focus for 15 years, as he’s led MD Anderson to quadruple in budget, triple in space and double in patients served and work force, thanks in no small part to philanthropic support that’s increased almost tenfold under his tenure.

Now, as he begins the next chapter of his career, Mendelsohn is eager to bring new meaning to the phrase.

Mendelsohn is preparing to step down as president and return to the clinical and translational research that he started 30 years ago. In fall 2011, after a new president is in place, Mendelsohn will co-direct the new Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan Institute for Personalized Cancer Therapy with Gordon Mills, M.D., Ph.D., chair of Systems Biology (see related story on page 7).

“The dream we all share is that five years from now attacking the products of the genes that cause cancer will be standard therapy for all cancer patients.” — John Mendelsohn, M.D.

Mendelsohn says he’s excited to be able to return to the process of designing, developing and studying therapies that target the abnormal genes and gene products detected in each patient’s cancer.

“When I began this research in 1980, it was an outlier,” says Mendelsohn. “My first grant was turned down when we proposed we could block the activity of the tyrosine kinase that’s attached to the epidermal growth factor receptor to inhibit cancer cell growth. But after our first publication I received strong grant support from the National Cancer Institute.”

Mendelsohn’s most proud that the institution has lived by a vision statement crafted at the onset of his tenure:

“We shall be the premier cancer center in the world based on the excellence of our people, our research-driven patient care and our science.”

As a result, Mendelsohn says, the world recognizes MD Anderson as the premier hospital for cancer care.

“I believe MD Anderson, more than any other institution, sets the standard today,” he says. “I’m very proud of our growth in knowledge and in the ability to provide better care for cancer patients. The numbers are astounding. Philanthropy has increased tremendously. We continue to be the No. 1 recipient of grants and grant dollars from the National Cancer Institute. The amount of revenues we contribute to research has increased, as have our contracts with pharmaceutical companies, more than doubling the number of patients we place on clinical trials each year.”

Video: www.MakingCancerHistoryCampaign.com
By Laura Harvey

During the tenure of John Mendelsohn, M.D., as president, MD Anderson has:

- Increased private philanthropy to more than $175 million annually.
- Launched the institution’s largest fundraising campaign, Making Cancer History®: The Campaign to Transform Cancer Care, reaching the original $1 billion mark more than two years ahead of schedule and increasing the goal to $1.2 billion under more than two years ahead of schedule and increasing the goal to $1.2 billion under more than two years ahead of schedule and increasing the goal to $1.2 billion under more than two years ahead of schedule.
- Created the Duncan Family Institute for Cancer Prevention and Risk Assessment in the new Dan L. Duncan Building to find ways to predict and reduce cancer risk at the genetic, population and behavioral levels, and to explore health disparities and ways of improving health care delivery.
- Greatly expanded the nation’s largest clinical trials program for experimental cancer therapies, with nearly 10,000 registrants participating annually.
- Expanded degree-granting programs, awarding bachelor’s degrees and certificates in allied health disciplines and jointly awarding Ph.D.s in biomedical sciences with The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston.
- Earned more competitive research grants and grant dollars from the National Cancer Institute than any other U.S. cancer center or university.
- Built a worldwide collaborative network of more than 20 sister institutions and opened collaborative clinical programs bearing MD Anderson’s name in the greater Houston area; Orlando, Fla.; Madrid, Spain; Albuquerque, N.M.; Istanbul, Turkey; and Gilbert, Ariz. (September 2011).

Developed the Red and Charline McCombs Institute for the Early Detection and Treatment of Cancer to explore new approaches for translating scientific discoveries into improved treatments and built five new facilities on the South Campus.

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As MD Anderson leads the effort to develop and offer truly personalized cancer medicine, I reflect on my own initial research in the field, beginning in 1980 working with Gordon Sato, Ph.D., at the University of California-San Diego. Our premise was that if we could block the activity of the epidermal growth factor receptor tyrosine kinase, we might be able to inhibit cancer cell growth.

