

# Community Connections



KEEPING OUR COMMUNITIES CONNECTED AND ENGAGED

From the Director's Desk

Issue 10, January 2021



**O'NEAL** COMPREHENSIVE  
CANCER CENTER

**UAB** THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA AT BIRMINGHAM

COMMUNITY  
OUTREACH & ENGAGEMENT

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## HAPPY NEW YEAR

Welcome to 2021!

We have made it through what has been one of the most challenging years on record. Not only did we make it, but each of you persevered and held to our mission of providing health education and cancer awareness to our communities.

As we ring in the New Year, it is an exciting time to reflect on our accomplishments and create goals for the upcoming year.

We begin the new year with great promise and excitement

for the work that lies ahead. We have so many exciting opportunities happening this month and throughout the year. Each of you plays a major role as we forge positively ahead in 2021.

Thanks to each of you for being such an important member of this team.

Lastly, please continue to be safe and aware during the ongoing pandemic.

– *Claudia*

## COMMUNITY PROFILE

# OFFICE OF COMMUNITY OUTREACH & ENGAGEMENT TURNS 25: A CHAT WITH THE PIONEERS

It has been 25 years since leaders at UAB recognized the need to address widening health disparities in cancer screening and treatment, and to then take decisive action to address it.

The result was the creation of what is now the O'Neal Comprehensive Cancer Center's Office of Community Outreach & Engagement (OCOE). During its silver anniversary year, the office traces its roots, development and impact on communities. This month we talk to a few of the pioneers.

## DR. EDWARD PARTRIDGE

Dr. Edward Partridge paused a moment when asked if he ever imagined that the office he founded would deliver such a sustained and widespread impact.

"I thought we would be successful because we were targeting early a problem that was being identified," said the former Cancer Center director. "The major driving force for us going back 25 years ago was that we recognized that cancer disparities were emerging. In the 70s, we discovered things like mammography and colonoscopy and we developed some reasonably effective chemotherapy so we could impact outcomes. But beginning in the 80s, the discoveries were delivered differently."

Partridge said it became clear that, while cancer screening and treatment



*Dr. Edward Partridge, in this vintage photo, reviews a map of Alabama and the target areas for the Office of Community Outreach & Engagement.*

methods were improving, patients with lower income or less education received different levels of care. This also represented a significant racial divide. After research, the Cancer Center recognized those disparities were greatly represented in Alabama and Mississippi.

The program began as a small coalition between UAB and other cancer and health advocacy groups, called the Alabama Partnership for Cancer Control in the Underserved.

"We were underfunded, so one group would volunteer to buy the sandwiches for the lunch meeting," Partridge recalled. "But it gave us an infrastructure that allowed us to convince the National Institute of Health and the

National Cancer Institute that we had enough of an association that we could write some grants to formalize our organization."

## SUZANNE CHURCHILL REAVES

When Dr. Partridge had secured funding to hire his first full-time employee for the new outreach office, he turned to Suzanne Churchill Reaves as his outreach coordinator.

"Because of his dedication and his vision, it was easy to say, 'Yes, we're going to make a difference,'" Reaves said. "There were just a lot of moving pieces that came together to make it happen."

Reaves and the new team, including Linda Goodson, helped adopt the community health advisor model, beginning in Bessemer,

among residents of the Bessemer Housing Authority. Both the effort and the network expanded into Alabama's Black Belt region as the office recruited more community gatekeepers.

"We just started county by county," Reaves said. "We had a lot of good partners in that area."

Reaves said she was most proud of her role with the community health advisors during the early years. Decades later, she still has a recipe for taco soup given to her by an early community health advisor from the Black Belt.

"It was just an incredible time," she said. "If you go to somebody's house and you have a glass of tea, and





you learn what problems exist in their community, you really get connected.”

### EARL SANDERS

Decades of a career in medical service and patient advocacy came full circle for Earl Sanders when he joined the outreach and engagement team with the Deep South Network. As a program manager, Sanders coordinated a hotline for cancer information. In addition, he went on the road to recruit community-based health advocates.

“I would visit hospitals in West Alabama and in the Black Belt,” Sanders said. “I would strike up a relationship with them and invite them to be part of the program. Dr. Partridge and I spent many miles down the highway.”

Sanders, throughout his career, worked as a patient advocate. It began in the Air Force in 1967, where he treated soldiers who were wounded in Vietnam. Sanders said his experience overseas at a hospital in Japan was perfect training for the next phase.

## OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT



**From top left: Dr. Edward Partridge, Suzanne Churchill Reaves and Earl Sanders**

“I felt so prepared being in the hospital setting,” he said. “It was an honor to serve those patients in Japan who had served in Vietnam.”

Sanders recalls early collaborations such as the partnership between UAB, Tuskegee University and Morehouse School of Medicine, where the three institutions would work on joint projects with the National Cancer Institute. It was all the result of a lunchtime

conversation where talk turned into real action, he said.

