

# cancerlines



UNC  
LINEBERGER

the inside line up



**3** 2014 John William Pope Clinical Fellows awarded to three physician-scientists



**4** Mayer named new Director of Cancer Survivorship



**5** Jackson Laboratory CEO and UNC Lineberger alum headlines Scientific Retreat



**6** Brenda Kirby continues long tradition of service to UNC

## UNC Lineberger secures three major NCI grants to advance the nation's clinical trial program



Dr. Carey Anders, above consulting one of her patients, is one of many UNC Lineberger members leading clinical trials.

clinical trial at UNC Lineberger. It included chemo, radiation and targeted oral medication for my particular type of lung cancer and lasted nearly nine months. By August of 2007, I was in remission."

With three new grants awarded by the National Cancer Institute (NCI), UNC Lineberger is changing the face of clinical trials at the national level. Based on an Institute of Medicine report, NCI altered its entire approach to clinical trials. They set up a competition to find the best centers to lead the new effort. UNC Lineberger was one of only five sites that received all three grants.

By definition, a clinical trial is a research study that involves patients. And despite the fact that clinical trials are usually testing a "new" drug or treatment, the clinical trial itself is towards the end of a long testing

Advances in cancer care are impossible without clinical trials. Whether the treatment is a new chemotherapy or radiation, a surgical procedure, a new way to detect disease or a combination of these things, at some point it has to be tested on people in a clinical trial.

And for patients like Tomma Hargraves, they are a lifesaver. "After being diagnosed with Stage 3B non-small cell lung cancer in 2006, I decided to participate in an aggressive

process that involves multiple pre-clinical steps. When trials involve patients, they are divided into three main categories — Phase I, Phase II, and Phase III. In Phase I trials, also known as "Early Phase", researchers are testing the optimal dose of a treatment to avoid toxic effects in the patient. Once a trial moves on to Phase II, researchers are then testing to see if the drug works against a specific type of cancer. Finally, at Phase III, the trial is testing how the new treatment compares to the current "standard of care" for the particular type of cancer.

*continued on page 2*

## Building capacity, collaboration for global cancer research

Before moving to Malawi, Dr. Satish Gopal rarely treated cases of Burkitt's lymphoma, a cancer of the lymphatic system seldom diagnosed in the U.S.

"I may have seen 1 to 2 cases a year," says Gopal. "Now, in Malawi, I can see up to 1 to 2 cases a week."

Gopal, UNC Lineberger member and director of the Malawi cancer program, observes day-to-day how certain cancers, while still fatal but less frequently diagnosed in the U.S., are abundant in other parts of the world. UNC Lineberger's Global Oncology Program works to both treat and investigate these cancer cases globally, enabling cancer researchers to make discoveries that not only have an impact on the world — but in the U.S. as well.

"Working on cancer research at the global level allows UNC Lineberger a unique opportunity to have an impact globally, while also making discoveries that can save lives here in the U.S. as well," said Dr. Blossom Damania, co-director of UNC Lineberger's Global Oncology program.

Since the program was conceived and established by Drs. Damania and Dirk Dittmer in 2007, significant strides have been made in cancer research and treatment. The program was established through collaboration with a long-standing effort led



UNC Lineberger Global Oncology Program Co-Director Dirk Dittmer (second from left) with Malawian health professionals in the lab.

by the Institute for Global Health & Infectious Diseases at UNC, in strong partnership with the Malawi Ministry of Health. Several program sites are located in Africa, India and South America. In Africa, highlights include the screening of over 100,000 Zambian women for cervical cancer and a top-ranked pathology lab in Malawi to better diagnose cancer in the country.

*continued on page 3*



UNC  
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# director's message



Ned Sharpless, MD

This summer has yet again been filled with exciting news and progress at UNC Lineberger. We continue to secure major grants at the national level,

including three new grants from the National Cancer Institute (NCI) related to a new clinical trials network that will change how clinical trials are managed across the country.

Through these NCI grants, which you can read more about in our feature article, UNC Lineberger will be providing scientific leadership in the development of the new network. Our researchers will be working to accelerate drug delivery in early clinical trials and also providing genetic sequencing at the national level. The fact that we received one of these grants is a major

accomplishment, but the fact that we secured all three is truly remarkable.

