UAB’s Bonner Study Among Top Six Cancer Discoveries of 2006

The American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) recently named the findings of a multinational study headed by James A. Bonner, MD, chair of the Department of Radiation Oncology, among the top six developments in clinical cancer research in 2006. The study, “Radiotherapy and Cetuximab for Head and Neck Cancer” (N Engl J Med.) 2006;354:567-578), compared radiotherapy alone with radiotherapy plus cetuximab (Erbitux), a chimeric monoclonal antibody produced by Imclone. Results showed combined therapy nearly doubles median survival rates in patients with locally advanced head and neck cancers.

Cetuximab is a monoclonal antibody that targets the epidermal growth factor receptor (EGFR) abnormally activated in epithelial cancers, including squamous cell carcinoma of the oropharynx, hypopharynx, and larynx. More than a decade ago, Dr. Bonner began investigating EGFR inhibition and has worked with UAB cancer center scientists Donald J. Buchsbaum, PhD; Kevin P. Raisch, PhD; and Mansoor N. Saleh, MD, PhD, on lab studies of cetuximab. Subsequently, he collaborated with UAB’s Ruby F. Meredith, MD, PhD; Sharon A. Spencer, MD; and Francisco Robert, MD, in phase 1 and 2 clinical trials. Patients were recruited through 2002, and the drug’s survival advantage was unveiled at the 2004 American Society for Clinical Oncology annual meeting.

“Realizing the majority of head and neck cancers heavily express EGFR, and knowing EGFR expression correlates with poor prognoses, we theorized that an EGFR inhibitor, such as cetuximab, could potentially increase these cancers’ sensitivity to radiation,” Dr. Bonner says.

“Our study found cetuximab improved outcomes without enhancing side effects, as sometimes occurs when radio-sensitizers are added. As a department, we are proud of this accomplishment and the continued impact our translational research has and will have on the future of cancer treatment on a global scale,” he says.

The top six advances were chosen by a 20-person editorial board composed of leading oncologists. Editors reviewed studies published in peer-reviewed scientific journals and early research results presented at major scientific meetings last year to select studies that most significantly altered understanding of cancer or had an important impact on patient care.

UAB Hospital Among America’s Best in U.S. News Rankings

Eight UAB Hospital specialty programs are among the nation’s top 50 – seven in the top 25 – in 16 categories evaluated at America’s 5,462 hospitals this year by U.S. News & World Report. The rankings appear in the magazine’s 18th annual “America’s Best Hospitals” issue, released July 13.

UAB Hospital is one of only 173 hospitals – and the only hospital in Alabama or Mississippi – to rank high enough in even one specialty to make the magazine’s national “Best Hospitals” list.

The rheumatology program ranked No. 8 nationally, its 16th consecutive year ranked. Other UAB programs ranked this year:

- Kidney disease, No. 15
- Cancer, No. 18
- Geriatrics, No. 20
- Gynecology, No. 20
- Respiratory disorders, No. 21
- Ear, nose and throat, No. 22
- Orthopedics, No. 32.

“We are very happy to be recognized for the high quality care we provide at UAB Hospital,” said Mike Waldrum, MD, CEO of UAB Hospital. “This is a tribute to the efforts of everyone who works here and the commitment they have to providing our patients with the best care possible.”

According to the magazine’s published methodology, a hospital’s overall performance is summed up by its U.S. News score. It is made up of three equal parts: reputation, mortality, and a mix of care-related factors such as nursing and patient services. The 50 hospitals in each specialty with the highest scores are listed.
Organ Donors at Record High

A record number of people in Alabama gave a final gift of life upon death during the past year, donating organs that made hundreds of transplants possible.

Dem Y. Lalisan, director of the Alabama Organ Center, reported there are 143 deceased donors for the fiscal year 2007. That’s an all-time high, a 20% increase from a year ago and a more than 50% increase from two years ago.

“Deceased organ donors provided hearts, livers, lungs, pancreases, and kidneys,” Lalisan says. On average each donor provided enough organs to allow life-saving operations for 3.5 patients, for a total of about 500 transplant surgeries.

The increase in donations is attributed to an outreach program started in recent years to quickly identify potential donors and provide more support to families as they make difficult end-of-life decisions.

“The whole donation process has undergone an evolution,” says Devin E. Eckhoff, MD, director of the Division of Transplantation at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB).

Dr. Eckhoff says the number of deceased organ donors stood at about 100 annually for many years, then dropped to 80 about four years ago.

“We got concerned and made some changes,” he says. “We’ve done it by reaching out to hospitals and families, by education … all the little things you do right.”

Perhaps the most profound change came in how the families of dying patients are approached, Dr. Eckhoff said. Previously, a nurse, doctor or transplant authority would ask family members about organ donation as a matter of routine when a patient reached the end of life.

“People used to ask and just walk away,” Dr Eckhoff said. “Now, we’re making sure families get their needs met.”

This approach requires more time, planning and training, Dr. Eckhoff says.

This new process required the hiring of three new family support workers.

UAB has the area’s only Level 1 trauma center. About 20% of the state’s deceased organ donors come from UAB, and the rest come from the state’s 20 largest hospitals.

From Original Article by Dave Parks
October 02, 2007
The Birmingham News

Corbett Is Comprehensive Diabetes Center Director

Interdisciplinary Center Will Build on Basic Science Discoveries to Enhance Care

John A. Corbett, PhD, joined UAB on June 1 as inaugural director of the Comprehensive Diabetes Center. Dr. Corbett is currently professor in the Edward A. Doisy Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology at the St. Louis University School of Medicine in Missouri.

An NIH-funded investigator, Dr. Corbett’s research focuses on the mechanisms of pancreatic beta-cell destruction. His laboratory has shown that nitric oxide is responsible for the damaging actions of interleukin-1 and interferon-gamma on beta-cell function and viability. His lab is currently investigating the role of viral infection as one potential environmental factor that may initiate or trigger beta-cell damage and autoimmune destruction during the development of type 1 diabetes.

The Comprehensive Diabetes Center is an interdisciplinary effort that will draw on the expertise of scientists and clinicians from the departments of medicine, surgery, pediatrics, nutrition sciences, pathology, cell biology, genetics, and other areas. These investigators will work collaboratively to build on recent groundbreaking advances in the understanding of diabetes and bring new therapies to the bedside.

Initial Goals Defined

Dr. Corbett’s goals for the center include bringing together four to six new investigators whose studies are focused on T lymphocytes, antigen identification, and lymphocyte trafficking. “An initial area of concentration will be pancreas development, with the goal of interacting with UAB’s outstanding islet transplantation team on beta-cell replacement therapy,” he says.

Dr. Corbett, whose hometown is Chicago, says he joined UAB because “of the quality of science performed here, the university’s outstanding reputation, and the strong commitment of both UAB and the local community to establishing the Comprehensive Diabetes Center.”

Dr. Corbett received his undergraduate degree in chemistry from Saint Norbert College in DePere, Wisconsin and earned his PhD in biochemistry at Utah State University in Logan. He completed postdoctoral training in pathology at Washington University’s School of Medicine in St. Louis, and joined the faculty in 1994 as an instructor in pathology.

In 1995 Dr. Corbett became assistant professor in St. Louis University’s Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology. The author of more than 80 articles for peer-reviewed journals, Dr. Corbett serves on the editorial boards of the American Journal of Physiology: Endocrinology and Metabolism and the Journal of Biological Chemistry.

“A leader in basic research of mechanisms of islet destruction, Dr. Corbett also has a long record as a mentor, which will help UAB as we continue to grow the number of scientists focused on diabetes,” says Senior Vice President and Dean of the UAB School of Medicine Robert R. Rich, MD.

Community Support Critical

Department of Medicine Chair Edward Abraham, MD, served as the Comprehensive Diabetes Center’s interim director and actively participated in the national search for a permanent leader. Dr. Abraham credits the generosity of the community with making the center a reality. “UAB has received a tremendous amount of community interest and support. This highly motivated group of individuals understands the disease and is dedicated to moving diabetes research and care forward to find new therapies, and ultimately, a cure.” The UAB-Community partnership has raised more than $15 million to date.
There's a UAB emergency department on the Southside with little to no waiting. Really.

UAB Highlands, the former HealthSouth Medical Center, has an emergency room staffed by University of Alabama at Birmingham doctors and treats about 25 patients daily. That number is growing, as UAB gets the word out to emergency medical workers that the ER is ready to treat broken bones and other routine emergency department cases.

The ER is one of several services UAB Highlands touts as it works to increase patient volumes at its location and to relieve crowding at the 908-bed main UAB Hospital a few blocks away.

UAB Health System started managing the community hospital in August 2005 and bought it from HealthSouth in April 2006 for $33 million. The health system provided another $15 million for first-year operations and upgrades. UAB is now infusing Highlands with another $25 million to continue improvements and pay for operations.

When UAB took over, the facade and lobby of the hospital looked great, but much of the infrastructure and technology were outdated, said Bo Cofield, Highlands' chief operating officer.

"We’ve come a long way in a year," Cofield said. "The facility itself was in decent shape but not great shape."

UAB has moved orthopedics, outpatient plastic surgery, The Workplace, physical medicine and rehabilitation and its pain clinic to the Highlands' campus. Inpatient plastic surgery is coming soon, and there's room for much more. The 219-bed hospital averages between 20 and 22 hospitalized patients daily, although it treats many more on an outpatient basis.

The health system is considering what else it should move to Highlands. Talk of moving Callahan Eye Foundation Hospital on the campus is under discussion.

UAB Highlands lost about $8 million on operations from January 2006 through September of that year, according to an audit released by the state. UAB officials were not surprised by the loss, considering the hospital's capital needs and the need to rebuild the patient base.

HealthSouth troubles:

HealthSouth's troubles and the defection of the hospital's signature practice caused many other physicians on the medical staff to find new places to practice.

UAB has worked to recruit a number of the community physicians that the hospital had lost. Today, about 15% to 20% of Highlands' medical staff is made up of community physicians, those with private practices outside the UAB Health System. As of April 15, all members of the medical staff must be UAB faculty members as well, but community physicians are offered positions that don't require research or classroom teaching.

