

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR CANCER RESEARCH (Philadelphia, Pa.)

Elizabeth H. Blackburn, PhD, a 2009 Nobel Laureate and the Morris Herzstein professor of biology and physiology, department of biochemistry and biophysics at the University of California, San Francisco, was sworn in as the new American Association for Cancer Research (AACR) president during the 101st Annual Meeting. Blackburn succeeds **Tyler Jacks, PhD**, director of the David H. Koch Institute for Integrative Cancer Research at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. **Judy E. Garber, MD, MPH**, officially became AACR president-elect for 2010 to 2011 on April 19. Garber currently directs the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute's Cancer Risk and Prevention Program and is a practicing physician at Brigham and Women's Hospital and an associate professor at Harvard Medical School. **Jon Retzlaff** joined the AACR Washington, D.C. office as managing director of science policy and government affairs. He had most recently led the health and biomedical research practice at Lewis-Burke Associates, LLC.

ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY CANCER CENTERS (Rockville, Md.)

Al B. Benson III, MD, became president of the Association of Community Cancer Centers (ACCC) at its 36th Annual Meeting. Dr. Benson is a professor of medicine in the division of hematology/oncology at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine in Chicago. He is also associate director for clinical investigations, Robert H. Lurie Comprehensive Cancer Center, at Northwestern.

AMERICAN COLLEGE OF RADIOLOGY (Philadelphia, Pa.)

Mark R. Gilbert, MD, of the University of Texas M. D. Anderson Cancer Center, Houston, has been appointed co-chair for neuro-oncology of the Brain Tumor Committee for the Radiation Therapy Oncology Group (RTOG). He succeeds **Wai-Kwan Alfred Yung, MD**, chairman of the department of neuro-oncology at M. D. Anderson. RTOG, a National Cancer Institute-funded international clinical trials group, is administered by the American College of Radiology.

AMGEN (Thousand Oaks, Calif.)

An article by Mike Mitka in the April 14 issue of *The Journal of the American Medical Association* describes a new program underway by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to inform physicians and patients about the risks of using erythropoiesis-stimulating agents (ESAs) for the treatment of anemia. The Risk Evaluation and Mitigation Strategy (REMS) program, which the FDA mandated that Amgen establish, requires education for physicians prescribing ESAs to treat chemotherapy-related anemia in patients with cancer and documentation that these individuals have learned of the risks associated with them.

Both requirements, the author says, have the American Society for Clinical Oncology (ASCO) concerned that the program will add to the administrative burdens of its members while not improving care. ASCO's **Chief Executive Officer Allen S. Lichter, MD**, expressed further concern that the medical community was excluded from any discussions in designing the REMS pro-

gram. ASCO plans to submit a letter to the FDA expressing its concerns.

CANCER THERAPY & RESEARCH CENTER (San Antonio, Tex.)

Dr. Ian Thompson Jr. became permanent executive director of the Cancer Therapy & Research Center (CTRC) at the University of Texas Health Science Center. He had served as interim executive director for five months. Through its Institute for Drug Development, CTCRC, a National Cancer Institute Designated Cancer Center, conducts one of the largest oncology Phase 1 clinical drug programs in the world.

CELL THERAPEUTICS Inc. (Seattle, Wash.)

The Seattle biotech said it would lay off 36 employees immediately in an effort to save \$16 million this year. The company received a Complete Response Letter on April 9 from the FDA regarding its New Drug Application for pixantrone as a non-Hodgkin's lymphoma treatment. Earlier, an FDA advisory panel had unanimously recommended against the drug's approval.

CENTERS FOR MEDICARE & MEDICAID SERVICES (Baltimore, Md.)

President Obama formally announced his nomination of Harvard Medical School professor and pediatrician **Donald M. Berwick, MD, MPP**, to run the nation's Medicare and Medicaid programs. Dr. Berwick now faces confirmation by the Senate Finance Committee and the full Senate. Dr. Berwick, president and CEO of the Institute for Healthcare Improvement, has been praised for innovative ideas that lower health care costs while maintaining quality care. On April 15 President Obama signed the Continuing Extension Act of 2010, delaying the 21 percent Medicare payment reimbursement cut for physicians through May 31. The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) has instructed Medicare contractors to begin processing claims under the new law for services provided by physicians, non-physician practitioners and others paid under the Medicare Physician Fee Schedule. Most claims with dates of service April 1 and later were being held by Medicare in anticipation of congressional action.

DELGATH SYSTEMS Inc. (New York, N.Y.)

Michael D. Dellario was named to the newly-created position of vice president, global marketing. The company is expanding its worldwide commercialization team in anticipation of FDA approval for the Delcath PHP System™, a proprietary treatment method for primary and metastatic cancers to the liver which is currently in Phase 3 trials.

DENDREON Corp. (Seattle, Wash.)

Varun Nanda was named as senior vice president of global commercial operations and **Richard Ranieri** was named as senior vice president of human resources. Nanda most recently served as the senior vice president and global head of oncology at Roche/Genentech, where he led worldwide product strategy for all oncology molecules. In his new position, Nanda will lead the commercial team with responsibility for sales and marketing functions. As Dendreon prepares for possible approval of its prostate cancer vaccine, Provenge®, it is anyone's guess as to how much the immunotherapy will cost. Various biotech analysts have estimated that Provenge will be priced anywhere from \$40,000 to \$75,000 and might even go as high as \$100,000.

ELI LILLY and Co. (Indianapolis, Ind.)