In this issue, you will also read about Dr. Satish Gopal, a dedicated physician-scientist who is leading our cancer program in Malawi. Dr. Gopal has been in Malawi since 2012, treating patients and helping develop local resources to improve cancer care. One of the most important efforts he has taken on is the training of local healthcare professionals to treat cancer in one of the world's most challenging health environments. I am sure you will find Satish's work exciting and inspiring.

In accord with these and many other recent successes, we continue to do well in national rankings and quality metrics. For example, the N.C. Cancer Hospital has been recognized once again as a top hospital for cancer care, according to U.S. News & World Report, jumping in the 2014–15 rankings up to 38th from 43rd in the country.

Change is also on the horizon for UNC Lineberger. In August, we said goodbye to our own Debbie Dibbert, who has taken the position of Chief of Staff

to Chancellor Carol Folt at UNC Chapel Hill. For over 12 years, Debbie has served a critical role as our director of external affairs. On behalf of the entire cancer center, I would like to thank Debbie for her unwavering passion for our mission. We will miss Debbie's vision and leadership but are extremely grateful that our University will not lose her talents with this transition.

While we are celebrating great success, we are also struggling with loss. In July, UNC Lineberger member and Eshelman School of Pharmacy professor Dr. Feng Liu died of injuries he sustained in a robbery near UNC's campus. We were shocked and saddened at this tragic event, and continue to keep Dr. Liu's family and friends in our thoughts. The School has established a fund in his honor to create an annual award benefitting students. If you would like more information, please visit [unclineberger.org/liu](http://unclineberger.org/liu). Feng was a dedicated cancer researcher and would want us to redouble our efforts against this terrible disease rather than focus on the tragedy of his death. 🙏

## Clinical Trials *continued from page 1*

At the national level, clinical trials are seeing a lot of change. In an effort to increase efficiency and keep up with national changes in the types of clinical trials offered to cancer patients, the National Cancer Institute's (NCI) National Clinical Trials Network (NCTN) is undergoing a major reorganization. The new structure is meant to improve treatment for the more than 1.6 million Americans diagnosed with cancer each year and UNC Lineberger will be playing a major role in this transition.

The NCI awarded grants related to the new clinical trials infrastructure in the spring of 2014, and UNC Lineberger secured three major new grants as a part of this initiative.

"Receiving one of these awards is an important accomplishment," said UNC Lineberger Director Ned Sharpless, MD. "Receiving all three is truly remarkable, placing UNC Lineberger among only a small handful of cancer centers in the country with such success."

Through these grants, UNC Lineberger will be providing scientific leadership into the development of the new network, will be working to accelerate drug delivery in early Phase I trials and will also be providing genetic sequencing in support of NCTN.

As a part of the first grant, UNC Lineberger will serve as one of 30 NCI Lead Academic Participating Sites (LAPS) from across the country. Under the guidance of Dr. Lisa Carey, UNC Lineberger will provide NCI with scientific leadership in the development and implementation of clinical trials.

The cancer center also secured entry into an elite network focused on experimental clinical trials — the NCI's Experimental Therapeutics Clinical Trials Network. Led by Dr. Claire Dees teaming with trialists at Duke and Washington University, UNC Lineberger will conduct early phase cancer clinical trials sponsored by the NCI to help speed the drug development process.

"Almost 1,600 people die from cancer every day in this country," said Dees. "We need to rapidly develop new drugs, focusing on targeted therapies that address the genetics and biology of this disease. Bringing together the excellent science and clinical care of three great cancer centers, we hope to make oncology drug development smarter, faster and more successful."

Lastly, UNC Lineberger is one of only five institutions across the country receiving a new grant to measure biomarkers within the NCTN as an Integrated Translational Science Center (ITSC). Spearheaded by Drs. Chuck Perou and Neil Hayes, the UNC ITSC will provide high-throughput RNA and DNA sequencing, along with related regulatory assistance, to partner institutions in the NCTN. Earning this distinction clearly acknowledges UNC Lineberger as one of the world's foremost centers for high volume, clinical genetic sequencing.

Cancer patients across the country, especially those in North Carolina, will greatly benefit from the new trials as well as the clinical and translational science being provided by UNC Lineberger as clinical trials evolve at the national level. 🙏

## Clinical Trials 101

Cancer clinical trials are designed to test new ways to treat cancer, find and diagnose cancer, prevent cancer and manage symptoms of cancer or side effects from its treatment. Clinical trials to test new cancer treatments involve a series of steps, called phases. If a new treatment is successful in one phase, it will proceed to further testing in the next phase.