Interrupting the signaling from a growth factor receptor and a cancer-causing oncogene was a novel idea then. Today it is the basis for much of personalizing cancer care: determining the genetic aberrations of each patient's tumor and prescribing therapy that targets the gene products functioning abnormally in that individual's tumor. Successful trials at MD Anderson and elsewhere already have demonstrated the efficacy of this approach. During the past 30 years, scientists have identified hundreds of targets, and there are more than 800 experimental drugs and biologics in the pipeline designed to attack them.

Soon I will be working with Gordon Mills, M.D., Ph.D., as we co-direct the Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan Institute for Personalized Cancer Therapy. We are confident that personalized cancer therapy will one day be standard practice for every patient. Until then, important and costly research must continue. I am grateful for the generosity of all who support our vision for the future of cancer care. Together, we are Making Cancer History®.
Doubleheader at Minute Maid Park

Event celebrates MD Anderson’s 70th anniversary, Anne and John Mendelsohn

By Sarah Watson

The Making Cancer History® team had lots to cheer about May 5 as 2,000 MD Anderson fans celebrated the institution’s 70th anniversary and honored Anne and John Mendelsohn, M.D. The event scored a home run for philanthropy, raising $4.3 million to establish the Anne and John Mendelsohn Personalized Cancer Therapy Fund.

“It occurs to me that Making Cancer History®, like baseball, is a team sport,” said Mendelsohn. “MD Anderson is fortunate to have all of you on our team. You’ve been clutch hitters for us many times, generously sharing your expertise, energies and financial resources to help further our cutting-edge research and patient care initiatives.”

Two masters of ceremonies — Scott Pelley, in his first public appearance as the newly named CBS Evening News anchor-managing editor, and Sam Champion, ABC’s Good Morning America weather anchor — directed a packed program featuring Luci Baines Johnson; UT System Chancellor Francisco Cigarroa, M.D.; UT System Board of Regents Chair Gene Powell; and Susan and James A. Baker, III. The Bakers served as honorary chairs with Barbara and George H.W. Bush, who greeted the crowd via video message. Cancer survivors James Wiley, BOV member John Holland and MD Anderson Children’s Cancer Hospital nurse and former pediatric patient Shelby Robinshared their own personal stories of Making Cancer History®.

Teaming up as event chairs were Janet and Ernie Cockrell, Nancy Loeffler and Charline and Red McCombs. Honorary co-chairs were Lynn and Peter Coneway, Edwin L. Cox, Brenda and John Duncan, Sally and Forrest Hoglund, Barbara and Randall Meyer, Madeleine and T. Boone Pickens and Jeri and Marc Shapiro.

Following dinner, guests enjoyed a Texas cultural tribute with the Houston Symphony Orchestra, mezzo soprano Susan Graham, concert violinist Sarah Chang, Larry Gatlin and the Gatlin Brothers, and, in a Cinco de Mayo salute, soprano Barbara Padilla with The University of Texas Pan-American Mariachi Aztlan and Luz de Luna Ballet Folklórico. A spectacular finale featured the Houston Children’s Chorus and vocalist Mary Griffin with the Abundant Life Cathedral Choir singing “Hope Can Move Mountains.”

Indeed, it was an evening of hope, perhaps best expressed by Anne Mendelsohn, whose heartfelt remarks centered on the words of an 11-year-old Children’s Art Project designer: “We love life. We love the MD Anderson.”

Video: www.MakingCancerHistoryCampaign.com
I am now in my second experience as a cancer patient at MD Anderson and am doing fine. My first tour began in late 1994. I have survived extensive treatment, two surgeries and many checkups since. During the past 15 years, I have referred approximately 200 patients to MD Anderson. What makes our cancer center the finest in the world begins with superb physicians, but a major contribution to its greatness comes from the skill, dedication and warm and friendly treatment rendered by support staff. Every patient I have ever referred expresses deep gratitude that they are treated like family. All of us are remarkably fortunate to have the world’s finest cancer center right here in Houston. Monroe D. Anderson, John H. Freeman and William B. Bates, the founding members of the MD Anderson Foundation, would be extremely proud to see the results of their endeavors of many years ago.

Do you promise? Tell us why you’re committed to Making Cancer History® by sending an email to Promise@mdanderson.org.
Great Expectations Inspire Couple’s Philanthropy

By Michelle Moore

Scheridan and John Eddie Williams live by an eight-word philosophy: To whom much is given, much is expected. This core value has led the couple to donate much of their lives to philanthropic efforts, especially those pertaining to children.

