



UT Health  
San Antonio  
Cancer Center

# FUTURE FOCUS

SHARING CANCER CENTER NEWS AS WE CHAMPION HEALTH TOGETHER.

## SAN ANTONIO CITY COUNCIL RAISING TOBACCO SALE AGE

UT Health San Antonio and The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center applauded the actions of the San Antonio City Council in voting to implement an ordinance that would raise the minimum legal age of sale for all tobacco products from 18 to 21. The measure is the first of its kind in Texas, and is an important step toward protecting the health of future generations and reducing the burden of tobacco in the state.

“UT Health San Antonio seeks to make lives better through improved health for all,” said Amelie G. Ramirez, Dr.P.H., associate director of the UT Health San Antonio Cancer Center and director of the Institute for Health Promotion Research, UT Health San Antonio. “The Tobacco 21 initiative fits perfectly with our ideals, as we seek to end or at least reduce the unnecessary disease and death that results from tobacco nicotine addiction. We are proud signatories on the initiative along with MD Anderson.”

“This effort will have a profound impact on children’s health and will be a significant step toward preventing the leading cause of preventable death in the United States: tobacco use,” said Peter WT Pisters, M.D., president of MD Anderson. “MD Anderson is strongly committed to the promotion of evidence-based policies aimed at reducing cancer incidence and mortality over time, but more importantly, initiatives preventing our children from engaging in harmful behaviors

leading to lifelong addiction to tobacco products.”

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, tobacco use claims an estimated 480,000 lives each year. In Texas alone, tobacco is responsible for 28,000 deaths, more than \$8.8 billion in direct health care expenses and another \$8.2 billion in productivity losses each year.

Approximately 95 percent of adult smokers began smoking before they were 21. A recent study suggests that over two-thirds of those who try a cigarette become daily smokers. In the U.S., an estimated 2,300 children under 18 smoke their first cigarette each day, and roughly 350 become daily smokers. In Texas, every year about 12,300 children become daily smokers.

According to the National Academy of Medicine (formerly the Institute of Medicine), increasing the tobacco age to 21 across the U.S. would significantly reduce the number of adolescents and young adults who start smoking, reducing tobacco-related deaths and immediately improve the health of this population.

Five states in the U.S. already have enacted statewide laws raising the tobacco age, as have several major U.S. cities – including New York, Chicago, Boston and St. Louis – and more than 280 other cities and counties in 18 states.

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NEWSLETTER

01.18.2018

## WELCOME CAROLINE SIPILI, MPAS, PA-C

Caroline Sipili is a physician assistant in the Division of Hematology and Oncology, providing care in the breast clinic at UT Health Cancer Center.

She studied at the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio, where she received her master’s in physician assistant studies. She will be also involved in current breast cancer research and work in other areas to increase patient survivorship.



# UT HEALTH INSTITUTIONS GAIN \$6 MILLION TO STUDY CANCER FIGHTING ANTIBODY



*Scientists at UT Health San Antonio and UTHealth in Houston are receiving \$6 million in grants from the U.S. Department of Defense to expand studies of a therapeutic antibody, the two UT health-related institutions announced today.*

The scientists are developing an innovative antibody-based drug to stem the spread of breast cancer to bone. This spread, called metastasis, is linked to a dramatic reduction in survival rates.

The lead principal investigator is Jean Jiang, Ph.D., the Ashbel Smith Professor at UT Health San Antonio and the associate director of the Joint Biomedical Engineering Graduate Program of UT Health San Antonio and The University of Texas at San Antonio.

“Antibodies are part of the body’s natural defenses and can be optimized to perform specific tasks,” Dr. Jiang said. “In this case, an antibody activates the connexin channels



*Jean Jiang, Ph.D.*

in bone cells, which protects skeletal tissue from breast cancer colonization and invasion.”

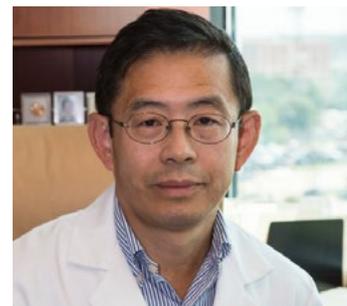
UT Health San Antonio received \$3.2 million for preclinical testing in the joint project. “Research from my laboratory shows the functional role of these channels in suppressing breast cancer invasion and bone metastases. This provides a potential therapeutic target for drug development in breast cancer,” said Dr. Jiang, professor of biochemistry and structural anatomy in the Joe R. & Teresa Lozano Long School of Medicine at UT Health San Antonio.

McGovern Medical School at UT Health received \$2.8 million for drug development. “Current treatment options are limited for breast cancer bone metastasis,” said Zhiqiang An, Ph.D., professor and the Robert A. Welch Distinguished University Chair in Chemistry at McGovern Medical School. “There is thus an urgent need to develop new and specific therapies with improved therapeutic efficacies and fewer side effects.”

Dr. An is Dr. Jiang’s partner principal investigator on the project.

Dr. An said the antibody drug discovery expertise in the Texas Therapeutics Institute (TTI) helped advance the basic discovery from the Jiang laboratory to preclinical drug development. Founded in 2010, the TTI is an academic drug discovery center housed in the Brown Foundation Institute of Molecular Medicine for the Prevention of Human Diseases at UTHealth.

The goal of Drs. Jiang and An is to develop a less toxic treatment and reduce deaths tied to the spread of breast cancer to the bone. At the end of the study, the researchers hope to have a drug that can advance to clinical trials.



*Zhiqiang An, Ph.D.*

“With 1.3 million soldiers deployed around the world, the DOD supports research designed to increase the health of its employees and citizens of United States,” Dr. Jiang. “Dr. An and I appreciate the DOD’s commitment to translational drug discovery.”

Not counting some kinds of skin cancer, breast cancer in the United States is the most common cancer in women. In 2014, 236,968 women and 2,141 men in the U.S. were diagnosed with breast cancer and 41,211 women and 465 men died from the disease.