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Clinical Trial Could Improve Outcomes for Women with Advanced Stages of Breast Cancer
Director of LIFE Center at CINJ Heads up Study to Test Effectiveness of New Drug Combination

New Brunswick, N.J., August 14, 2008 – The American Cancer Society estimates 183,000 new cases of breast cancer will be diagnosed in the United States this year with more than 40,000 dying from the disease. In New Jersey alone 6,300 new cases are expected with 1,400 deaths. It is those statistics on which researchers at The Cancer Institute of New Jersey (CINJ) hope to have impact with a newly opened clinical trial at the facility. CINJ is a Center of Excellence of UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School.

In advanced breast cancer, combinations of chemotherapy drugs to kill cancer cells result in response rates between 40 and 70 percent; complete response rates or clinical remissions are rare. Although there has been progress in prolonging survival in metastatic breast cancer (breast cancer that spreads to other parts of the body), ultimately the majority of women die from their disease.

Researchers at CINJ are investigating a new combination of chemotherapy drugs targeted at patients who have been diagnosed with previously untreated triple-negative metastatic breast cancer. Triple negative is a type of breast cancer that does not express estrogen or progesterone receptors or HER2 protein. Thus, standard treatments with hormone blocking agents and agents that target HER2 such as tamoxifen and the antibody herceptin, respectively, are ineffective weapons against this subtype of breast cancer. As a result, women with triple negative breast cancer have a shorter survival and identifying better combinations of chemotherapy and novel biologic agents that are effective in this disease is critical.

Deborah Toppmeyer, M.D., director of the LIFE (Ladies Professional Golf Association In the Fight to Eradicate breast cancer) Center at CINJ and associate professor of medicine at UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, is the lead researcher on a clinical study which will examine how patients respond to treatment with a novel combination of three agents, doxil, carboplatin, and the anti-blood vessel (anti-angiogenic) biologic, bevacizumab.

Extensive laboratory data suggests that the formation of new blood vessels plays an important role in the establishment of distant sites of breast cancer by providing nutrients needed for cell growth to reach a tumor. Bevacizumab has been found to interfere with the production of new blood vessels, thereby interfering with cell growth and survival at distant sites. Doxil and carboplatin have been found to prevent the growth of cancer cells by inhibiting cancer cell reproduction. The study seeks to determine the response of the patient's tumor to this novel combination and to assess the side effects.

"We at CINJ and our Network of hospitals are committed to understanding the complex heterogeneity of breast cancer so that we can develop more effective and less toxic targeted therapies," said Dr. Toppmeyer.

Women with the diagnosis of triple-negative metastatic breast cancer which has been previously untreated are eligible to take part in the study, although other criteria must be met. The study is part of the CINJ

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Oncology Group (CINJOG), which is comprised of physicians throughout New Jersey from the CINJ Network of hospitals. For additional information on how to participate, individuals should call 732-235-7251.

Clinical trials, often called cancer research studies, test new treatments and new ways of using existing treatments for cancer. At CINJ, researchers use these studies to answer questions about how a treatment affects the human body and to make sure it is safe and effective. There are several types of clinical trials that are currently underway at CINJ, including those that diagnose, treat, prevent, and manage symptoms of cancer. Many treatments used today -- whether it is drugs or vaccines; ways to do surgery or give radiation therapy; or combinations of treatments -- are the results of past clinical trials.

As New Jersey's only National Cancer Institute-designated Comprehensive Cancer Center, CINJ provides patients with access to treatment options not available at other institutions within the state. CINJ currently enrolls more than 1,000 patients on clinical trials, including approximately 15% of all new adult cancer patients and approximately 70% of all pediatric cancer patients. Enrollment in clinical trials nationwide is fewer than 5% of all adult cancer patients.

About The Cancer Institute of New Jersey

The Cancer Institute of New Jersey 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. Partner Hospital: Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital. Affiliate Hospitals: Bayshore Community Hospital, CentraState Healthcare System, Cooper University Hospital*, Jersey Shore University Medical Center, JFK Medical Center, Morristown Memorial Hospital, Overlook Hospital, Raritan Bay Medical Center, Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital at Hamilton (CINJ-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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