New Discoveries in Head and Neck Cancers

Shutting down inflammation within the body, and then harnessing the immune system to recognize and destroy cancer cells, could provide the one-two punch needed to effectively treat head and neck cancers, according to researchers at Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai.

Research into the pivotal role played by the inflammatory molecule inducible nitric oxide synthase (iNOS) in promoting cancer growth and immune evasion is being led by Andrew G. Sikora, MD, PhD, Assistant Professor and Director of Head and Neck Translational Research in the Department of Otolaryngology, Head and Neck Surgery.

This research, and a separate clinical trial for a cancer vaccine that will start in the fall, represent two novel approaches Dr. Sikora’s lab is using to treat patients with head and neck cancers. There are more than 50,000 new cases in the United States each year, according to the American Society of Clinical Oncology.

According to Dr. Sikora, inhibiting production of nitric oxide (NO) by the iNOS molecule in mouse cancer models alters signal transduction pathways that are critical to the growth and survival of cancer cells. Continued research in this area could lead to the development of a new class of drugs that, when combined with other therapies, could outperform current treatments.

Mount Sinai Streamlines its Research Administration Enterprise

The Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai has begun rolling out a series of projects for investigators in basic, translational, and clinical research that will streamline the research administration structure and make it easier to initiate and submit protocols and compete for funding.

“We are transforming and improving the research administration enterprise on behalf of our investigators,” says Dennis S. Charney, MD, Anne and Joel Ehrenkranz Dean of Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs of The Mount Sinai Medical Center. “This vital endeavor underscores our commitment to supporting innovative and
A Transformational Gift for Children's Health

Eric M. Mindich, a member of Mount Sinai’s Boards of Trustees, and his wife, Stacey Mindich, have provided a leadership gift to advance groundbreaking science to improve children’s health. In recognition of their generosity, Mount Sinai’s Child Health and Development Institute recently was renamed The Mindich Child Health and Development Institute (MCHDI).

“Eric and Stacey’s extraordinarily generous gift represents a critical step toward Mount Sinai’s goal of transforming children’s health,” says Kenneth L. Davis, MD, President and Chief Executive Officer of The Mount Sinai Medical Center.

“This will play a crucial role in helping us to identify new treatments for pediatric cardiovascular disease, allergy and asthma, diabetes and obesity, and neurodevelopment,” says Bruce D. Gelb, MD, the Director of the MCHDI. Dr. Gelb, a world-renowned translational investigator, is also the Gogel Family Professor of Child Health and Development, and Professor of Pediatrics, and Genetics and Genomic Sciences.

The MCHDI resides in the new Leon and Norma Hess Center for Science and Medicine, joining other research and technology-focused Mount Sinai institutes in an effort to promote collaborative scientific discovery.

“Groundbreaking discoveries come from a culture of innovation and creativity, and The Mindich Child Health and Development Institute will play an important part in spreading that culture,” says Dennis S. Charney, MD, the Anne and Joel Ehrenkranz Dean of the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs of The Mount Sinai Medical Center.

“Stacey and I are inspired by Mount Sinai’s vision for children’s health and by the remarkable leadership of Dr. Davis, Dean Charney, and Dr. Gelb,” says Mr. Mindich. “We feel privileged to be able to help them accomplish their goals of providing a better, healthier life for children everywhere.” Over the years, the Mindiches have contributed $15 million to Mount Sinai.

This gift—along with Mount Sinai’s ongoing expansion and renovation of its pediatric and neonatal intensive care units—showcase the institution’s commitment to advancing children’s health. Says Peter W. May, Chairman of the Boards of Trustees: “Mount Sinai had the courage to launch these ambitious endeavors because we were confident that we had the best philanthropic partners in the world, and Eric and Stacey have certainly justified our confidence.”

Mount Sinai Streamlines its Research Administration Enterprise

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highly competitive research that will lead to groundbreaking treatments for human diseases.”

This initiative—called the Research Administration Reengineering Program—is focused on speeding up the protocol review process and improving investigator satisfaction. It is being rolled out at a challenging time for all institutions, which are competing for a declining pool of research funding from the National Institutes of Health (NIH). As a leader in biomedical research, Mount Sinai continues to rank among the top 20 institutions in NIH funding, and third in research dollars per principal investigator.