Phase 1: To find a safe dose, decide how the new treatment should be given or to see how the new treatment affects the human body.

Phase 2: To determine if the new treatment has an effect on a certain cancer and see how the new treatment affects the body.

Phase 3: To compare the new treatment, or new use of a treatment, with the current standard treatment.

Source: National Cancer Institute



## Debbie Dibbert appointed UNC Chancellor's chief of staff

Debbie Dibbert, who has served as director of external affairs for UNC Lineberger and vice president of The Medical Foundation of North Carolina

since 2003, will become UNC Chancellor Carol Folt's Chief of Staff beginning Aug. 11. We are grateful for Debbie's service and leadership and wish her all the best in her new position with the University!

## UNC Global Oncology *continued from page 1*



*The pathology lab in Malawi, which has received a 4-star status from the World Health Organization.*

### Building Capacity in Malawi

Based at Kamuzu Central Hospital (KCH), the cancer research conducted in Malawi represents a long-standing collaboration between UNC, the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases and Malawi's Ministry of Health. Originally founded to help fight the nation's HIV epidemic, the partnership has expanded to other areas including the provision of free cancer care working side-by-side with Malawian partners in the country's teaching hospital.

In 2011, UNC opened a pathology lab in KCH making it only the second pathology lab in the entire country. Employing high-tech telepathology using a digital microscope, the pathologists in Malawi consult with counterparts at UNC on a weekly basis. The lab, which has received a 4-star status from the World Health Organization, also provides training and research opportunities for young Malawian health professionals with an interest in cancer.

### Screening Success in Zambia

Just a nine hour drive from Malawi, another major effort within UNC Lineberger's Global Oncology program exists in Zambia at the Centre for Infectious Disease Research in Zambia (CIDRZ). UNC Lineberger member Groesbeck Parham, MD, directs the cervical cancer prevention program at CIDRZ, UNC's partner

organization in the country. A leader in cervical cancer prevention in resource-constrained settings, Parham's team was among the first to provide such cervical screening and treatment services on a broad scale in sub-Saharan Africa.

Before the screening project, most of the Zambian women who were diagnosed with cervical cancer were found to have very advanced stages of the disease. About 1 in 5 women screened through Parham's program had a positive screening test, and most of them had a form of pre-cancer that can be cured with a technique that involves freezing the cervix for a few minutes, in the clinic. One out of every 100 women screened is found to have actual cancer, and in half of those women the cancers are very early and can be successfully treated with surgery alone. According to the most recent data, the incidence rate for cervical cancer in the United States was 8.1 cases per 100,000 screened.

### Building Collaborations across Countries

With a new supplement grant secured from the National Cancer Institute (NCI), the sites in Malawi and Zambia will now further advance research and build capacity for cervical cancer screening in both countries.

Building on the CIRZD program that has already screened over 100,000 women, this new effort will help establish a similar screening effort in Malawi. Similarly, advances made in cancer pathology achieved in Malawi will be leveraged to benefit cancer research in Zambia.

"It is exciting to see the successes of our two sites in Africa come together for further research and cancer treatment in much-needed areas," said Dr. Dirk Dittmer, professor of microbiology and immunology and co-director of UNC Lineberger's Global Oncology program.

### A Growing Need

While great strides have been made, the need for cancer research and treatment around the globe continues to be significant. By 2030, cancer-related deaths are predicted to rise to over 11 million people — with developing countries taking on 70 percent of the global cancer burden.

Building capacity for cancer research and treatment will be critical to answering this growing need. In Malawi, Gopal is the only medical oncologist in the entire country, a developing African nation of over 15 million people.

"Cancer care in Malawi doesn't even remotely resemble what cancer care is like in the United States," Gopal says.

With increased funding and research initiatives, UNC Lineberger's Global Oncology Program will continue building the infrastructure needed, working hand-in-hand with the community, to make greater strides in global cancer treatment. 🦋

## Three chosen as 2014 John William Pope Clinical Fellows

Three physician-scientists from UNC Lineberger have been chosen as the 2014 John William Pope Clinical Fellows. This year's fellows are David Chism, MD, MSc; David Johnson, MD, MPH; and Christopher Tignanelli, MD. The award honors the best young physicians and scientists at UNC Lineberger who combine excellence in clinical practice as a physician and as a researcher in the laboratory. Each fellow receives a \$5,000 award made possible by a gift from The John William Pope Foundation.

Dr. Chism works in the lab of William Kim, MD, on a project that identified the molecular subtypes of bladder cancer, revealing that the cancer had genetic similarities to the subtypes of breast cancer.

A surgical resident in urology and a public health researcher, Dr. Johnson's population-level research into the over-diagnosis and treatment of patients with small renal masses undertaken with Matthew Nielsen, MD, showed that a significant portion of patients were undergoing unnecessary surgery, exposing the patient to significant health, financial and mental harms.

A resident in the UNC School of Medicine's Department of General Surgery and a Research Fellow in the lab of Jen Jen Yeh, MD, Dr. Tignanelli has spent the last three years determining why a targeted therapy currently undergoing clinical trials may not be an effective treatment for pancreatic cancer patients. Through his research, he has expanded the understanding of pancreatic cancer in ways that will influence future research into the treatment of the disease. 🦋



*Left to Right: Joyce Pope, Vice President of the John William Pope Foundation; Christopher Tignanelli, MD; David Chism, MD, MSc; David Johnson, MD, MPH; and David Stover, Board Member, John William Pope Foundation.*

## Satish Gopal – improving cancer care in Africa one patient at a time



Satish Gopal does not remember a time when he did not want to be a doctor. While growing up in North Carolina, he said he always imagined himself working with patients, helping people to get better.

“I liked science, but I didn’t see myself as a lab scientist. I liked the idea of studying and working really hard to be in a position to help people who were sick and vulnerable,” said Dr. Gopal.

His dream took him from an undergraduate degree at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and medical school at Duke University to treating severely underserved patient populations as the Director of the Cancer Program at UNC Project-Malawi. As the only medical oncologist in a nation of 16 million people, Dr. Gopal provides care for people who have few options.

He developed his passion for global cancer care while serving with the Baylor University Pediatric AIDS Corps in Tanzania. Seeing the challenges faced by cancer

patients in Africa, who often were also infected with HIV, made him realize that the local health systems had little to offer them.

“These patients seemed forgotten, seeking care within a health system woefully ill-equipped to prevent, diagnose, treat or palliate the immense burden of cancer occurring there,” said Dr. Gopal.

Since 2012, Dr. Gopal has worked for UNC in Malawi treating patients and helping develop local resources to improve cancer care and train local healthcare workers. His dual medical training in oncology and infectious disease along with his passion, makes him the perfect person to lead this effort in Malawi.

“The program, spearheaded by UNC’s Institute for Global Health & Infectious Diseases, has grown over several decades into something very substantial. It’s something the University, rightly, is really proud of,” said Dr. Gopal.

“There’s a tremendous humanitarian and moral imperative to treat patients who can benefit and put programs in place to provide access to care,” he says.

Many of his patients in Malawi had no access to cancer care before making the trip to the clinic in Lilongwe. Many had first visited their local health center after falling ill only to be given aspirin or drugs for malaria. To reach his clinic, patients often must travel hundreds of miles by bus before and after each treatment.

“In many cases, these patients are able to complete therapies successfully and hopefully go on to have

decades of normal life expectancy. What it takes for them to get through six cycles of chemotherapy as compared to someone in Chapel Hill, it’s a phenomenal achievement,” he said. “Travelling back and forth to the rural areas where they live, I’m not sure that I would have the resources and motivation to go through what some of our patients go through to complete their therapy.”

The challenges of working in Malawi are great, but Dr. Gopal’s life in Malawi is not all challenging. While Lilongwe lacks some of the cultural attractions of life in the U.S., the city is a cosmopolitan, global capital with plenty of great restaurants and charming neighborhoods.

“It’s actually really a great place to live. People imagine that I’m making this tremendous sacrifice, and there are certainly things we can’t get in Lilongwe. I can’t go to the symphony and there are limits to the number of restaurants we can go to, but it’s actually a great place to live.”

Living with his wife and two daughters aged seven and five has been an amazing experience. The capital is the home of many embassies and non-governmental organizations, and his social life revolves around his family and friends he has made from across the world.

“When I pick up my daughters from school, I find them running around with their friends from Malawi, South Africa, Germany, Denmark and Norway. It’s a pretty amazing and rewarding experience for all of us.”