It’s no surprise, then, that MD Anderson Children’s Cancer Hospital is at the top of their list. They recently gave $250,000 to the osteosarcoma research of Eugenie S. Kleinerman, M.D., professor and head of the Division of Pediatrics.

“I have such respect for Dr. Kleinerman,” says Sheridan, who owns an interior design business. “She has devoted her life to children’s cancer.”

Sheridan joined The University Cancer Foundation Board of Visitors (BOV) in 2008. When fellow BOV members asked her to be part of a Children’s Cancer Hospital advisory group, she enthusiastically accepted. In that capacity, Sheridan is helping raise funds to renovate and expand the pediatric inpatient unit on the ninth floor of the Albert B. and Margaret M. Alkek Hospital to include a pediatric intensive care unit and day hospital. The project also includes plans to renovate the Robin Bush Child and Adolescent Clinic on the seventh floor, where MD Anderson’s pediatric patients see their doctors.

Sheridan describes John Mendelsohn, M.D., president of MD Anderson, as “a fantastic leader.”

“We all hate to see him step down as president,” she says, “but I know he’s interested in doing research in personalized cancer therapies and will continue his good work through that.”

John Eddie echoes those sentiments. His appreciation for MD Anderson dates to the 1990s when, as a trial lawyer, he represented the state of Texas against the tobacco industry. Charles A. LeMaistre, M.D., former president of MD Anderson, was one of the chief witnesses.

“There is no surprise that representation I got to know people at MD Anderson,” says John Eddie. “The institution offers the finest cancer research and patient care in the country. It’s a real asset for our community.”

Sheridan and John Eddie actively support numerous nonprofit organizations in Houston.

“We are fortunate to be able to contribute to programs that benefit the community,” says John Eddie. “Cancer can be a devastating diagnosis. It’s exciting to see such tremendous progress and what research has achieved. Many people are beating this terrible disease and living productive and happy lives as a result.”

John Eddie proudly points to a photograph of his wife accepting an award, one of many such awards as Sheridan graces best-dressed lists from Houston to New York. She recently landed a spot as an ambassador for designer Donna Karan. Perhaps more impressive are the words Sheridan offers in response: “It’s nice to dress up, but philanthropy is what it’s all about. Looking good means nothing if you aren’t making a difference.”

Mangurian Legacy Boosts Cutting-Edge Leukemia Research

By Michelle Moore

N ational furniture chain owner, real estate developer, thoroughbred breeder, Boston Celtics owner. The late Harry T. Mangurian Jr. of Fort Lauderdale, Fla., was both a successful businessman and a compassionate philanthropist. Among the World War II veteran’s many legacies is The Harry T. Mangurian Jr. Foundation Inc., which he established with close friends and business associates Stephen Mehallis, now chairman and president, and Gordon Latz, vice president-grants, a decade before his death from leukemia in December 2008.

In December 2010, the Mangurian Foundation gave MD Anderson $250,000, the first payment of a $1 million pledge. The funds will support the leukemia research of Laurence Cooper, M.D., Ph.D., associate professor in the Division of Pediatrics. Cooper and his team have advanced immunotherapy for leukemia to the clinical stage. The Harry T. Mangurian Jr. Fund for Leukemia Immunotherapy will help them manufacture clinical-grade T cells genetically modified to eliminate leukemia.

In 2008, when Mangurian received disheartening lab results, he sought treatment with Jorge Cortes, M.D., professor of medicine in MD Anderson’s Department of Leukemia. Cortes had years earlier successfully treated Latz’s brother for chronic myelogenous leukemia.

“Dr. Cortes was our quarterback,” says Latz. “He helped facilitate the process of Harry’s treatment back home in Florida. We were so pleased that we gave our first gift of $220,000 to MD Anderson to support his work.”

