

Contact: Camille Webb
317.921.2040
cwebb@walther.org

NEWS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Hoosier Oncology Group to Partner with IU on \$10 Million Breast Cancer Project

INDIANAPOLIS – Indianapolis-based Hoosier Oncology Group LLC, a Walther Cancer Institute subsidiary, announces a \$10 million collaborative research project with Indiana University and other research centers in the United States, Canada and Peru to establish a “Center of Excellence for Individualization of Therapy for Breast Cancer.” The project is funded by the Department of Defense Breast Cancer Research Program of the Office of Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs.

Hoosier Oncology Group (HOG) and Indiana University (IU) will collaborate with clinical researchers, laboratory scientists, bioinformatics researchers and breast cancer advocates from the University of Oklahoma, Baylor College of Medicine, McGill University, the National Cancer Institute of Peru and the Research Advocacy Network.

Combining emerging technologies with existing ones, the project will study therapeutic individualization—matching the right patient to the right drug—for women with advanced breast cancer.

George W. Sledge Jr., M.D., a clinical investigator with HOG and IU, will oversee the project. According to Dr. Sledge, standard treatments for advanced breast cancer are often plagued by drug failure and toxicity.

“The tragedy of modern therapy is not just its toxicity; rather, it is that so many experience so much toxicity for so little benefit,” Dr. Sledge said. Through individualized treatments, Dr. Sledge hopes to increase effectiveness and lessen toxicity of treatments for women with advanced breast cancer.

A sample of each patient’s breast cancer tumor tissue and blood will be analyzed using a combined approach of three new technologies, including: genomics, which allows investigators to examine the DNA of the breast cancer cell; proteomics, which performs a similar task with cancer cell proteins; and pharmacogenetics, the study of inherited differences in drug effects.

Combining the predictive powers of genomics, proteomics and pharmacogenetics with existing technology in bioinformatics and pathology, Dr. Sledge’s team will produce a recipe for individualized therapeutic treatment that can be tested in a clinical setting.

The project’s clinical aspect will be organized through Hoosier Oncology Group, an association of more than 400 researchers and physicians dedicated to improving therapy for cancer patients through clinical trials. Kathy Miller, M.D., a clinical investigator with the Group and IU, will lead this effort.

“The Hoosier Oncology Group is nationally recognized for its ability to run clinical trials, and we were able to demonstrate that it had a state of the art communication system, which was very important in terms of our receiving the grant,” Dr. Sledge said.

Communication between all project members will be actively fostered using Hoosier Oncology Group’s eResearchTechnology, Inc. (eRT), a web-based data management and collaboration platform that incorporates clinical and laboratory data, specimen and document tracking and real-time data validation. The system makes it possible to assemble and analyze data from all the project’s research sites in a central database.

Constantin Yiannoutsos, Ph.D., of the Hoosier Oncology Group and IU, will analyze the collected data to create a treatment algorithm for matching the right drug to the right woman, based on her genetic and protein makeup and the specific type of breast cancer she has.

"If this works, a patient will be getting the right drug—the drug that will make the tumor respond in the right doses," Dr. Sledge said. "Because this proposal both begins and ends in the clinic, it is realistic to believe that real patient benefits could become available with the completion of this work."

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