“Dr. Partridge sketched it out on a napkin,” Sanders said. “He sketched out what we were going to do, and sure enough, we did get funded.”

Sanders noted that his former director still has the napkin that set the framework for the first ever collaboration.

# CERVICAL CANCER IS PREVENTABLE



HAVE YOU SCHEDULED  
YOUR ANNUAL  
CHECKUP?

IT'S YOUR BODY.  
TAKE CONTROL.

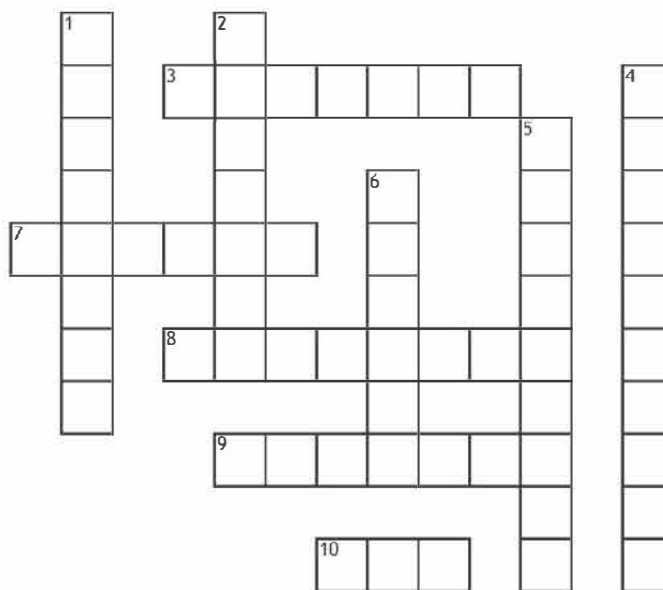
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## Cervical Cancer Awareness-January 2021



### Across

3. Test used to detect changes in the cervix, and early stages of cancer
7. Cervical cancer is cancer located in the \_\_\_\_\_
8. Regular physical activity can \_\_\_\_\_ the risk of developing cancer
9. Test used to find human papilloma virus
10. Human papilloma virus is also known as \_\_\_\_\_

### Down

1. Smoking causes the risk of developing cancer to \_\_\_\_\_
2. The HPV \_\_\_\_\_ is given to protect against the HPV types commonly linked to cervical cancer
4. Cervical cancer screening should begin at age \_\_\_\_\_
5. With the HPV vaccine and regular screening, cervical cancer can be \_\_\_\_\_
6. HPV and Pap Test used at the same time is called a \_\_\_\_\_



# THE RESEARCH CORNER

## UAB LAUNCHES WISDOM, SEEKS PARTICIPANTS IN BREAST CANCER SCREENING STUDY

The O'Neal Comprehensive Cancer Center at UAB is recruiting women in Alabama to join the WISDOM study, or Women Informed to Screen Depending on Measures of risk. This is an innovative national research study designed to test a personalized approach to breast cancer screening and prevention. Women between the ages of 40 and 74 who have not had breast cancer are eligible to participate.

Despite continued advances in cancer care, approximately 42,000 women per year still die of breast cancer. About one in eight women will be diagnosed with invasive breast cancer in her lifetime, and the impact of the disease is felt beyond the patient, to loved ones, caregivers and health care providers.

"This is a unique opportunity for women to participate in a study that can help generations of women to come," said Rachael Lancaster, M.D., principal investigator on the study and assistant professor in the UAB Division of Breast & Endocrine Surgery. "Each woman's breast cancer risk varies, and this study takes multiple risk factors into consideration, including genetics, family history, lifestyle and personal history, to determine the best way to screen."

Lancaster stresses that this study is not changing any existing guidelines for mammograms but is seeking to improve upon those guidelines.

The WISDOM study aims to determine which method is more effective: routine annual mammography or a personalized screening schedule that includes genetic testing for breast cancer risk. For example, in the personalized screening group, those considered at high risk for developing breast cancer will be recommended for additional breast MRI screening. In addition, the study offers breast cancer risk reduction strategies to women identified to have high risk for breast cancer.

"We recommend women undergo annual mammograms starting at age 40. However, if a woman is interested in learning more about her personal risk of breast cancer and potentially screening for breast cancer based on this risk, this study is a good option," Lancaster said.

"In fact, participants can express a preference as to which study group they desire to be enrolled in or they can elect to be randomly assigned," Lancaster said. "This means a woman can still participate in this study and still get her



annual mammograms just as she has always done."

By participating, women do not need to change where they get their mammograms or go to a study site. The study is conducted online and is available in both Spanish and English. Participation can mostly be done from home.

The WISDOM study was launched by doctors at the University of California, San Francisco in 2016. The overall goal is to enroll 100,000 women. As one of the participating sites, the O'Neal Cancer Center at UAB hopes to enroll 5,000 participants over five years.

