Members

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Dr. Stefan Ambs
Dr. Stefan Ambs is a Senior Investigator at the National Cancer Institute, NIH, and head of the Molecular Epidemiology Section, Laboratory of Human Carcinogenesis, Center for Cancer Research. His group conducts molecular epidemiology and translational research studies of prostate and breast cancer with an emphasis on health disparity. This research is aimed at linking tumor markers to disease epidemiology and disease outcome, and to identify possible causes for the existing survival health disparities in prostate and breast cancer between African-American and European-American patients. He is the principal investigator of a case-control study of prostate cancer and a case study of breast cancer, both in Baltimore, MD, with a recruitment focus on African-American participants. More recently, his group started recruitment of breast cancer patients into a pilot research study that will evaluate the relationship between stress-related exposures (e.g., social isolation and discrimination) and tumor biology in breast cancer and also compare African-American with European-American patients in this study.

Link to related health disparity papers:

Dr. Michael Cook
Dr. Michael B. Cook earned his BSc in genetics at the University of Nottingham, England, and subsequently a PhD in epidemiology at the University of Leeds, England. Dr. Cook joined the Division of Cancer Epidemiology and Genetics of the National Cancer Institute as a Visiting Postdoctoral Fellow in 2007 before becoming a Research Fellow in 2008 and then an Investigator in 2011. Dr. Cook’s research interests include the epidemiology of prostate cancer including racial disparities in incidence and mortality, as well as the epidemiology of esophageal adenocarcinoma including sex disparities. Dr. Cook uses classical and molecular epidemiologic approaches to understand these cancers, the contributing factors to disparities with potential translation value to lessen disease burden and mortality.

Link to related health disparity papers:

Dr. W. Douglas Figg
W. Douglas Figg Pharm.D., MBA, was recruited to the National Cancer Institute in 1992. Dr. Figg is currently a key investigator in the prostate cancer clinical program at the NCI, and works in unison with Will Dahut, M.D., and James Gulley, M.D., Ph.D. to develop new agents to treat metastatic prostate cancer. Dr. Figg currently heads a Molecular Pharmacology Section, the Clinical Pharmacology Program, and the Blood Processing Core within the NCI's intramural program.

The Figg laboratory has conducted research that emphasizes the nature of health disparities and addresses ethnic disparities in health status, an important component of the Healthy People Initiative. Dr. Figg has communicated the significance of this message in seminars he presented at the NIH Health Disparity Conference (“The importance of genetic variances in response to anticancer treatment”) and at a special American Association of Cancer Research meeting in Atlanta, GA (“Pharmacogenetics: Ethnic Differences”). He has previously received research funding from the American College of Clinical Pharmacy and a grant from the NIH Office of Minority Health in collaboration with SWOG (formerly the Southwest Oncology Group) to examine genetic variations (the CAG trinucleotide repeat length) in the androgen receptor of Native American and Hispanic men and published the novel finding that racial variation in the androgen receptor exists in prostate cancer patients of lower socioeconomic status. Research on determining the genetic risks of prostate cancer continues in a collaborative project with SWOG on an NIH program grant awarded to conduct molecular studies of the Prostate Cancer Prevention Trial and evaluate factors that contribute to risk across sub-populations. He was also awarded with a significant amount of funding from the Center for Disease Control to investigate the genetic/genomic variations and risk factors involved in the development of cancer and in response to cancer treatment. Dr. Figg and his team have conducted research on cancer genomics and development of molecularly targeted therapies. To this end, they have evaluated the
pharmacogenetics/pharmacogenomics of drug metabolism and transport to identify patient sub-populations responsive to treatment as well as elucidating molecular alterations of cancer development and progression specific to racial/ethnic groups in hopes to advance the field of precision medicine.

Link to related health disparity papers:

Dr. Brid Ryan
Dr. Ryan joined NCI as a Stadtman Investigator in 2013 and is head of the Integrative Molecular Epidemiology Unit in the Laboratory of Human Carcinogenesis. Her research group studies the causes and consequences of health disparities in lung cancer using translational molecular epidemiology and integrative genomics, with a focus on genetic, environmental and biological causes of disparities. She is the principal investigator of a lung cancer case control study that is based in the Baltimore region of MD. This study recruits both European Americans and African Americans and facilitates well-powered studies of health disparities. Her research group also studies the development of companion diagnostics that can aid the prediction of prognosis in both European American and African American patients with early stage lung cancer.

Dr. Tiffany Wallace
Dr. Wallace is a Program Director within the Disparities Research Branch at the Center to Reduce Cancer Health Disparities/NCI. As a Program Director, she oversees a grant portfolio promoting basic cancer research geared towards reducing cancer health disparities. In addition to her interests in basic cancer and translational studies, she also co-manages awards within the national and regional Community Networks Program Centers (CNPCs) awards, which use community-based participatory research (CBPR) approaches focused on promoting cancer prevention and treatment to eliminate cancer disparities in specific target communities.

Dr. Wallace maintains a strong interest in cancer health disparities research that initiated during her postdoctoral training in the Laboratory of Human Carcinogenesis at NCI. While a postdoc, she conducted basic and translational research that provided novel insights on the role of biological factors as they contribute to cancer health disparities. Specifically, she sought to identify markers of aggressive disease in prostate cancer, with a focus on differences between different racial/ethnic groups.

Prior to joining CRCHD, Dr. Wallace was an oncology scientist at Human Genome Sciences, where she managed research programs and conducted preclinical development of promising cancer therapeutics.

Link to related health disparity papers: