

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

KEEPING OUR COMMUNITIES CONNECTED AND ENGAGED



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DIRECTOR'S NOTE

September gives us an opportunity to celebrate how far we have come and recommit ourselves to the work still ahead.

First, September is Prostate Cancer Awareness Month, a reminder that awareness must lead to action. Across the Deep South, we must continue creating opportunities for men to understand their risk, talk with their healthcare providers, and access appropriate screening and timely care. Through our regional wellness days this year alone, we have provided 68 free PSA tests for men. I'm so proud that our Community Health Advisors, along with our many community and clinical partners are working to bring trusted cancer education and resources closer to where people live, work, worship, and gather.

We also enter this month energized by another successful Community Dissemination Institute! We welcomed 360 guests for an incredible

gathering centered on learning, sharing, relationship building, and moving science into communities. We had a great time together! Like never before, the Institute demonstrated what is possible when community members, researchers, clinicians, advocates, and partners come together around a shared purpose.

Now, we carry that energy forward. Our work does not end when the Institute closes or an awareness month passes. Every conversation, partnership, screening connection, research collaboration, and person reached moves us closer to our goal of reducing the cancer burden across Alabama.

Thank you for continuing to show up, lean in, and move this mission forward. Numbers are our neighbors and our neighbors are counting on us.

Onward and upward together!

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Research Corner

Research Spotlight: Finding New Ways to Fight Prostate Cancer

Sorry Varambally, PH.D., and colleagues are working to better understand what helps prostate cancer grow and spread. In this study, scientists looked closely at a protein called TRIP13. They found that prostate cancer cells may have higher amounts of this protein.

Why does that matter? Researchers found that when there was more TRIP13, prostate cancer cells were more likely to grow and spread. When they lowered the amount of TRIP13, the cancer cells grew more slowly and had a harder time spreading.

Researchers also tested a drug that blocks TRIP13. In laboratory studies, the drug slowed the growth of prostate cancer cells and caused

more cancer cells to die. It also slowed the growth of tumors in experimental models.

These results suggest that TRIP13 could someday become a new target for prostate cancer treatment. However, this research is still in the early stages. More studies are needed to learn whether this type of treatment is safe and works well in people.

During Prostate Cancer Awareness Month, studies like this remind us why cancer research is so important. By learning more about what makes prostate cancer grow, researchers can continue working toward better treatments and better outcomes for men and their families.

Afaq F, Pathi SS, Chakravarthi BVSK, Chandrashekar DS, Carskadon S, Diffalha SA, Kunju LP, Palanisamy N, Manne U, Singh R, Varambally S. AAA ATPase TRIP13 is overexpressed in prostate cancer and promotes tumor progression. *Transl Oncol*. 2026 Jun;68:102743. doi: 10.1016/j.tranon.2026.102743. Epub 2026 Apr 17. PMID: 42000600; PMCID: PMC13101708.

Building Community Voices in Research

This summer, OCOE trained 17 participants through its Research Advocates/Community Scientists (RACS) program. Participants learned about the research process and how community members can work alongside researchers to share valuable perspectives. RACS helps strengthen connections between researchers



and communities, ensuring community voices are included in research that addresses important health needs across Alabama.

Prostate Cancer Awareness

Prostate Cancer: Know Your Risk. Start the Conversation.

Prostate cancer is one of the most common cancers among men in the United States. It begins in the prostate, a small gland that is part of the male reproductive system. Many prostate cancers grow slowly, but some can grow quickly and spread to other parts of the body.

Know Your Risk

All men can develop prostate cancer, but some have a higher risk. Age is the most common risk factor, and the chance of developing prostate cancer increases as men get older. African American men and men with a family history of prostate cancer also have a higher risk. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), African American men are more likely to develop prostate cancer and are more than twice as likely to die from it compared with other men.

Do Not Wait for Symptoms

Prostate cancer may not cause symptoms in its early stages. When symptoms do occur, they may include trouble starting urination; a weak urine flow; urinating often at night; blood in the urine or semen; or ongoing pain in the back, hips, or pelvis.

These symptoms do not always mean cancer, but they should be discussed with a healthcare provider.

When Should You Talk About Screening?

Screening can help find some prostate cancers

before symptoms appear. One common screening tool is the prostate-specific antigen, or PSA, blood test.

The American Cancer Society recommends talking with a healthcare provider about the benefits and risks of screening beginning at:

- Age 50 for men at average risk
- Age 45 for African American men and men with a father or brother diagnosed before age 65
- Age 40 for men with more than one close relative diagnosed at an early age

Start the Conversation

Knowing your family history and personal risk can help you make informed decisions about your health. Ask your healthcare provider: "When should I start talking about prostate cancer screening?"

Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC); American Cancer Society





A research study aimed to provide physical activity and nutrition guidance for prostate cancer survivors



What's the study about?

To learn how effective this program is for losing weight and increasing physical functioning in men with prostate cancer.



Who may participate?

Men diagnosed with prostate cancer who have received hormone therapy (also called ADT).



Where will it be held?

In your own home.
No travel required!



What will I do?

Participate in an online weight loss program with online exercise classes -OR- receive diet and exercise information.

Complete online assessments, health surveys, and an at-home urine sample to determine muscle mass.



What will I receive?

FitBit, digital scale, and guidance about diet and exercise.



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Support Our Patient Assistance Fund: Your Donation Makes a Difference

We invite you to join us in supporting the Patient Assistance Fund through the Office of Community Outreach & Engagement at the UAB O'Neal Cancer Center. Your generous donation will provide critical resources to patients facing financial hardships, helping them access essential cancer care, medications and transportation services.

Every contribution, no matter the size, makes a tangible impact on the lives of those in need. Together, we can ease the burden for patients and their families during their cancer journey.

To donate or learn more, please scan the code below or contact our office directly.

Thank you for your support!

