



TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY
HEALTH SCIENCES CENTER™
Paul L. Foster School of Medicine

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 1, 2011

CONTACT: Lisa Ruley, lisa.ruley@ttuhsc.edu
(915) 783-5621
Laura Gallegos, Ed.D., laura.gallegos@ttuhsc.edu
(915) 309-5647

\$2.7 Million Project Through CPRIT Aims to Reduce Colorectal Cancer Deaths in El Paso

The Cancer Prevention and Research Institute of Texas (CPRIT) has announced that the Against Colorectal Cancer in our Neighborhoods (ACCION) project has been funded for \$2.7 million over the next three years to help reduce the burden of colorectal cancer in El Paso. Colorectal cancer starts in the large intestine (colon) or the rectum (end of the colon), according to the National Institutes of Health. Almost all colon cancer starts in glands in the lining of the colon and rectum.

The project will be led by Navkiran Shokar, M.D., M.P.H., associate professor of family and community medicine and biomedical sciences and associate director of cancer prevention and control in the Center of Excellence in Cancer at the Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center (TTUHSC) Paul L. Foster School of Medicine, and by Theresa Byrd, R.N. Dr.P.H., professor of medical education and family and community medicine, at the Paul L. Foster School of Medicine. Shokar has been investigating disparities in colorectal cancer screening for more than a decade. She has been in Texas for 15 years and in El Paso for just more than a year. She trained at Oxford University Medical School in England and completed family medicine residency training in the United Kingdom and Houston.

“Colorectal cancer remains the second leading cancer killer in Americans, killing men and women of all races and backgrounds, yet it is not on the radar for most people,” Shokar said. “The tragedy is that people should not be dying from this disease because this cancer is one of the few that can actually be prevented by screening, beginning at age 50. That is why this project is so important, it will not only raise awareness of this issue, but it will also make screening available to the most vulnerable members of our community.”

Office of Communications and Marketing

An EEO/Affirmative Action Institution

-More-

“This important award speaks volumes about the dedication, talent and capability of Dr. Shokar and her team,” said Douglas Stocco, Ph.D., TTUHSC executive vice president for research and dean of the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences. “CPRIT funding is extremely competitive, and the program made possible by this award will have a major impact on our understanding of effective cancer prevention in El Paso.”

TTUHSC President Tedd L. Mitchell, M.D., added, “The generous support of institutes like CPRIT make it possible for our researchers to pursue important new discoveries in areas like cancer. These discoveries have the potential to impact the health of people not only in Texas, but also in other parts of the world.”

ACCION is a collaboration between the TTUHSC Department of Family and Community Medicine and the Center of Excellence in Cancer. They are joined by more than 20 academic and community-based organizations throughout El Paso County, including University Medical Center of El Paso, the Cancer and Chronic Disease Consortium, Centro San Vicente, La Fe, Project Vida and the Rio Grande Cancer Foundation.

ACCION will increase community awareness and knowledge about colorectal cancer and the importance of screening. It will also provide access to no-cost screening and diagnostic colonoscopy, and will increase the use of all needed follow-up tests and treatment services for eligible underinsured and uninsured residents of El Paso County.

For more breaking news and experts, follow @ttuhscnews on Twitter.