



CHANCELLOR'S Notes

January 24, 2014

DR. LARRY HOLLIER

Students honor LSUHSC's Gee

Dr. Rebekah Gee, Assistant Professor in the LSUHSC Schools of Public Health and Medicine, has been selected to receive the 2014 Women Leaders in Medicine Award from the American Medical Student Association (AMSA).



Dr. Gee was nominated by our medical students who identified her as a source of inspiration, leadership and support during their medical training. We're told there were an impressive number of nominations this year.

Dr. Gee is also the Medicaid Medical Director for the State of Louisiana. She has served in leadership roles in public health policy at both state and national levels. She has advised the public health departments of several states including Louisiana, Pennsylvania, Ohio and Massachusetts. She currently chairs or co-chairs national committees on maternity quality and prematurity reduction for both the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), the Maternal and Child Health Bureau (HRSA) and the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO).

Dr. Gee is clinically active and is caring for patients at LSU.

LSUHSC research shows early promise of new drug for cancers caused by viruses

Christopher Parsons, MD, Director of the HIV Malignancies Program at LSU Health Sciences Center New Orleans, is the senior author of a paper that is the

first to report that specialized fat (lipid) molecules, called sphingolipids, play a key role in the survival of aggressive lymphomas caused by viruses. The paper also reveals a new therapy for preventing production of sphingolipids by lymphoma cells, thereby killing these cells, which are often resistant to



Dr. Chris Parsons

standard therapies. The study is published in the January 2014 issue of *Molecular Cancer Therapeutics*, a journal of the American Association for Cancer Research.

The research team focuses on primary effusion lymphoma (PEL), an aggressive and deadly variant of diffuse large B-cell lymphoma that frequently occurs in people

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Nursing BSN to DNP applications being accepted



The LSUHSC School of Nursing is now accepting applications for the BSN to DNP Program in the Adult Gerontology Clinical Nurse Specialist, Executive Nurse Leader, Neonatal Nurse Practitioner, Primary Care Family Nurse Practitioner, and Public/Community Health Nursing concentrations.

The degree program offers nurses holding a Baccalaureate in Science in Nursing (BSN) degree the opportunity to attain a Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP)

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infected with HIV. Though scientists have known that the Kaposi's sarcoma-associated herpesvirus (KSHV) causes PEL, development of effective therapies has proven difficult. PEL tumors arise within body cavities and progress rapidly with an average survival of around 6 months. Combination chemotherapy represents the current standard of care for PEL, but side effects (including bone marrow suppression) and drug resistance (generated through virus-associated mechanisms) continue to limit the effectiveness of standard therapy.

After documenting the role of an enzyme called sphingosine kinase (SK), in the generation of biologically active sphingolipids in PEL tumors that keep the tumor cells alive, the researchers tested a novel clinical-grade small molecule that selectively targets SK. The molecule, called ABC294640, was developed by Apogee Biotechnology Corporation. Previous

studies found antitumor effects for ABC294640 with kidney, prostate, and breast cancer cell lines. In the current study, ABC294640 not only inhibited SK function and induced PEL cell death, it worked selectively for virus-infected cells while sparing uninfected cells.

It is still early in our understanding of how these special lipids contribute to viral cancers, but this is a major potential advance. There are no therapies available to fight viral tumors by selectively blocking these pathways, all while not harming normal, uninfected cells.

In addition to Dr. Parsons, the LSUHSC research team also included Drs. Zhiqiang Qin, Lu Dai, Thomas Reske, Karlie Bonstaff, Luis Del Valle, and Paulo Rodriguez, who are all members of the Copeland-LSUHSC Partnership in Viruses, Cancer, and Immunotherapy.

The research thus far indicates that this molecule is safe, with the potential to stand alone as a single, orally

administered drug with no need to combine it with other toxic drugs now routinely used but which fail to work for many patients. ■

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degree. The practice doctorate has emerged as an entry-level requirement for many health care professions such as dentistry, pharmacy, psychology, audiology, and physical therapy. The American Association of Colleges of Nurses has recommended the practice doctorate for entry level into advanced practice nursing by 2015. LSUHSC's BSN to DNP program will fulfill a major need at the local, state and national level for doctorally prepared registered nurses.

The BSN to DNP is a practice-focused doctoral nursing degree designed to prepare students to translate academic research, promote evidence-based practice, and develop systems of care based on research utilization. LSUHSC School of Nursing is the only school of nursing in Louisiana affiliated within an academic health sciences center that affords students unique opportunities for interprofessional education and research.



The application is available online at: <http://nursing.lsuhs.edu/Special/bsntoDNPapplication.html>. ■