Much of the $15 million invested in Highlands the first year went for improvements that are unseen, such as rewiring the hospital for current technology that is now linked to UAB Hospital. One patient floor - 26 rooms and a nurses' station - were remodeled and updated. The orthopedics department got new diagnostic equipment, all of which is connected to the UAB Health System. Computer systems are being updated.

During its second year of ownership, UAB plans more technological upgrades. Much of the telephone system wiring dates to the 1980s, Cofield said. The hospital is working on remodeling a second patient floor that will be dedicated to inpatient plastic surgery patients. Highlands will cater to those patients by providing them a private elevator directly to their floor. To preserve their privacy, the patients will come directly to their inpatient rooms to be admitted to the hospital.

The rooms will have hardwood floors, flat-screen televisions and good window views.

Dr. Amie Jackson, Highlands' chief of staff, laughs when she compares the amenities for the patients and her recent request for a desk. She was told to go up to an empty floor and find a desk not being used.

"They're definitely putting all their resources toward the patient and patient experience," she said.
**UAB Highlands Emergency Department**

“best for life’s minor emergencies”

Life serves up small emergencies that need immediate medical treatment, but not necessarily a trauma specialist. That’s when you need UAB Highlands.

Choose the Emergency Department at UAB Highlands to care for lacerations, fevers, fractures, sports-related, and other general injuries to ensure that you receive the most prompt and efficient care 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. UAB Highlands is located at 1201 11th Ave. South, and free parking is provided across the street.

“The UAB Highlands Emergency Department offers community-based emergency services practiced by faculty physicians. We are here to treat neighborhood residents and UAB students, employees and their families,” said Kathleen Bowen, MD, the medical director of the Emergency Department at UAB Highlands.

UAB Highlands is a provider for the VIVA Health Plan, and most other major insurance coverage is accepted.

The Emergency Department at UAB Highlands is fully staffed for medical and surgical emergencies; however patients with major trauma, acute cardiac emergencies, stroke, critical illnesses or obstetrics needs are advised to seek care at University Hospital Emergency Department on Sixth Avenue at 19th Street South.

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UAB Health System Facilities

**UAB Hospital**
619 South 19th Street
Birmingham, AL 35233
(205)934-4011

**Federal Tax ID Number:** 63-6005396
**Medicare Provider Number:** 010033  **CHAMPUS Provider Number:** 010033
**Medicaid Provider Number:** HOS0033H  **NPI:** 1154435824 (Acute Care Only)

**UAB Highlands**
1201 – 11th Avenue South
Birmingham, AL 35202
(205)930-7000

**BILLING ADDRESS:**
P.O. Box 11407
Birmingham, AL 35246-1336 (Zip code must contain all digits to route properly)
(205)934-6400

**Federal Tax ID Number:** 743162834
**Medicare Provider Number:** 010167  **CHAMPUS Provider Number:** 010167
**Medicaid Provider Number:** HOS0167H  **NPI:** 1508805581

**The Workplace- Occupational Health Clinic**
1201 – 11th Avenue South, Suite 100
Birmingham, AL 35202
(205)933-5300

**Callahan Eye Foundation Hospital at UAB**
1720 University Boulevard
Birmingham, AL 35233
(205)325-8100

**Federal Tax ID Number:** 630459034
**Medicare Provider Number:** 01-0018  **CHAMPUS Provider Number:** 01-0018
**Medicaid Provider Number:** HOS0018  **NPI:** 1811945215
UAB Family Practice Center – Southside
930 South 20th Street
Birmingham, AL 35205
(205)934-9700

Federal Tax ID Number: 63-6005396  NPI: 1063576588
Medicare Provider Number: G485
CHAMPUS Provider Number: 63-6005396-048
Medicaid Provider Number: 5290801060

University of Alabama Health Services Foundation, P.C. (UAHSF)

The Kirklin Clinic
2000 6th Avenue South
Birmingham, AL 35233
(205)801-8000

Federal Tax ID Number: 630649108  NPI: 1093768723 (HSF MSO affiliate)
Medicare Provider Number: 051055053
Medicaid Provider Number: ASC0025C
TKC Ambulatory Surgical Center License Number: 10434

The Kirklin Clinic at Acton Road
2145 Elmer J. Bissell Road
Birmingham, AL 35243
(205)978-0250

Affiliated UAB Health Centers  (FTIN: 630649108 – MSO Affiliate)

UAB Health Center Hoover
Lake Crest Centre
2321 Highway 150
Hoover, AL 35244
(205)989-7254

UAB Health Center Hueytown
3029 Allison Bonnett Memorial Dr
Hueytown, AL 35023
(205)497-4083

UAB Health Center Inverness
1250 Inverness Corners, Highway 280
Birmingham, AL 35242
(205)980-0035

UAB Health Center Moody
2050 Village Drive
Moody, AL 35094
(205)640-1171

UAB HealthFinder is the key to the UAB Health System @ 1-800-822-8816