COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

KEEPING OUR COMMUNITIES CONNECTED AND ENGAGED



ISSUE 51, NOVEMBER 2026

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Greetings, OCOE Family and Friends!

November brings an opportunity to reflect on our health, celebrate our collective accomplishments, and give thanks for the people who make our work meaningful.

As we recognize Lung Cancer Awareness Month, we remember that prevention and early detection save lives. Lung cancer remains the leading cause of cancer-related deaths in the United States, but we have the power to change that story. Living smoke-free, avoiding secondhand smoke, and encouraging those who smoke to seek support for quitting are important steps toward healthier lives. For individuals at increased risk, lung cancer screening can offer an opportunity for early detection. Let's continue sharing knowledge and encouraging healthy choices throughout our communities!

We are also still celebrating the success of our 2026 Community Dissemination Institute! With 360 attendees, the institute was a wonderful demonstration of what happens when communities, researchers, healthcare professionals, and partners unite around a shared purpose. We invite you to visit our Community Outreach & Engagement webpage to explore event highlights – including our Program Booklet and Beyond the CDI document – which captures valuable insights and opportunities for continued collaboration.

Finally, as Thanksgiving approaches, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to our dedicated staff, Community Health Advisors, partners, and community members. Your commitment makes our mission possible. Remember, numbers are our neighbors, and every effort brings us closer to healthier communities.

Wishing you and your loved ones a joyful, healthy, and blessed Thanksgiving!

Onward and upward together!

Dr. Nolan

UAB MEDICINE
O'Neal Cancer Center

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Lung Cancer Awareness

Breathe Easier:
Understanding Lung Cancer Risk and Screening

Lung cancer awareness is an important opportunity to encourage prevention, education, and early detection. Lung cancer remains a leading cause of cancer-related death in the United States, and understanding risk factors can help people make informed decisions about their health.

Cigarette smoking is the leading risk factor for lung cancer and is linked to approximately 80% of lung cancer deaths in the United States. However, people who have never smoked can also develop lung cancer. Other risk factors include exposure to secondhand smoke; radon gas; air pollution; and certain workplace substances, such as asbestos.

Early detection can make a difference. The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force recommends annual lung cancer screening with a low-dose computed tomography (LDCT) scan for adults ages 50–80 who have a smoking history of at least 20 pack-years and currently smoke or quit within the past 15 years. People should discuss their individual risks and screening eligibility with a healthcare professional.

Prevention and awareness efforts can help communities take action. Avoiding tobacco smoke, testing homes for radon, and learning about recommended screening are important steps toward reducing risk. The American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network also advocates for policies that improve access to cancer prevention and early detection services.

This November, share reliable information, encourage conversations about lung health, and help connect eligible individuals with screening resources.



Research Corner

Research Spotlight:

Exploring Ways to Improve Lung Cancer Screening Access in Alabama

Researchers at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) are examining practical ways to improve access to lung cancer screening in underserved Alabama communities. In a 2026 research abstract published in the *American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine*, Dr. Soumya Niranjan and colleagues explored strategies to address barriers to screening with low-dose computed tomography (LDCT).

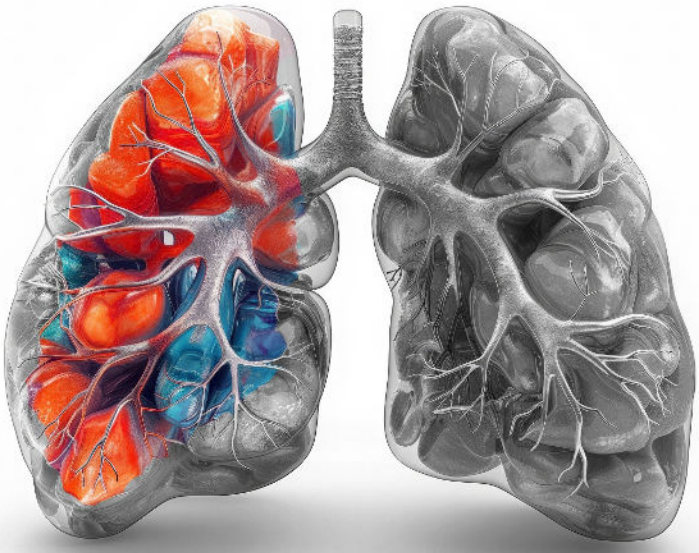
The research team synthesized findings from three National Cancer Institute-funded studies involving 68 stakeholders, including healthcare professionals, patients, and community advisory board members. Through qualitative analysis, the researchers identified 15 strategies to help improve lung cancer screening implementation.

Recommendations included expanding access through mobile screening units, satellite clinics, weekend appointments, and transportation assistance. The team also highlighted the importance of community outreach, culturally and linguistically appropriate educational materials, and hopeful, empathetic messaging to encourage people to learn about screening and to discuss their options with healthcare professionals.

Additional strategies focused on helping healthcare teams identify eligible individuals, improve staff training, support shared decision-making, and establish reminder systems for follow-up care.

The findings emphasize that increasing screening rates requires more than making screening technology available. Communities also need accessible services, trusted communication, and coordinated systems that help people move from awareness to action.

By incorporating community perspectives into implementation strategies, this UAB research offers a framework for addressing barriers to early detection and improving lung cancer screening access across Alabama.



Niranjan SJ and colleagues. "Bridging the Implementation Gap for Lung Cancer Screening in Underserved Alabama Communities." *American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine*. 2026;212(Supplement 1).

UAB MEDICINE
O'Neal Cancer Center

Cancer Awareness
WEBINAR

Breaking Barriers in Pancreatic Cancer Detection & Treatment

Join the Office of Community Outreach & Engagement for an informational webinar focused on increasing awareness and understanding of pancreatic cancer.



TUESDAY
November 17, 2026
@ 6:00 PM



Dr. J. Bart Rose III
UAB Medicine
Hepatobiliary & Pancreatic Surgery, Surgical Oncology



Dr. Mehmet Akce
UAB Medicine
Hematology/Medical Oncology

Pancreatic Cancer Basics
- What is pancreatic cancer
- Risk factors
- Symptoms
- Diagnosis and treatment

The Pancreatic Vaccine & Clinical Trials
- The role of the vaccine
- Current clinical trials
- What these advances could mean for patients and their communities

REGISTER TODAY

Scan the QR Code or visit
go.uab.edu/pancreatic26
to register for this free event

Office of Community Outreach & Engagement - 205.975.0003 - coeinfo@uab.edu

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!