## UNC Lineberger meets needs of cancer survivors



Deborah K. Mayer, PhD, RN, AOCN, FAAN, Director of Cancer Survivorship

Thanks to advances in prevention, early detection and treatment of cancer, there are now more than 13 million cancer survivors in the United States. That’s up from just 3 million in 1971. As progress continues in the fight against cancer, the number of survivors continues to grow, along with the need for programs and resources to help move beyond cancer diagnosis and treatment to wellness.

Cancer survivorship efforts at UNC Lineberger have grown substantially in the last five years. As one of seven LIVESTRONG Survivorship Centers of Excellence, UNC is part of an effort by leading cancer centers to increase the effectiveness of survivorship care through collaborative research, the development of new interventions and sharing of best practices. The late Marci Campbell PhD, professor of nutrition at the University of North Carolina Gillings School of Global Public Health and UNC Lineberger member was responsible for securing

the initial grant that made UNC Lineberger part of the LIVESTRONG network.

### Leadership

Deborah K. Mayer, PhD, RN, AOCN, FAAN was recently appointed director of cancer survivorship at UNC Lineberger. In this newly created position, she leads the cancer center’s effort to enhance clinical and research initiatives for cancer survivors. Mayer, a leading expert in survivorship and oncology nursing, works closely with Donald Rosenstein, MD, director of the UNC Lineberger Comprehensive Cancer Support Program (CCSP), to implement survivorship care that is integrated, comprehensive, and patient-centered. She also focuses on survivorship research and training efforts aimed at improving programs for cancer survivors in North Carolina and across the nation.

“This position is a natural extension of my research, teaching, and clinical work aimed at improving cancer care for survivors,” says Mayer. “We have a critical mass of clinicians and researchers interested in the impact of cancer and its treatment has on the long term health of survivors.”

### Programs

UNC Lineberger was recently selected to participate in A Survivor Action Partnership – United States of America (ASAP USA), a consortium of institutions that will collaborate to develop and study interventions to improve the lives of prostate cancer survivors in the United States. Sixteen institutions were selected

following a peer reviewed application process. Ronald Chen, MD, MPH, assistant professor of radiation oncology is leading the UNC Lineberger ASAP USA team.

Survivorship is a primary research interest for Dr. Chen, and he notes that UNC Lineberger has a robust survivorship care team. “I think that we were chosen to be a part of this consortium because we have such strength in this area,” says Chen. “We have a wide variety of people with a breadth of experience who work in survivorship care — from physicians and nurse practitioners to people like Deb Mayer, who is a nationally recognized expert on survivorship care plans.”

Elizabeth Sherwood, RN, MS, ANP is the coordinator for survivorship programs at Carolina Well, the UNC Lineberger cancer survivorship program at the N.C. Cancer Hospital. She is also part of the psycho-oncology support team through the Comprehensive Cancer Support Program headed by Dr. Rosenstein. Sherwood helps provide programs including integrative medicine (yoga, massage, acupuncture), exercise, nutrition, emotional support, stress management and dealing with uncertainty after cancer.

“Patients often find the time after treatment is as challenging as the time during treatment, and some patients find it more challenging,” says Sherwood. “Research demonstrates that patients benefit from better symptom management post treatment and wellness interventions like physical activity and good nutrition. I feel very fortunate to have helped to start our Survivorship Program and provide opportunities for patients to move toward wellness after treatment.”

## Exercise improves survival and health for breast cancer patients

Leading an active life can help women treated for breast cancer live longer and healthier lives, yet many women treated for the disease do not meet national guidelines on physical activity. The findings were magnified in African-American patients, who were less likely to meet the guidelines than their white counterparts.



The study, led by doctoral candidate in epidemiology Brionna Hair, assessed pre- and post-diagnosis physical activity levels in 1,735 women aged 20 to 74 years who were diagnosed with invasive breast cancer between 2008 and 2011 in 44 North Carolina counties. The research, published in the journal *Cancer*, was undertaken as part of the Carolina Breast Cancer Study (CBCS), the largest-ever population-based study of breast

cancer in North Carolina and one of the largest studies of African-American women in the world.

The findings are based on the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and American Cancer Society recommendations that adults engage in a combination of at least 150 minutes of moderate physical activity or 75 minutes of vigorous physical activity each week. Only 35 percent of women in the study met these standards following their diagnosis, and 59 percent of the women in the study had decreased their activity by six months after being diagnosed.

The findings point to a need for healthcare providers to enhance efforts promoting the benefits of physical activity as part of a cancer treatment regimen, especially among African-American patients. African-American women experience a higher mortality rate from breast cancer than patients from other groups.

