

The American Cancer Society Institutional Research Grants (ACS IRG) are a unique funding source entrusted to Stephenson Cancer Center (SCC) to support early stage faculty interested in cancer-related research in any field by providing seed grants.

ACS IRG Pilot Grant Recipients:

Fall 2020

- *Assessing the Tumor Suppressive Effect of miRNA-130b in Pancreatic Ductal Adenocarcinoma (PDAC)*
PI: [Wenyi Luo, MD, PhD](#)

Pancreatic cancer is one of the deadliest with less than 10% patients surviving at least 5 years. The miRNA-130b/301b, is important in several cancers but has not been carefully studied in pancreatic cancer. This project aims to delineate if and how the miRNA-130b/301b cluster is involved in pancreatic cancer.

- *Piloting a Mobile Health Mixed Method to Understand Rural Cancer Risk-Related Substance Use Behaviors: Combining Smartphone Data Collection with Qualitative Mapping*
PI: [Julia McQuoid, PhD](#)

Rural Oklahoma has high rates of both cancer and cancer-associated substance use, including use of tobacco, alcohol, cannabis, and injected methamphetamine and opioids. This pilot study aims to understand how and why rural Oklahomans use substances that may increase their cancer risk so as to inform novel interventions designed to help rural adults stop using tobacco and other cancer causing substances.

- *Age-Dependent Endothelial Regulation of Ovarian Cancer Stem Cell Fate*
PI: [Stefano Tarantini, PhD](#)

Ovarian cancer primarily affects older women. Unfortunately, most ovarian cancer cases are diagnosed at advanced stages, when the cancer has metastasized and the survival rate is poor. This study seeks to better understand the vascular tumor microenvironment (TME) of ovarian cancer and its age-related changes. Understanding age-related TME changes could lead to improved diagnosis and treatment of ovarian cancer.

Spring 2020

- *A Cancer-Related MicroRNA Profile: The Critical Role of Firefighter Protective Equipment Practices*
PI: [Jooyeon Hwang, PhD](#)

Firefighters wear equipment to protect them from fire-related contaminants; however, they still have an elevated risk of cancer. This study evaluates the use and maintenance of personal protective equipment by volunteer and career firefighters and examines cancer-associated biomarkers in their blood, and will determine if differences in equipment practices between volunteer and career firefighters affect internal biomarkers.

- *Barriers To Accessing Specialty Care Among American Indian Children with Cancer*
PI: [Amanda Janitz, PhD](#)

This study assesses whether American Indian children differ from non-Hispanic white children in cancer treatment and outcomes in Oklahoma. This is the first study to provide epidemiologic data related to disparities in access to oncology care among American Indian children in Oklahoma. Results of this study will facilitate tailored interventions to improve the coordination of care and better incorporate important cultural factors into cancer care for American Indian children with cancer.

- *Incentives to Promote Smoking Cessation for Individuals with Diabetes*

PI: [Sydney Martinez, PhD](#)

Smoking cessation is recommended as a standard treatment for individuals with diabetes; however, smokers with diabetes face many other challenging lifestyle behavior changes and smoking cessation remains difficult. Offering abstinence-contingent incentives improves cessation rates in various populations. This study evaluates the potential impact of offering financial incentives for smoking cessation among individuals with diabetes and will identify diabetes-related factors associated with smoking cessation.