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Researchers Find Way to Maximize Treatment for Estrogen Receptive Positive Breast Cancer *Study from The Cancer Institute of New Jersey Presented at 100th Annual AACR Meeting*

New Brunswick, N.J., April 20, 2009 – Researchers from The Cancer Institute of New Jersey (CINJ) are converging on Denver for the 100th Annual Meeting of the American Association for Cancer Research (AACR) to share their findings on a combined treatment targeting breast cancer that is stimulated by the hormone estrogen (estrogen receptive positive). They are joining other top investigators from around the globe for the event, which is highlighting interdisciplinary approaches to cancer research. CINJ is a Center of Excellence of UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School.

Among the abstracts being presented is one focusing on how the FDA-approved therapy fulvestrant can influence the effects of chemotherapy drugs on breast cancer cells. Fulvestrant is commonly used in postmenopausal women to treat estrogen receptive positive breast cancer that has spread to other parts of the body.

Breast cancers that respond to female hormones, such as estrogen, generate specific proteins that help tumor cells survive and grow. One such protein, HDM2, is known to be present in higher levels in many cancers including breast. These higher protein levels are strongly correlated with the presence of the estrogen receptor on breast cancer cells, which can affect how well chemotherapy works. Targeting the receptor is a common treatment for breast cancer.

Lead author Adriana V. Jager, PhD, a postdoctoral fellow at CINJ, and her colleagues focused on adding fulvestrant to the traditional chemotherapy agents doxorubicin, etoposide and paclitaxel, as fulvestrant is known to degrade the estrogen receptor and result in less stimulation of tumor cell growth. They found that in two estrogen receptor positive breast cancer cell lines, fulvestrant decreased HDM2 levels and enhanced the sensitivity of these cells to chemotherapy. This enhancement was better than either fulvestrant or chemotherapy alone.

According to the American Cancer Society, 183,000 cases of breast cancer were diagnosed nationwide last year, with 6,300 new cases in New Jersey alone. With such statistics, the team is hopeful that this laboratory-based research can be expanded to a clinical trial with patients in order to further explore improved outcomes.

The author team also includes William N. Hait, MD, PhD, Johnson and Johnson/Centocor; Deborah Toppmeyer, MD, CINJ; Bruce G. Haffty, MD, CINJ; Kim Hirshfield, MD, PhD, CINJ; and Jin-Ming Yang, PhD, Penn State.

The work represented by CINJ members is among the 6,000 abstracts being presented at the gathering, which is featuring more than 17,000 researchers, healthcare professionals, and patient advocates. The goal of the annual AACR event is to provide a forum in which the latest in cutting-edge laboratory, clinical and translational research can be shared.

About The Cancer Institute of New Jersey

The Cancer Institute of New Jersey (www.cinj.org) is the state's first and only National Cancer Institute-designated Comprehensive Cancer Center, and is dedicated to improving the prevention, detection, treatment and care of patients with cancer. CINJ's physician-scientists engage in translational research, transforming their laboratory discoveries into clinical practice, quite literally bringing research to life. The Cancer Institute of New Jersey is a center of excellence of UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School. To support CINJ, please call the Cancer Institute of New Jersey Foundation at 1-888-333-CINJ.

The Cancer Institute of New Jersey Network is comprised of hospitals throughout the state and provides a mechanism to rapidly disseminate important discoveries into the community. Flagship Hospital: Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital. Major Clinical Research Affiliate Hospitals: Carol G. Simon Cancer Center at Morristown Memorial Hospital, Carol G. Simon Cancer Center at Overlook Hospital, Jersey Shore University Medical Center. Affiliate Hospitals: Bayshore Community Hospital, CentraState Healthcare System, Cooper University Hospital*, JFK Medical Center, Raritan Bay Medical Center, Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital at Hamilton (CINJ at Hamilton), Saint Peter's University Hospital, Somerset Medical Center, Southern Ocean County Hospital, The University Hospital/UMDNJ-New Jersey Medical School*, and University Medical Center at Princeton. *Academic Affiliate

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