## Toxins in the environment accelerate aging

When we calculate our age, we measure by the number of years since our birth. Our cells, however, count by a different clock.

Researchers at UNC Lineberger are working to better understand how to measure these cellular changes in order to better understand how our bodies age. A team led by UNC Lineberger Director Norman Sharpless, MD, is working to identify the cellular biomarkers that accompany molecular aging. In a paper published in *Trends in Molecular Medicine*, Dr. Sharpless and colleagues called for a greater focus on understanding molecular aging in order to benefit patients and public health efforts.

A better measurement of age would provide researchers and physicians with valuable tools to assist in clinical decisions about how a patient will respond to treatment — for example, how a 70-year-old cancer patient will tolerate a regimen of chemotherapy — and help identify which substances accelerate biological aging.

By creating a test for these age-accelerating substances, known as “gerontogens,” researchers could create the tools necessary to identify and regulate substances that artificially promote the aging process. With this knowledge, they could replicate the public health benefits that have accompanied the regulation of carcinogens, substances known to increase the risk of developing cancer.

Dr. Sharpless’ call for greater emphasis on gerontogen research was profiled widely in the national media, including articles in *National Geographic*, *Fox News* and *Business Insider*.

## Leading expert in link between cancer and obesity joins UNC faculty

Dr. Stephen Hursting has joined the faculty as a professor of nutrition in the UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health. A national expert in the link between cancer and obesity, Hursting earned his PhD in nutritional biochemistry and his MPH in nutritional epidemiology from the University of North Carolina and completed postdoctoral training in molecular carcinogenesis and cancer prevention at the National Cancer Institute (NCI). Hursting was also a professor and chair in nutrition, cellular and molecular sciences at the University of Texas at Austin, and professor of carcinogenesis at UT-M.D. Anderson Cancer Center.

Prior to joining UNC, Hursting served as deputy director of NCI’s Office of Preventive Oncology and chief of NCI’s Nutrition and Molecular Carcinogenesis Laboratory Section. Dr. Hursting’s research, which has resulted in over 160 publications, centers on diet-gene interactions relevant to cancer prevention.



L-R: Joseph Pagano, MD, Al Baldwin, PhD, Leslie Parise, PhD, Shelley Earp, MD, Michael O’Malley, PhD, and JoAnn Earp, ScD, gather with Edison Liu, MD (center) at the Ninth Annual UNC Lineberger Scientific Retreat

## UNC Lineberger alum headlines Ninth Annual Scientific Retreat

The Ninth Annual UNC Lineberger Scientific Retreat highlighted the breadth of research conducted at UNC Lineberger Comprehensive Cancer Center. Held on May 14 at the Carolina Club, the event featured talks and poster presentations from UNC Lineberger members and associated postdocs and graduate students that showcased a broad array of basic, clinical and population science.

Guest lecturer Edison Liu, president and CEO of The Jackson Laboratory and a world renowned expert in cancer biology, genomics, human genetics, molecular epidemiology and translational medicine, spoke on the promise of using systems genomics to gain a better understanding of cancer biology. From 1987 to 1996 Dr. Liu worked at the UNC as an assistant professor in medicine and oncology at the School of Medicine, and rose to full professor directing UNC Lineberger’s Specialized Program of Research Excellence in Breast Cancer. During the retreat, Dr. Liu said that systems genomics, science that uses data to reveal the architecture of the genome, is providing researchers and clinicians with the tools to understand the complex systems that drive cancer and can be targeted by new genetic therapies.

UNC Lineberger Director Norman Sharpless, MD, delivered a keynote address highlighting the great success UNC Lineberger members have had publishing high impact papers and securing major grants. He emphasized the importance of the University Cancer Research Fund (UCRF) in supporting and strengthening cancer research at UNC. This includes support for hiring researchers such as Stephen Frye, PhD, Ronald Chen, MD, and Ethan Basch, MD, whose work has had major international impact on their respective fields, and providing the initial funding initiatives and investigators whose work has gone on to bring in millions in external grants.