Boston Celtics owner Harry T. Mangurian Jr., from left, Red Auerbach and Bill Fitch watch as Larry Bird signs with the team in 1978. Photo courtesy of Gordon Latz
By DeDe DeStefano

The Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan Foundation recently gave MD Anderson $150 million. The gift marks the largest in the institution’s history and the largest single contribution from a living individual or family foundation to an institution in the Texas Medical Center or any Texas university. It will enable MD Anderson to make significant advances in personalized cancer therapies and accelerate the pace of pancreatic cancer research.

“The extraordinary generosity of the family through the Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan Foundation exemplifies the family’s long tradition of philanthropy,” says John Mendelsohn, M.D., president of MD Anderson. “The gift will pay tribute to the late His Highness Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan, the founder and former President of the UAE, and his sons, His Highness Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the current UAE President; and the late Sheikh Ahmed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan. Their generosity makes possible:

The Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan Building for Personalized Cancer Care, a new, 600,000-square-foot state-of-the-art building on approximately five acres on MD Anderson’s main campus. The building will integrate delivery of laboratory and clinical research to support personalized cancer care and will house:

- The Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan Institute for Personalized Cancer Therapy, a comprehensive program designed exclusively to individualize cancer care so that each patient receives treatments that target the genetic and molecular abnormalities in his or her tumor. Mendelsohn will co-direct the institute with Gordon Mills, M.D., Ph.D., who also chairs MD Anderson’s Department of Systems Biology. Hundreds of MD Anderson’s faculty will participate.

- The Sheikh Ahmed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan Center for Pancreatic Cancer Research, dedicated to accelerating scientific discovery that will make a pivotal impact on pancreatic cancer, one of the most fatal types of cancer, which is rising in incidence yet remains significantly underfunded compared to other disease sites. Research in personalized cancer therapies will help physicians determine the specific genetic and molecular abnormalities in each patient’s cancer and then prescribe or develop safer, more effective therapies that directly target those abnormalities.

“Personalized cancer therapy holds tremendous promise for the future of cancer care,” says Mendelsohn. “This gift will escalate progress exponentially, playing a critical role in our efforts to employ the most effective cancer treatment the first time, every time.”

Fueling cancer care and research

Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan Foundation’s $150 million gift to MD Anderson also will establish fellowships to further education in oncology as well as three permanent endowment funds:

- The Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan Distinguished University Chair
- The Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan Distinguished University Chair of Medical Oncology
- The Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan Distinguished University Chair.

—D.D.
**PHILANTHROPY IN ACTION**

**Jori’s Parents Invest in Hope**

*By Sara Farris*

To make a difference — that’s the common motivator for many donors and volunteers at MD Anderson. But what’s the actual power of one donor within a multibillion-dollar cancer research industry?

It’s a lot, according to Dennis Hughes, M.D., Ph.D., assistant professor at MD Anderson Children’s Cancer Hospital. Hughes cites one example in particular: an effort that began as a small fundraiser walk that’s translated into a 15-fold return on investment in his research laboratory.

For Nina and Brook Zemel, founders of the Jori Zemel Children’s Bone Cancer Foundation, the reward comes from knowing they’re helping other children diagnosed with a rare bone cancer called osteosarcoma.

“A strong and long relationship has existed between MD Anderson and Susan G. Komen, “ says Paterson. “One plus one equals 10 when you add together the energy of these two beautiful organizations. I owe my life to both.”

**Giving Back Is Job One**

*By Michelle Moore*

A few years ago, Dorothy Paterson, of Houston, told a friend that she wanted to get her career out of the way so that she could devote her life to philanthropy. He replied, “I think your job was just preparation. Philanthropy is your career.”

Paterson is a 13-year breast cancer survivor who was successfully treated at MD Anderson. Today she relies on the spirit and resilience that got her through that experience to help others on their cancer journeys.

In 2002, Paterson became one of the original Pink Ribbons volunteers, MD Anderson breast cancer survivors who offer support to current breast cancer patients. Since 2007, she has served on the institution’s Advance Team advisory board.

“I get to work with people who have big hearts and passion to show the world what MD Anderson is all about,” says Paterson.

Paterson’s advocacy has led her into full-time volunteer work for Susan G. Komen for the Cure®, the world’s largest breast cancer organization. To date, Komen for the Cure® has awarded more than $55 million for breast cancer research at MD Anderson.