Hugh A. Sampson, MD, Kurt Hirschhorn Professor of Pediatrics and Dean for Translational Biomedical Sciences, and Kumar Chhatani, Senior Vice President and Chief Information Officer, are Co-chairs of the Reengineering Program. Phyllis Schneppf, Associate Dean for Education and Translational Research Operations, is the program’s implementation leader.

Mount Sinai’s research administration structure is comprised of more than a dozen offices and committees, including the Institutional Review Board (IRB), Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC), and the Grants and Contracts Office (GCO).

“We are establishing better administrative practices and policies to create the most efficient system possible for our investigators and staff while maintaining full compliance with all regulatory requirements,” says Dr. Sampson.

According to Mr. Chhatani, “The program will be tied to quantifiable goals for improving research administration operations. This will be a data-driven process in all respects.”

One of the first high-impact reengineering research projects implemented was the Grant Application Resource Center (GARC), which offers tools and resources to assist investigators and staff in the preparation of grant applications. GARC includes standardized language about Mount Sinai’s programs, and a Research Wizard that guides investigators in determining which regulatory applications or reviews are required in order to submit their research protocols for approval. This can be accessed by logging onto www.ichnr.mssm.edu/garc.

A streamlined Investigational Drug Service (IDS) submission process for research protocols using routine care drugs is now available, as well.

“These projects and the many others currently under way are all geared toward making the administrative requirements for starting research more efficient and intuitive for investigators,” says Ms. Schneppf.

Future rollouts will include a new electronic administration system, Idene, which will replace InforID, and a new Office of Research Services (ORS) that will guide investigators and staff with internal and external regulatory oversight submissions, and administrative processes for preparing grant applications. A comprehensive new web portal for research is also being created.
Nurses Honored with Awards of Excellence

Before a celebratory audience of colleagues, family, and friends, 19 Mount Sinai nurses were recognized as standard-bearers of compassion, innovation, and education at The Mount Sinai Boards of Trustees’ 52nd Annual Awards for Excellence in Nursing Practice on Wednesday, May 1, in Stern Auditorium.

“Forty-one nurses were nominated for these awards, and I consider every one of them a winner, as well,” said Carol Porter, DNP, RN, FAAN, The Edgar M. Cullman, Sr. Chair of the Department of Nursing, Chief Nursing Officer, and Associate Dean of Nursing and Research.

David Reich, MD, the Horace W. Goldsmith Professor and Chair of Anesthesiology, and Interim President and Chief Operating Officer, The Mount Sinai Hospital, congratulated honorees: “This is a superb Nursing Department, one of the best in the city, the state, the country, and the world. You are the face of Mount Sinai, the champions for patient safety and satisfaction.”

Participating in the ceremony were two members of the Boards of Trustees: Susan R. Cullman and Patricia S. Levinson, who is the Department of Nursing representative on the Board’s Patient Care and Quality Assurance Committee. Ms. Cullman and her brother, Edgar M. Cullman, Jr., represent similar interests and concerns of their father, the late Edgar M. Cullman, Sr., who served on the Boards of Trustees for more than 50 years, and was a long-time supporter of excellence in nursing and patient care at Mount Sinai. Agnieszka Mieczkowska, BSN, RN, was recognized with the overall Department of Nursing Clinical Excellence Award for the extraordinary care she provides patients in the departments of Neurology and Neurosurgery. The 18 other recipients were: Mercedita Abadles, BSN, RN, CCRN, Mount Sinai Queens; Rubhita Concepcion, BSN, RN; Melody Cubas, BSN, RN; Dianne Delapenha, BSN, RN; Jennifer Galkuzzo, BSN, RN, CCRN; Margaret Grogan, MPA, BSN, RN; Kathy Hofstadter-Thal, CPNP, MSCR, RN; Carolina Y. Lopez, BSN, RN, CPAN, the Pat Liang Post-Anesthesia Care Unit Nursing Practice Award; Stefania Mancia, MSN, RN, OCN; Leah McLaughlin, BSN, RN; Morgan Meinel, BSN, RN; Cynthia Mendez, BSN, RN; Victor Murgolo, BSN, RN, CCRN; Elsa Nieves, BSN, RN, BC; Marilyn Pomposo, BSN, RN, the Mary Mendes Award; Jena Simon, MS, FNP-BC, RN-BC; Jamie Theriault, BSN, RN, OCN; and Francesca Thomas, BSN, RN, Mount Sinai Queens.