## Marci Campbell Award

Leanne Kaye, MPH, of the UNC Department of Nutrition (left) has been named the 2014 recipient of the Marci Kramish Campbell Dissertation Award, a competitive \$5,000 award to recognize excellence in dissertation research focused on cancer and the population sciences. This honor is especially fitting for Kaye, as she began her doctoral studies under the supervision of Dr. Marci Campbell, in whose memory this award is named. 🙏

# volunteerprofile

## Brenda Kirby



Brenda Kirby served the University of North Carolina for 40 years. She began her University career assisting ROTC colonels and ultimately served as assistant to the chancellor, secretary of the University and assistant secretary to the Board of Trustees. A woman of abundant graciousness, warmth and energy, she was widely regarded as both the human face of the University and the engine that kept it running. Upon her retirement in 2012, then Chancellor

Holden Thorp said of Kirby, "Quite simply, she is the most important employee that the University of North Carolina has ever had."

"Retirement" finds Kirby busier than ever. She and her husband, Bill Smith, enjoy travelling — most recently touring America's national parks and journeying through the Canadian northwest by rail.

Kirby now shares some of her many gifts with the Patient and Family Resource Center (PFRC) at the N.C. Cancer Hospital. "I always want to stay busy and engaged," says Kirby. "I wanted to start volunteering just as soon as I retired."

A cancer survivor herself, Brenda initially thought she would volunteer in the infusion clinic. "When I was going through treatment in 2009, those volunteers were wonderful to me, and I really appreciated all they did. I thought that was something I would like to do for others. But when I interviewed to become a volunteer at the cancer hospital, they thought my outgoing personality would be good for the PFRC. I just wanted to help where I was needed."

Kirby often greets patients as they come into the PFRC — some of them stunned by news of a cancer diagnosis. "Some of them are scared," explains Kirby. "They've never had cancer before, and they don't know what to do next. I just listen, and then I can help direct them to the resources we have. Often what they need most is a hug."

Tina Shaban, BSN, RN, OCN, manager of the PFRC appreciates Kirby's many gifts. "We are so blessed to have Brenda Kirby on our team," says Shaban. "In

addition to her wonderful organizational skills, Brenda has a keen understanding of the upheaval that cancer can have on families' lives and she shows a compassion towards our visitors that seems to immediately bond them."

Kirby particularly enjoys helping with the PFRC's monthly "Look Good Feel Better" program where patients learn new tips on managing some of the physical changes that result from cancer and its treatment with area cosmetologists. She recalls one inspiring patient whom she met while volunteering with that program.

"We had a patient who had to drive from quite a distance for her treatments, and this was her second bout of cancer. She had the best outlook and attitude! I was so moved to hear her talk of her love for her family and how blessed she was. She was just beautiful inside and out!"

Shaban is grateful for Kirby's contributions to the Look Good Feel Better program. "It is wonderful for our ladies to connect with Brenda as they remember the women that they always were and still are despite this diagnosis of cancer. How wonderful it is for them to see the strong and caring woman in front of them... a picture of health... a cancer survivor."

Part of Kirby's mission is increase awareness of the resources available to patients at the PFRC. "I talk to the doctors and nurses and try to spread the word about PFRC. The library they have there is a wonderful resource with books on all kinds of cancers and issues related to treatment. I want to make sure patients can benefit."

Just as Kirby was the heart of the University she served, she knows that the people are the greatest resource at the N. C. Cancer Hospital. "I'm so impressed with compassion and care of the staff at the PFRC. I love those people! They are always ready to listen and help the patients who come in, and I feel very proud to be a part of that as a volunteer."

Family underscores Kirby's continued devotion to service. "I have always belonged to a loving, compassionate family, and that prepares you for whatever comes your way in life. I want to share that with others."

Her two sons, Shannon Kirby and Derek Kirby, began their working lives as UNC Hospitals volunteers when they were teenagers, and she is grateful for the opportunities they had. Her husband is very pleased that she enjoys her volunteer work at the cancer hospital. "He sees the smile on my face when I come home from the cancer hospital, and he knows: I had another great day of giving back — and nothing else needs to be said!"

## UNC Lineberger launches new website

Visit [www.unclineberger.org](http://www.unclineberger.org) to take a look at our new website design launched this summer!



## Cancer and Older Adults: Care and Treatment

*When:* Friday, November 14, 2014

1PM – 5PM

*Where:* William and Ida Friday Center

For Continuing Education

100 Friday Center Dr.

Chapel Hill, NC 27517

*Learn more about cancer, aging and resilience from UNC Cancer Care experts at this free, public event! To register, please visit [www.unclineberger.org](http://www.unclineberger.org) or call (919) 966-7834*



## Betty Ray McCain honored with Outstanding Service Award

Betty Ray McCain was presented with UNC Lineberger's Outstanding Service Award at the UNC Lineberger Board of Visitors meeting on April 11th. The award honors Mrs. McCain's nine years of service and leadership on the board including terms as vice chair from 2007-2009, chair of the board from 2009-2012 and most recently as chair of the Membership and Nominating Committee.



