Expanding clinical trials to more of Kansas

Study strives to boost participation among elderly and minorities

New research involving The University of Kansas Cancer Center is focusing on different segments of the state’s population in the hopes of increasing their participation in clinical trials.

Clinical trials are vital to finding new cancer treatments, but participation is relatively low among the elderly, minorities and rural groups.

So researchers with the William Allen White School of Journalism & Mass Communications in Lawrence are working with communications colleagues at the cancer center’s Health Communication Research Shared Resource.

They’ve conducted focus groups with oncologists and nurses.

They’ve also interviewed cancer patients at urban and rural clinics that are involved with the Midwest Cancer Alliance, the outreach division of our cancer center.

Their research found nearly 30 percent of those surveyed had a positive perception of clinical trials, though the majority said they were most familiar with the term “clinical trial” either through commercials or hospital TV dramas such as “Grey’s Anatomy.”

Also, while very few of those interviewed have participated in a clinical trial, many of them expressed a high level of altruism and willingness to do good.

The findings are being used to develop a strategic communication plan designed to increase those groups’ understanding of clinical trials and encourage enrollment.

With knowledge of the main barriers to participation, the researchers are developing a plan to use messages and distribution channels tailored to two principal audiences – racial minorities living in an urban environment and predominantly white adults living in rural areas of Kansas.

In addition to the mass communication efforts, the plan calls for arming oncologists around the state with new informational tools and training to support their discussions with patients about clinical trials.

Oncologists such as Gary Doolittle, MD, MCA medical director, laud the efforts to promote more clinical trial participation among underserved populations.

“Research is increasingly focused on personalized medicine, thus we need to ensure research participants represent our diverse populations,” he said. “Research has shown that racial and ethnic minority populations are just as likely to participate in clinical trials if they are offered the trial as an option.”

By the Numbers: Clinical trials by race, ethnicity

Last year, The University of Kansas Cancer Center (in partnership with Children’s Mercy Hospital) enrolled 460 people into clinical trials.

13.7%

Nonwhite participants in the clinical trials in 2015

*Treatment clinical trials
Events

► Bicycle safety – The ninth annual Hawks, Helmets and Handlebars is 10 a.m.-noon Saturday, June 4, at the Westwood Campus. The University of Kansas Medical Center will provide free bicycle helmets to children and demonstrate proper fitting. The event is hosted by Healthy Hawks, a Pediatrics program that helps children and families overcome issues related to weight.

► Blood drive – The Community Blood Center will host a blood drive 7 a.m.-8 p.m. Wednesday, June 15, at the main campus Hixson Atrium. Everyone who donates will receive two tickets to a Royals game. To register, go to esavealifenow.org and use uokansas in the sponsor code field. Walk-ins are welcome.

► Heart Walk – The University of Kansas Hospital again is forming a team to participate in the American Heart Association’s annual Heart & Stroke Walk/5K, which is Saturday, June 18, at the Power & Light District. The team is open to staff and the public. Email Nichole Kempf (nkempf@kumc.edu) to join.

► HPV Twitter chat – The University of Kansas Cancer Center and Children’s Mercy Hospital will host an online discussion about HPV and the importance of the vaccine to help prevent cancer. The Twitter chat (#HPVchat), which will be moderated by eight medical professionals, is 1-2 p.m. Tuesday, June 21.

► London calling – The second annual “Party of the Summer” is Saturday, June 25, under the 12th Street bridge in downtown Kansas City. The evening, which features a range of London-themed food and entertainment stations, benefits programs at The University of Kansas Hospital’s Turning Point: The Center for Hope and Healing. Go to turningpointkc.org for details.

PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT

Farsighted program honored for its vision

Lifesaving organ donations and transplants make many of the headlines, but eye donations actually are far more common: Each year about 48,000 Americans need a cornea transplant due to eye injury, disease or disorder.

A cornea transplant, which is successful more than 95 percent of the time, is the only form of eye transplant possible.

