CPRIT awards grants to TAMHSC faculty

(COLLEGE STATION, TX) — Seven researchers – representing Texas A&M University, the Texas A&M Health Science Center and the Texas AgriLife Extension Service — received grants totaling more than $2.7 million Tuesday (March 29) from the Cancer Prevention and Research Institute (CPRIT) of Texas.

The awards are for research projects that involve prevention of cancer or ways to fight the disease, which kills an average of 100 Texans every day, or one in every 15 minutes, studies show.
From left, Dr. David S. Carlson (TAMHSC), Dr. Wallace McKeehan (IBT), Dr. Kathleen Rankin (BCD) and Dr. Daniel Jones (BCD).

Becky Garcia, chief prevention officer of CPRIT who presented the ceremonial check, notes, “These seven grants show that Texas A&M is leading the way to cancer, and it supports research that will provide breakthroughs to fight this terrible disease.”

Established in 2007 by the Texas Legislature, CPRIT accepts applications and awards grants for a wide variety of cancer-related research and for the delivery of cancer prevention programs and services by public and private entities located in Texas. All CPRIT-funded research is conducted in state by Texas-based scientists and reflect CPRIT’s mission to attract and expand the state’s research capabilities and create high quality new jobs in Texas. Its headquarters are in Austin.

“The cost of fighting cancer is enormous,” notes Dr. Jeffrey Seemann, chief research officer and vice president for research and graduate studies at Texas A&M. “The total cost to Texans every year is about $21.9 billion, while the national cost if more than $220 billion. Cancer has surpassed heart disease as the leading killer of adults under the age of 85.”

Receiving awards from Texas A&M are Dr. Mary Shaw, whose $539,000 grant will fund her project “More Than A Picnic: It’s A Family Affair for Lifestyle Change;” Dr. Lei-Shih Chen, who gets $300,000 for her project “Development, Implementation and Evaluation of a Cancer Genomics Training Program for Texas Health Education;” and Dr. Feng Qiao, who receives $200,000 for his work “Development of a Novel Chemogenetic Approach to Structure/Function Analysis of Human Telomerase RNA.”

Receiving grants from the Texas A&M Health Science Center are Dr. Daniel Jones, who will get $295,000 for his project “Collaborative Tobacco Cessation Education at Texas Schools of Dental Hygiene: Development and Delivery of Core Modules and Assessment of Skills and Practice;” Dr. Kathleen Rankin, who will get $299,000 for “Core Modules, Electronic Tobacco History and Assessment;” and Dr. Fen Wang, who will receive $798,000 for “Activation of Prostate Cancer Stem Cells Through Aberrant FGF Signaling.” Dr. Wallace McKeehan, also an investigator on the project, received the check in place of Dr. Wang, who was out of the country.

Dr. Carol Rice of the Texas AgriLife Extension Service receives a $300,000 award for her project “Increasing Breast and Cervical Cancer Screening in Rural and Frontier Texas Communities: A Sustainable Strategy To Increase Screening and Early Detection.”