Once traveling the world as a geologist for large oil companies, Paterson now travels the world as an international race ambassador on the Komen Board of Directors. She has assisted in starting up Komen Race for the Cure® events around the world, recently in Israel and Egypt.

Paterson says she’s proud to be a part of her two favorite organizations.

“A strong and long relationship has existed between MD Anderson and Susan G. Komen,” says Paterson. “One plus one equals 10 when you add together the energy of these two beautiful organizations. I owe my life to both.”

**VEPS: Reason to Smile**

Anne and John Mendelsohn, M.D., center, join former first lady Barbara Bush and longtime MD Anderson supporter Helen Viottor at the Volunteer Endowment for Patient Support (VEPS) luncheon at River Oaks Country Club in Houston. Viottor’s husband, George, was an MD Anderson patient and volunteer who founded VEPS, hoping it would grow to $1 million in 10 years. With that goal achieved in just nine years, the endowment currently stands at more than $2.7 million. Since 1992, VEPS has disbursed more than $1.6 million to fund patient-oriented programs and services at MD Anderson. Nancy B. Loeffler, chair of The University Cancer Foundation Board of Visitors, was keynote speaker at this year’s March luncheon. Photo by Pete Baatz

— Gail Goodwin
By Michelle Moore

Houston: Jack Nicklaus-Jim Nantz

More than 800 MD Anderson supporters and Jack Nicklaus fans welcomed the golf pro, businessman and philanthropist for A Conversation With a Living Legend® Oct. 19 at the Hilton Americas-Houston. Emmy-winning sports personality Jim Nantz interviewed Nicklaus, who has attained 118 professional tournament victories worldwide as well as a record 18 professional major championship titles. This year’s fourth annual event raised more than $472,000 for MD Anderson Children’s Cancer Hospital. Event chairs Katie and Harry Cullen Jr., Rose and Harry Cullen Sr. and Kathy and Jody McCord contributed greatly to the fundraising efforts, along with honorary chairs Ginger and Jack Blanton, Kelli and Eddy Blanton and Leslie and Jack Blanton Jr. Teen pediatric patient and golf enthusiast James Ragan emceed the event. He brought audience members to tears and to their feet, rewarding Ragan with a standing ovation as he shared his story and love for MD Anderson, golf, Nicklaus and Nantz.

San Antonio: Vicente Fox-Tom Johnson

A Conversation With a Living Legend® made its debut in San Antonio Oct. 29 with more than 650 guests at the Grand Hyatt hotel. The event honored Vicente Fox, former president of Mexico, and benefited the Blanton-Davis Ovarian Cancer Research Program at MD Anderson. Fox sat down for a one-on-one interview with Tom Johnson, MD Anderson Board of Visitors member and former president and CEO of CNN. He discussed the importance of education, jobs and health care in efforts to boost quality of life for citizens of Mexico. Thanks in part to the fundraising efforts of event chairs Kim and Clyde Johnson IV and Paula and Clyde Johnson III, along with honorary chairs Peggy and Lowry Mays and Charline and Red McCombs, the inaugural event raised more than $197,000.

Dallas: Bob Schieffer-Tom Brokaw

Event chair Gale Sliger and honorary chairs Margot and Ross Perot helped orchestrate the 21st annual A Conversation With a Living Legend® in Dallas. More than 800 guests made their way to the Hilton Anatole Dec. 13 to partake of a slice of journalism heaven as renowned journalist and NBC correspondent Tom Brokow interviewed Bob Schieffer, legendary CBS News chief Washington correspondent and anchor of Face the Nation. To guests’ delight and surprise, Schieffer broke into song with his band, Honky Tonk Confidential. A live auction included an opportunity for four to attend a broadcast of Face the Nation and brunch with Schieffer and wife Pat, with hotel and first-class airfare provided by American Airlines. Lenise Stephenson was the lucky winner with a bid of $35,000. With proceeds from the auction and a last-minute donation by the Schieffers, the event raised more than $1 million and set a fundraising record for the Dallas event.

Video: www.MakingCancerHistoryCampaign.com
The Annual Meeting of the American Association for Cancer Research is considered the premier scientific meeting in cancer research. This year’s April meeting drew about 18,000 people from around the world to learn more about novel laboratory approaches and technologies, innovative preclinical science and clinical trial results.

