

Women & Infants' researchers publish on connection between anal cancer, HPV

PROVIDENCE – Researchers at Women & Infants Hospital recently published the results of a study demonstrating a connection between anal cancer and human papillomavirus (HPV) infection.

The study – entitled “Anal Cytology and Human Papillomavirus Genotyping in Women with a History of Lower Genital Tract Neoplasia Compared with Low-Risk Women” – was published in a recent issue of *Obstetrics & Gynecology*.

The publication extends the research of **KATINA ROBISON, MD**, of the Program in Women's Oncology at Women & Infants. The initial research, presented at the 2014 HPV Conference, indicated an increased likelihood that the two diseases would coexist in some women.

“HPV is associated with anal cancer, which is more common among women. In 2014 alone, there were 7,200 cases of anal cancer noted and 4,500 of them are women. We believe that certain women with a history of an HPV-related genital infection would benefit greatly from anal cancer screening,” says Dr. Robison, who is also an assistant professor and co-director of colposcopy at The Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University.

Anal cancer screening is routinely performed using anal cytology in HIV positive men and women, as well as in men having sex with men. Knowing that anal cancer is five times more likely in women with a history of cervical, vaginal or vulvar cancer, which are all linked to HPV, Dr. Robison wanted to evaluate the feasibility of screening HIV negative women with anal cytology and HPV testing.

The research – conducted from December 2012 to February 2014 – examined 273 women recruited through Women & Infants' outpatient clinics. Anal cytology and HPV genotyping were performed. All women with abnormal anal cytology were referred for high-resolution anoscopy. Biopsies were also conducted at the discretion of the colorectal surgeon.

The 273 women were divided into two groups – the “high-risk group” who had a history of cervical, vaginal or vulvar cancer, and the “low-risk group” who had no history of cancer, dysplasia or abnormal Pap smears. Of those, 40 percent of the high-risk group and 21.7 percent of the low-risk group were found to have abnormal anal cytology. In the high-risk group, 20.8 percent were found to have high-risk HPV, but only 1.2 percent of the low-risk group.

The study also included the work of other scientists affiliated with Women & Infants. Listed as co-authors were: **BETH CRONIN, MD; MELISSA CLARK, MD; CHRISTINE LUIS, MS; PAUL DISILVESTRO, MD; STEVEN SCHECTER, MD; LATHA PISHARODI, MD; CHRISTINA RAKER, ScD; AMY BREGAR, MD; and JOEL PALEFSKY, MD.** ❖

Justin M. Nash, PhD, awarded funding for integrated behavioral health program at Memorial

PAWTUCKET – **JUSTIN M. NASH, PhD**, professor in the departments of Family Medicine and Psychiatry and Human Behavior at The Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University and director of behavioral health in family medicine at Memorial Hospital was awarded \$15,000 in funding from the Care Transformation Collaborative (CTC) of Rhode Island's Integrated Behavioral Health Pilot Program to develop a population health approach to improving the behavioral and overall health of Memorial's patients.

The CTC was started in 2008 by the Office of the Health Insurance Commissioner with the goal of bringing health care stakeholders together to promote care for patients with chronic illnesses by utilizing the Patient Centered Medical Home model.

“The funding allows us to enhance our efforts to improve the behavioral health of the patients in the Family Care Center. We are using a population health approach of standardizing screening for depression, anxiety, and substance abuse. We are also using a registry to understand how our patients access and use the behavioral health services in the Family Care Center and in the community,” says Dr. Nash. ❖




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2016027