A major goal of this study is to increase knowledge of screening by reaching women across diverse backgrounds, ethnicities and geographic locations. Risk assessment is particularly important among women of color, who are more at risk for lethal cancers. The hope is to address health disparities and improve

breast cancer detection within medically underserved and minority populations.

"This nationwide study offers all women — regardless of where they live, where they receive health care or health insurance type — the opportunity to participate in this groundbreaking research and to receive screening recommendations and risk reduction strategies," said Monica Baskin, Ph.D., professor in the UAB Division of Preventive Medicine and associate director for the O'Neal Comprehensive Cancer Center's Office of Community Outreach & Engagement.

"Breast cancer is not a one-size-fits-all disease, and in that vein, breast cancer risk also varies by race and ethnicity. That is why we need racial and ethnic diversity in WISDOM, and we need the help of so many different women," Baskin said.





**The WISDOM Study** is a nation-wide effort to improve breast cancer screening for all women. The goal of WISDOM is to find the safest and best way to screen for breast cancer.

The WISDOM study compares two ways to screen for breast cancer in women age 40 and over with no history of breast cancer. One way is the standard yearly mammogram. The other way is a personal screening plan based on your risk, including your genetics.

Participation is easy and can be done from home. You do not need to change where you get your mammogram or go to a study site. To join WISDOM or to learn more, visit [www.thewisdomstudy.org/UAB](http://www.thewisdomstudy.org/UAB) or call 855-729-2844.

## JOIN THE WISDOM STUDY

### At no cost to you, the study involves:

- Online questionnaires
- Saliva DNA test kit sent to your home (for some participants)
- Screening advice for you and your doctor based on your personal risk

### Recruiting For:

- Women aged 40 to 74
- Who have not had breast cancer



**JOIN TO IMPROVE  
YOUR HEALTH AND THE HEALTH  
OF YOUR SISTERS, MOTHERS,  
DAUGHTERS, & FRIENDS.**

**LEARN ABOUT  
YOUR PERSONAL RISK  
FOR BREAST CANCER.**

**To join WISDOM  
or get more information visit  
[www.thewisdomstudy.org/UAB](http://www.thewisdomstudy.org/UAB)  
or call 855-729-2844**

# January 2021 Events

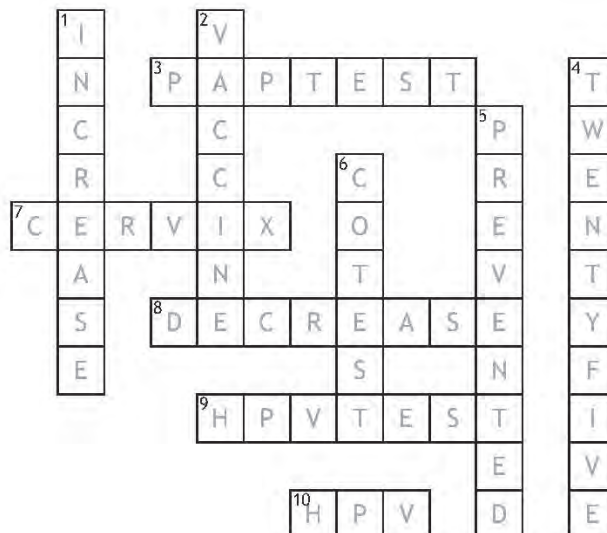
Please mark your calendars. All events will be held virtually via Zoom.

- January 11, 12 p.m. (Noon) – Cervical Cancer 101
- January 19, 5:30 p.m. – Fireside Chat with the Pioneers: A Conversation on the Roots and Development of the Office of Community Outreach & Engagement
- January 26, 5 p.m. – Cervical Cancer



## ANSWER KEY

### Cervical Cancer Awareness-January 2021



#### Across

- Test used to detect changes in the cervix, and early stages of cancer
- Cervical cancer is cancer located in the \_\_\_\_\_
- Regular physical activity can \_\_\_\_\_ the risk of developing cancer
- Test used to find human papilloma virus
- Human papilloma virus is also known as \_\_\_\_\_

#### Down

- Smoking causes the risk of developing cancer to \_\_\_\_\_
- The HPV \_\_\_\_\_ is given to protect against the HPV types commonly linked to cervical cancer
- Cervical cancer screening should begin at age \_\_\_\_\_
- With the HPV vaccine and regular screening, cervical cancer can be \_\_\_\_\_
- HPV and Pap Test used at the same time is called a \_\_\_\_\_

SAVE THE DATE

*the 36th annual*

# VIRTUAL ARTBLINK GALA

*Friday, February 5th*

4:00-6:00PM DINNER PICK-UP

6:30PM PRE-SHOW | 6:45PM EVENT BEGINS



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ARTBLINK.ORG

# Stay up to date

with all the activities and news at the O'Neal Cancer Center and the Office of Community Outreach & Engagement. Follow us:

## ON THE WEB

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