Waun Ki Hong, M.D., head, Division of Cancer Medicine, presented on personalized approaches to lung cancer prevention.

Jian Gu, Ph.D., assistant professor, Department of Epidemiology, presented findings that a single point of variation along the genome on chromosome 14 is associated with a 19% decrease in bladder cancer risk and, separately, with longer telomeres. Nobel laureate Elizabeth Blackburn, Ph.D., 2010-11 AACR president and member of MD Anderson’s scientific advisory board, commented on the importance of Gu’s research during a news conference.

John Heymach, M.D., Ph.D., associate professor, Department of Thoracic/Head and Neck Medical Oncology, presented research that might better predict which lung cancer patients will benefit from erlotinib, known commercially as Tarceva®.

Robert Gagel, M.D., head of the Division of Endocrinology, presented the results of a Phase III clinical trial of Vandetanib, the first anti-angiogenic drug approved for medullary thyroid carcinoma, “says Gagel.

The trial was led by Robert Gagel, M.D., head of the Thyroid Clinical Research Program at the National Cancer Institute. MD Anderson, collaborators included the departments of Thoracic/Head and Neck Medical Oncology and Gastrointestinal Medical Oncology. Robert Gagel, M.D., head of the Division of Internal Medicine and a national co-investigator on the trial, delivered the Phase III clinical trial results of Vandetanib to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration in December 2010, a presentation that led to the drug’s approval in April.

“Vandetanib is the first therapy specifically approved for treatment of medullary thyroid carcinoma,” says Gagel. “It provides another example that shows how a therapy, targeted to a specific genetic abnormality in the tumor, is successful in reducing its size and growth.”

These efforts could further transform thyroid cancer treatment, providing options for patients with late-stage disease.

MD Anderson scientists have discovered that adding the drug saracatinib to Herceptin treatment shrinks previously resistant tumors by cutting off at least five molecular pathways. Saracatinib is an Src inhibitor, thwarting that protein and allowing Herceptin to work again in tumors that have a high amount of the HER2 protein. Only about 26% of women with HER2-positive breast cancer respond to Herceptin as single therapy. Between 40 and 60% respond to it combined with other chemotherapy.

“This combination is a promising therapy for those with Herceptin-resistant breast cancer,” says senior author Dihua Yu, M.D., Ph.D., professor in MD Anderson’s Department of Molecular and Cellular Oncology.

Funded by: the National Cancer Institute (NCI), MD Anderson’s NCI Breast Specialized Program of Research Excellence (SPORE), Department of Defense Center of Excellence, Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation Promise Grant, the Cancer Prevention and Research Institute of Texas, the MD Anderson Breast SPORE Career Development Award and Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation Postdoctoral Fellowship.

MD Anderson's endocrinologists participated in the first successfully completed international Phase III trial in thyroid cancer, demonstrating the potential role of anti-angiogenic therapy for this disease. The trial was led by Sam Wells, M.D., head of the Thyroid Clinical Research Program at the National Cancer Institute. MD Anderson, collaborators included the departments of Thoracic/Head and Neck Medical Oncology and Gastrointestinal Medical Oncology.

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RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR CANCER RESEARCH

Showcasing MD Anderson’s Breakthrough Research

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BRAIN

Targeted Particle Fools Brain’s Guardian to Reach Tumors

Study Published in Journal of Clinical Investigation

A research team led by scientists from MD Anderson has shown that a targeted delivery combination selectively crosses the tight barrier that protects the brain.

The iron-transporting transferring protein and receptor complex is a potential path to treatment because its receptor gene is the most overexpressed in human glioblastomas (the most common form of primary brain tumor among adults and one of the most lethal cancers).

“We’ve identified an iron-mimic peptide that can hitch a ride on a protein complex that transports iron across the blood-brain barrier,” says co-author Wadih Arap, M.D., Ph.D., professor in the David H. Koch Center for Applied Research of Genitourinary Cancers at MD Anderson.

“Employing the iron transport system selectively opens the blood-brain barrier for tumor imaging and treatment while keeping it otherwise intact to play its protective role.”