Eli Lilly and Co., Merck & Co. and Pfizer, Inc. announced the formation of the Asian Cancer Research Group, Inc., (ACRG), an independent, not-for-profit company established to accelerate research and ultimately improve treatment for patients affected with the most commonly diagnosed cancers in Asia.

GENENTECH Inc. (South San Francisco, Calif.)

Genentech formally opened a \$400 million manufacturing center in Hillsboro, Ore., on April 5. The 340,000 square foot facility currently employs 250 and will eventually produce all three of Genentech's signature biologics for cancer.

MYRIAD GENETICS (Salt Lake City, Utah)

A federal court in New York ruled on March 30 that patents were improperly granted to Myriad Genetics on two human genes associated with hereditary breast and ovarian cancer. The decision, if upheld, may very well amount to a major coup for scientific research in disallowing restricted access to specific genes based on gene patenting. Myriad has had total control over the BRCA1 and BRCA2 genes since the 1990s and charges more than \$3,000 for diagnostic testing to determine a woman's hereditary risk of breast and ovarian cancer.

NATIONAL CANCER INSTITUTE (Bethesda, Md.)

The White House nominated **Dr. Harold Varmus**, as director of the National Cancer Institute (NCI). A March press release from the Cancer Prevention Coalition took issue, however, with Dr. Varmus' nomination to lead NCI. The statement said although Varmus had a "distinguished track record in basic research on cancer treatment," he had a "lack of familiarity with mounting scientific evidence on cancer prevention." The organization also criticized the Nobel Laureate for his close ties to the pharmaceutical industry. Dr. Varmus will step down as president of Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in Manhattan as soon as a successor is found.

NATIONAL COMPREHENSIVE CANCER NETWORK (Fort Washington, Pa.)

Thomas A. D'Amico, MD, of the Duke Comprehensive Cancer Center, Durham, N.C., is the new chairman of the National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN) board of directors. He succeeds **Al B. Benson III, MD**, the new president of ACCC, who will remain on NCCN's board.

ONCOGENEX PHARMACEUTICALS Inc. (Bothell, Wash. & Vancouver, B.C.)

OncoGenex received the BIOTEC Canada's Gold Leaf Award as biotech company of the year at the BIO 2010 International Convention in Chicago on May 4. Last December the company secured a major global partnership with Teva Pharmaceuticals to develop and commercialize its lead drug candidate, OGX-011. OncoGenex also closed 2009 with \$64.6 million in cash, a record for the company.

OSU COMPREHENSIVE CANCER CENTER (Columbus, Ohio)

Miguel Villalona-Calero, MD, was named director of the newly formed division of medical oncology at The Ohio State University (OSU) Comprehensive Cancer Center—Arthur G. James Cancer Hospital and Richard J. Solove Research Institute, effective May 1.

Dr. Villalona is an internationally-recognized expert in experimental therapeutics and lung cancer.

PATIENT ACCESS NETWORK FOUNDATION (Washington, D.C.)

On April 1 Patient Access Network (PAN) Foundation began providing co-payment assistance for medications to underinsured patients with chronic lymphocytic leukemia (CLL). Qualified patients will be granted \$5,000 per year to cover the cost of medications related to their disease. Patients can start the application process online at www.PANfoundation.org or by calling (866) 316-PANF (7263).

REGENERON PHARMACEUTICALS (Tarrytown, N.Y.)

Michael Aberman, MD, was appointed as vice president, strategy and investor relations. Prior to Regeneron, Dr. Aberman covered the biotechnology industry as a research analyst for Credit Suisse and Morgan Stanley, and had previously been director of business development at Antigenics, Inc.

Peter Dworkin, vice president, will continue to be responsible for corporate communications.

ROCHE (Basel, Switzerland)

With the announcement of quarterly earnings in mid-April, Roche disclosed plans to submit, with Genentech, a marketing application to U.S. regulators in 2010 for trastuzumab-DM1 (T-DM1) in advanced HER2-positive metastatic breast cancer. The basis for the application is the positive Phase 2 data presented at the San Antonio Breast Cancer Symposium in December 2009.

STANFORD CANCER CENTER (Stanford, Calif.)

Douglas Blayney, MD, has been appointed the Ann and John Doerr medical director of the Stanford Cancer Center, effective July 1. Dr. Blayney is currently the medical director of the University of Michigan's Comprehensive Cancer Center and the president of the American Society of Clinical Oncology.

TEXAS ONCOLOGY (Dallas, Tex.)

The independent community-based oncology practice with over 100 sites throughout Texas and southeastern New Mexico opened a new comprehensive cancer center in Northeast Tarrant County. The new Texas Oncology-Grapevine facility is located at 1631 Lancaster Drive, Suite 150 in Grapevine, Tex. The phone number is 817-251-9080. **Dr. Inna Shmerlin**, an oncology specialist, joined the cancer treatment team at Texas Oncology and will see patients at two Dallas-based practice locations, Texas Oncology-Methodist Dallas Cancer Center and Methodist Charlton Cancer Center.

IN MEMORIAM

Dr. Marie-France Demierre, a prominent dermatologist who specialized in melanoma and director of the skin oncology program in dermatology at Boston Medical Center, died unexpectedly on April 13 in Boston. She was 43.

Harriet Benjamin, whose breast cancer battle inspired the Wellness Community, an innovative support network for cancer patients and their families, died at the age of 85 on April 7 in Marina del Rey, Calif.

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