“Eye donation is the most common type of donation, but it’s the least familiar to the public,” said Saving Sight’s Justina Barnes, whose organization is dedicated to promoting greater eye health in the Midwest.

Last month Saving Sight honored The University of Kansas Hospital as one of the best in the region with its Excellence in Eye Donation Award. The hospital last year helped facilitate 101 eye donation cases, which resulted in 119 people receiving restored sight through cornea transplants.

The hospital achieved a 65 percent consent rate for eye donation, an unusually high level for a facility of its size. Less than 15 percent of the 220 hospitals in Saving Sight’s service area of Missouri, Kansas and southern Illinois receive the award.

Performing a transplant obviously requires an eye donor, which is where a donation program becomes critical. The eye donation process here is unique in that it’s integrated into a comprehensive program covering all medical donations, said Angela Smith, RN, who helps lead the hospital’s Donor Advisory Council.

The council, she notes, is extremely active, with involvement from physicians, nurses, educators and chaplains – all in key positions to support donation. Caregivers receive extensive education about organ, eye and tissue donation, and top executives are involved in high-profile events honoring donors, such as the Rose Ceremony each April.

“Our hospital is very open and committed to supporting patients and families through the donation process, and we have a culture that honors the gifts of our donors,” Smith said. “It’s a major reason for our success.”

EXPOSURE

On their way

Congratulations to the more than 700 students from the University of Kansas Schools of Health Professions, Medicine and Nursing who celebrated commencement ceremonies last month. On May 14, medical grads (pictured here) participated in a hooding ceremony at Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Hall in Kansas City, Kan. The next day all the graduating students were honored during KU’s 144th commencement in Lawrence.
In the News
A recap of recent articles, TV segments and other media coverage of the region’s leading academic medical center

Hawks, Helments and Handlebars – 6Lawrence, May 26. For the third year, the KU Alumni Association is partnering with Healthy Hawks, a program of the University of Kansas Medical Center’s Department of Pediatrics that helps children and families overcome issues related to weight. The association and Healthy Hawks hosted two bicycle donation days to collect and repair used bicycles, which will be distributed free to kids on Saturday, June 4, in Westwood.

Lower chances of breast cancer – Fox 4 News, May 26. A new report finds 30 percent of breast cancer cases could be prevented if women did four things: maintain a healthy weight, not smoke, limit alcohol and not use hormone replacement therapy after menopause. The findings are beneficial to women who have genetic variations that put them at high risk of breast cancer. “They are very shocked to know – these higher risk women with family history – that they can actually modify their risk,” said Carol Fabian, MD, director of the Breast Cancer Prevention Center at The University of Kansas Cancer Center.

Dermatologist: Sun is good – Lawrence Journal World, May 17. The belief that all sun is bad is antiquated. It’s important to get some sun to stay healthy, according to Daniel Aires, MD, director of Dermatology at the University of Kansas Medical Center. However, sunburns and indoor tanning should be avoided entirely. “People think, ‘Oh, it’s just skin,’ but skin cancers can and do kill thousands of Americans every year,” he said.

A signal for Alzheimer’s – MedCity News, May 13. A new imaging agent that binds to tau protein and makes it visible in PET scans is showing promise as a marker for Alzheimer’s disease, according to a study published in the journal Science Translational Medicine. “This is an important first step in beginning to tease apart the underlying pathologies related to dementia,” said Jeff Burns, MD, neurologist at the University of Kansas Medical Center. “This is an early example of how the new era of molecular imaging will advance our understanding of this complicated disease.”

EMS salute
At The University of Kansas Hospital’s 17th annual EMS picnic, Trauma Services’ Tracy McDonald, RN, chatted with Kansas City, Kan., Fire Department’s Steven Salazar and Capt. Andrew Novak. Held May 19 at Rosedale Park, the picnic is a way for the hospital to thank our community’s Emergency Medical Services for their support. More than 270 EMTs (and their families) representing 15 agencies attended.