## New Leadership for UNC Lineberger Board of Visitors

The UNC Lineberger Board of Visitors elected new leaders at its spring meeting in April. Richard Stevens of Cary, NC was elected to serve as chair, and Jean Kitchin of Scotland Neck, NC will serve as vice chair. Their terms began on July 1, 2014.



## Mill Creek hosts PGA Tour players for Skins Match

On June 16, Mill Creek Golf Club in Mebane hosted a "Monday After the U.S. Open Skins Match" benefitting cancer research at UNC Lineberger. PGA Tour Professionals Boo Weekley, Will McKenzie, Carl Petterson and Chesson Hadley were joined by emcee Woody Durham for this family-friendly event. Many thanks to Mike Hicks, Mike Long, the Stallings family, and the entire Mill Creek community for supporting us through this successful event.



## UNC Lineberger joins Race for the Cure

UNC Lineberger joined thousands of cancer survivors and supporters on Saturday, June 14th for the 18th annual Susan G. Komen Triangle Race for the Cure in Raleigh, NC. Participants included researchers, clinicians and staff from across UNC Health Care. Susan G. Komen for the Cure is a tremendous supporter of breast cancer research at UNC Lineberger. The North Carolina Triangle to the Coast (NCTC) chapter recently awarded a \$50,000 grant to UNC Lineberger to fund a project aimed at improving access to comprehensive lymphedema care for breast cancer patients in central North Carolina. Komen also helps fund the Carolina Breast Cancer Study and the work of Lisa Carey, MD and Chuck Perou, PhD.

## Save the Date — Fast Break Against Cancer

The 10th Annual Roy Williams' Fast Break Against Cancer will be held on the floor of the Dean E. Smith Center on Friday, October 3. Individual tickets and priority seating private tables will be available starting September 2 by calling 919.966.5905 or online at [www.unclineberger.org](http://www.unclineberger.org).

# calendar of events

## September

26<sup>th</sup> Fall Board of Visitors Meeting (Friday Center)

## October

3<sup>rd</sup> 10th Annual Roy Williams' Fast Break Against Cancer – Kenan Stadium 7:30 am

8<sup>th</sup> Pasta With Purpose – Carolina Club 5:30 pm

18<sup>th</sup> Cancer Awareness Football Game (a.k.a. The Pink Football Game)

25<sup>th</sup> Pedal for PEDS — 7:30am–4:00pm  
The Wellness Center at Northwest Cary

## November

14<sup>th</sup> Cancer Care and Older Adults: Care and Treatment, a free public forum — 1:00 pm – 5:00 pm (Friday Center)

To find out more about these events and other UNC Lineberger news, visit [www.unclineberger.org](http://www.unclineberger.org), or follow us on [f](#) [t](#)



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## UNC Lineberger faculty and staff making a difference outside of the lab

UNC Lineberger members continually go above and beyond in both inside — and outside — the clinic and lab. Here are just a few recent examples of how UNC Lineberger faculty and staff support cancer awareness and advocacy.



Several UNC Lineberger faculty are actively involved in the Pancreatic Cancer Action Network, serving as speakers for key events and organizing teams to raise funds for pancreatic research. In May 2014, two UNC teams — TEAM UNC and the Der Lab Team — raised over \$200,000 for the effort.



Research assistant professor Katie Hoadley (center) remains active with Zeta Tau Alpha (ZTA) sorority, a national sponsor of the breast cancer Survivor Recognition Program for Susan G. Komen, and in 2014, served as the co-chair of the Triangle Chapter Race Survivor Committee.



Professor Bernard "Buddy" Weissman (right) served as organizer of Team UNC Lineberger for the 2014 Bladder Cancer Advocacy Network's (BCAN) Annual Walk for Bladder Cancer, with WRAL News Anchor Ken Smith (left) serving as Honorary Marshall at this year's walk. Several additional UNC Lineberger faculty and staff are actively involved with BCAN as well.



Thoracic oncologist Dr. Jared Weiss collaborates with The Lung Cancer Initiative of North Carolina, the state's leading non-profit organization supporting lung cancer research and education, serving on their board of directors.