# **News of the Center**

## Jonsson Cancer Center **Named Best in the West Again!**

For the fifth consecutive year, UCLA's Jonsson Comprehensive Cancer Center is the best cancer center in

the western United States, according to a U.S. News & World Report survey of 2,550 board-certified physicians from across the country.

The ranking is included in the magazine's July 12, 2004, annual guide to America's best hospitals. UCLA's Jonsson Cancer Center is one of five California cancer centers named among the top 50 nationwide, and one of only two to make the top 10. The Jonsson Cancer Center also ranks as the best rated cancer center in Southern California, according to the magazine.

Judith C. Gasson, director of the Jonsson Cancer Center, said the U.S. News ranking reflects the excellent medical care and leadingedge research available to patients with cancer at UCLA.

"Our scientists and oncologists are committed to the very best in cancer research and patient care," said Gasson, who also is a scientist. "We are gratified by this recognition from our colleagues, and delighted to be ranked the best cancer center in the west for the fifth year in a row."

Overall, UCLA's Jonsson Cancer Center ranked eighth in the nation. Of the four other California cancer centers listed in the top 50, the University of California, San Francisco ranked ninth, Stanford University Hospital ranked 16th, the University of California, Davis ranked 42nd, and the City of Hope ranked 38th.

The rankings are listed on the magazine's web site at www.usnews.com.

# **Science Update**



### **Avastin Plus Chemotherapy Improves Survival**

A drug designed to cut off a tumor's blood supply, when paired with a chemotherapy combination, resulted in significant improvement in survival in patients with metastatic colorectal cancer, the first time in decades that survival times have been extended in patients with this devastating form of advanced cancer.

The results of the study, done at UCLA's Jonsson Cancer Center and several other sites nationwide. appeared June 3, 2004 in the New England Journal of Medicine.

The study paired the angiogenesis inhibitor Avastin with irinotecan, 5fluorouracil and leucovorin. The combination therapy improved median survival in patients by nearly five months, reducing risk of death by more than 30 percent. It also improved response rates, duration of response and progression-free survival times, said Dr. Fairooz Kabbinavar, an associate professor of hematology/oncology and senior author of the study.



#### Study Looks at Well-Being **After Cancer Care**

Women who have mastectomies or undergo chemotherapy for breast cancer have more severe physical symptoms immediately following treatment than women who have lumpectomies without chemotherapy treatment, according to a study by researchers at UCLA's Jonsson Cancer Center.

The study by Dr. Patricia Ganz, director of Cancer Prevention and Control Research, was published in the March 3, 2004 issue of the Journal of the National Cancer Institute.

There have been many studies of the physical and emotional experiences of women newly diagnosed with breast cancer, and in recent years several studies have examined the experiences of longterm cancer survivors. However, until



this study, little information was available on the experiences of women in the transitional period between the end of initial treatment and survivorship, when they must move beyond cancer to reestablish normal life patterns.



#### **Low-Fat Diet Slows Prostate Cancer Cell Growth**

A low-fat diet may help men with aggressive prostate cancer better fight their disease and live longer, according to researchers at UCLA's Jonsson Cancer Center who showed that a diet low in polyunsaturated fats slowed cancer growth and increased survival times in lab models.

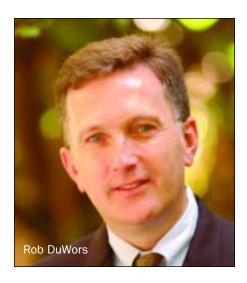
The study by Dr. William Aronson, an associate professor of urology, appeared in the Feb. 15, 2004 issue of the peer-reviewed journal Cancer Research. It is part of the Jonsson Cancer Center's Specialized Program of Research Excellence (SPORE) in prostate cancer, a federally funded program created to find better ways to prevent, detect and treat this disease.



## **Study Finds News Clues to Origins of Brain Tumors**

Researchers at UCLA's Jonsson Cancer Center have discovered that brain tumors may be derived from the cells that form the nervous system, called neural stems cells, which may help them understand how this cancer begins and one day lead to improved diagnosis and treatment.

The study by Dr. Harley Kornblum, a pediatric neurologist and an associate professor of pharmacology and pediatrics, was published in the online edition of the peer-reviewed journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences on Nov. 24, 2003.



# **Administrative Update**

There have been a number of changes within the Jonsson Comprehensive Cancer Center's administrative staff since the last issue of *Discoveries* was published. Here are a few of the highlights:

- The administrative management of Dr. Dennis Slamon's UCLA/Community Oncology Research Network has moved from the Department of Medicine to the JCCC effective Feb. 1, 2004.
- \* Susan Fisher has rejoined the JCCC after spending the last several years in the School of Dentistry. Fisher is our new Chief Financial Officer, focusing primarily on the finances of the Clinical Research Unit.
- \* Li Cui now directs the computer support services function for the JCCC. Cui recently hired a new computer support coordinator, Charles Avila, to help her support the IT needs of the JCCC, JCCF and Ted Mann Family Resource Center employees.

Over the next year, the administrative staff plans to work closely to automate various processes and develop ways to better support the JCCC membership. In addition, key staff members and I will focus on the strategic directions of the JCCC and how to meet specific objectives.