Camera system is ‘Angel’ in the NICU
The University of Kansas Hospital’s Neonatal ICU has unveiled the Angel Eye Camera System, an internet-based program delivering real-time video of hospitalized newborns to parents who can’t be bedside around the clock. The password-protected system, developed at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences, allows parents, grandparents and other family members and friends to watch their NICU babies on smart phones, laptops and other devices. The system also enables NICU staff to chat online with parents: “Your baby took the whole bottle!” Or, “Don’t forget your meeting with the doctor tomorrow.” Our hospital is the first in the area with the Angel Eye system, which debuted in 21 of the NICU’s 32 rooms. A gift from Kansas City Royals Charities funded the majority of its approximate $88,000 cost.

The service, needless to say, is a tremendous hit with parents: “I had one mom bawling when I told her about it,” said Laurie Hay, RN, NICU nurse manager.

Nurses awarded for transplant support
Midwest Transplant Network has honored staff on The University of Kansas Hospital’s Neurosciences and ENT ICU (HC-9) for their exceptional efforts to support organ and tissue donations. The NEICU staff were recognized in the Individual category during MTN’s May 12 annual Excellence in Donation ceremony. The unit accounted for 25 percent of our hospital’s organ donations in 2015, saving 16 lives.

“The NEICU nursing staff are making a positive impact on the donation process in their hospital,” said Jan Finn, chief operating officer at MTN. MTN is the organ and tissue procurement agency for our hospital, serving Kansas and the western two-thirds of Missouri.

“The nursing team’s collaboration with MTN has been key in building trust with their staff and physician teams,” she added. “They serve as the critical link of communication between MTN and medical staff, as they continually advocate for family support.

“We would not be successful in fulfilling our mission without the help and support of the NEICU staff,” she added. “They have opened doors for us, ensured all families have seamless transitions to our team at end of life and, overall, are an absolute pleasure to work with.”
Our People

An officer and a nurse – For the first time in years, a University of Kansas School of Nursing graduate has been commissioned as an active military officer.

Gunnery Sgt. Justin Williams, who earned his diploma last month from the KU School of Nursing, was commissioned as Ensign Justin Williams in the U.S. Navy Nurse Corps during a ceremony in the School of Nursing Atrium.

Before starting his BSN studies at KU in 2014, Williams was in the Marines and served on assignments in the U.S. and Middle East.

As a nursing student here, he won awards for outstanding clinical skills and for his strong ties to the military and community service.

During last month’s ceremony, his father placed his new rank boards on his shoulders, and he received a ceremonial “first salute” via teleconnection from his brother, Austin, who is serving in Jordan with the Air National Guard.

“KU has been instrumental in my transition from enlisted to an officer,” said Williams, who begins his nursing career this summer at Walter Reed National Medical Center in Bethesda, Md. “I’m excited for my role as a leader in nursing, serving at the bedside, on the front lines or in the boardroom.”

Investiture for BMT physician – Joseph McGuirk, DO, medical director of The University of Kansas Cancer Center’s Blood and Marrow Transplant program, has been formally invested as the Schutte/Spies Professor of Hematology/Oncology.

McGuirk has overseen the BMT program’s remarkable growth, which continues to lead the region – not only in the number of patients treated, but also in its innovative approach to treating blood cancers.

Endowed professorships, which are financially supported permanently by donors, are the highest academic award the university can bestow on a faculty member.

Professorships also bolster KU’s stature as a top research university. To date, KU has 193 endowed professorships and directorships in Lawrence and at the University of Kansas Medical Center campus in Kansas City.

Fact:
Skin cancer is the most common of all cancers.

Find your place in the shade
Skin cancer affects 1 in 5 Americans.

Protect yourself from the sun
Examine your skin regularly.
Check for changes in new/existing moles.
Use SPF 30 or higher sunscreen.

Learn more at kucancercenter.org/skincheck. 913-588-1227