Funded by: the National Institutes of Health, the National Cancer Institute, the U.S. Department of Defense and MD Anderson’s Center for Targeted Therapy; also the Gillsen–Longenbaugh Foundation, AngellWorks, the Marcus Foundation, the National Foundation for Cancer Research, the Harry S. and Isabel C. Cameron Foundation and the Schissler Foundation.

THYROID

Research Results in First Thyroid Cancer Drug Approval

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BREAST

Combination Overcomes Breast Cancer Resistance to Herceptin

Reported online at Nature Medicine

MD Anderson scientists have discovered that adding the drug saracatinib to Herceptin treatment shrinks previously resistant tumors by cutting off at least five molecular pathways. Saracatinib is an Src inhibitor, thwarting that protein and allowing Herceptin to work again in tumors that have a high amount of the HER2 protein. Only about 26% of women with HER2-positive breast cancer respond to Herceptin as single therapy. Between 40 and 60% respond to it combined with other chemotherapy.

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Renata Pasqualini, Ph.D., Department of Genitourinary Medical Oncology - Research, and Wadih Arap, M.D., Ph.D., Department of Genitourinary Medical Oncology, with post-doctoral fellow Fernanda Staquini. Arap’s team reports significant findings impacting brain cancer research. Photo by Barry Smith
Dedication Spans a Life in the Spotlight

By Dawn Dorsey

James A. Baker, III’s connection with MD Anderson began long before he stepped on to the world stage or faced cancer in his personal life.

As a child, he celebrated birthdays and played hide-and-seek in his grandfather’s house, which later became MD Anderson’s first home.

“We’re big fans of MD Anderson,” Baker says. “To say we’re impressed with the nature of the treatment and the research is an understatement. It’s just absolutely fantastic in our view.”

Baker, who was 11 when his grandfather died, has fond memories of joining his many cousins for Sunday dinners at the house.

“The house was beautiful — and a little imposing to a young child,” he says. “The dining room was always dark and scary, and we were sure ghosts lived there. Grandfather would dare us to walk all the way around the huge table — then give us a nickel if we could do it.”

In 1969, when Baker was 38 years old and busy building a successful law practice and raising four young sons, his first wife, Mary, received a diagnosis of inflammatory breast cancer. Her death 16 months later prompted Baker’s lifelong interest in cancer.

When he began political life in 1975 as deputy secretary of commerce for President Gerald Ford, Baker was on MD Anderson’s advisory board. The University Cancer Foundation Board of Visitors. Increasingly important government positions came in close succession, and he led five presidential campaigns for three presidents. Baker was secretary of state for President George H.W. Bush, secretary of the treasury for President Ronald Reagan and White House chief of staff for Reagan and Bush.

Although government officials often step down from volunteer advisory commitments, Baker remained faithful to MD Anderson throughout his time in politics.

“My affiliation with MD Anderson was the only one I didn’t terminate when I went to Washington,” he says. “Its mission is so noble that I was never worried about anyone making claims of conflict or impropriety. I think that’s significant — and it says a lot about MD Anderson.”

In 2009, Baker’s wife, Susan, received a diagnosis of ovarian cancer and sought treatment at MD Anderson. Today she is cancer-free.

“The most impressive thing we saw at MD Anderson was the cheerfulness of the people, their concern and their attention to detail,” he says. “Having cancer is a frightening thing, and everyone makes you feel confident you’re in the best possible care.”

Baker, who travels extensively, often meets people who come to MD Anderson for cancer treatment.

“Everyone I talk to is universally positive about their experiences at MD Anderson,” he says. “Its reputation as one of the very best cancer centers is known beyond Houston, Texas or the United States — it’s worldwide.”

Survivors Say

As a young girl, Shelby Robin, of Houston, was a patient at MD Anderson Children’s Hospital. Today she walks its halls as a clinical nurse on the inpatient pediatric unit. In her spare time, Shelby is active with the Sunshine Kids organization and MD Anderson’s Children’s Art Project.

Promises invites cancer survivors to share their reflections. Email Promise@mdanderson.org. Video: www.MakingCancerHistoryCampaign.com

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