New Discoveries in Head and Neck Cancers (continued from page 1)

of head and neck cancers, including melanoma and squamous cell carcinoma. Combining iNOS therapy with surgery, radiation, or chemotherapy, he says, could produce even more dramatic results.

Most cases of head and neck cancers start in the squamous cells that line the moist, mucosal surfaces inside the mouth, nose, and throat, and are attributed to tobacco and alcohol use, or human papillomavirus infection (HPV).

“First we use iNOS inhibition to sensitize the tumor chemotherapies that cause tumor death, and release antigens that can be recognized by T cells,” says Dr. Sikora. “Then we take the brakes off the antitumor immune response by reversing NO-mediated immune suppression.” The end result would be a robust antitumor immune response capable of destroying residual tumor cells that remain after surgery or radiation therapy.

Dr. Sikora says he is in the process of negotiating with the maker of an iNOS inhibitor drug to move the study from mouse models into clinical trials.

In the separate vaccine study—due to enter Phase 2 clinical trials in the fall—Dr. Sikora and his team will be partnering with AdVaxis Inc., a New Jersey based company, to determine whether the bacteria Listeria serves as an effective cancer antigen. After administering the vaccine, Dr. Sikora’s lab will then look for changes in the profile of immune cells in the resected tumors that indicate an effective antitumor immune response.

Says Eric M. Genden, MD, Professor and Chair of the Department of Otolaryngology, Head and Neck Surgery, at Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai: “Dr. Sikora and his team represent Mount Sinai at its best. He is a young, dynamic scientist whose collaborative work is redefining our view of oncology, and elucidating new ways to understand and treat cancers of the head and neck.”
This tenth annual event honors faculty, students, and staff who have demonstrated outstanding achievement in teaching and made meaningful contributions to the educational activities at Mount Sinai and its affiliate hospitals.

**Thursday, May 23**
4 pm
Hatch Auditorium

**Wednesday, May 15**
7:15 – 8:15 am
Annenberg 10-30

Jeffrey Farber, MD, Associate Professor, Geriatrics and Palliative Medicine, presents “Health Care Reform and Trends in Health Care.”

**Thursday, May 16**
4 – 5 pm
Annenberg 12-01

Peter Palese, PhD, Chair, Department of Microbiology, presents “Pandemic Influenza Viruses: Past and Future.”

**Tuesday, May 21**
4 – 5 pm
Stern Auditorium

**Wednesday, May 22**
7 am: M&M Conference
7:55 am: Grand Rounds
Hatch Auditorium

Neil Cukierman, MD, Professor and Chair, Family Medicine and Community Health, presents “Information Technology: Bridging Public Health and Primary Care.”

The Department of Orthopaedic Surgery will host its First Annual Spine Research Day to highlight Mount Sinai’s innovative clinical and basic science research. The event will also include a presentation by K. Daniel Blevin, MD, Chief of Cervical Spine Surgery at Washington University in St. Louis.

**Thursday, May 16**
Noon – 4 pm
Hess Center
Davis Auditorium

Faculty who need pictures for web profiles on the Mount Sinai Find-a-Faculty Directory are encouraged to attend. Those who bring USB Flash drives will be able to take their photos with them. Mount Sinai ID cards required. To learn more, contact Susanne Erni at 212-746-7821.

**Thursday, May 23**
9 am – 4:30 pm
Guggenheim Atrium

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**Free Hearing and Skin Cancer Screenings in May**

For Better Hearing and Speech Month, the Department of Otolaryngology will offer free hearing screenings on Friday, May 17, from 1 – 5 pm, at the Ear, Nose and Throat Department, 5 East 98th Street, Eighth Floor. To make an appointment, call 212-241-9417.

May is also Skin Cancer Awareness Month. The Department of Dermatology will conduct free melanoma cancer screenings on Thursday, May 23, from 3 – 5 pm. Go to 5 East 98th Street, Fifth Floor. No appointment necessary. To learn more, call 212-659-9530.

**Free Hearing Screenings**
Friday, May 17
1 – 5 pm
5 East 98th Street
Eighth Floor

**Free Skin Cancer Screenings**
Thursday, May 23
3 – 5 pm
5 East 98th Street
Fifth Floor

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**Mount Sinai**

**INSIDE MOUNT SINAI**
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