

## **Southwest Virginia Residents Sought to Direct Region's Battle Against Cancer**

*New UVA Initiative Helping Find Better Ways to Detect, Prevent Cancer*

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va., Oct. 4, 2018 – A new University of Virginia Cancer Center initiative will empower Southwest Virginia residents to lead projects to better detect and prevent cancer in the region. The effort has earned \$244,589 in funding from the Eugene Washington Engagement Award Program at the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI).

With the funding in hand, the UVA Cancer Center Without Walls team is now seeking Southwest Virginia residents who will be trained to guide these cancer research projects.

Their goal is to address two cancer disparities in the Appalachian counties of Southwest Virginia:

- the lack of early screening and detection
- high death rates (between 15 and 36 percent higher compared with urban non-Appalachian residents) caused by later detection and lack of access to treatment and support programs

### **Building Community Involvement**

This new initiative grew out of a community advisory board formed in 2013 for the UVA Cancer Center Without Walls, which works to improve cancer care for residents of Southwest Virginia. "The advisory board has been a sounding board for researchers," said Jamie Zoellner, PhD, RD, co-director of the Cancer Center Without Walls. "We hadn't sat down at the table with [the advisory board members] and said, 'What are your research priorities?'"

So over the past year, UVA Cancer Center team members met with the community advisory board to determine the board's priorities – which ended up centering on early detection and prevention – and to refine the application for funding through a PCORI contract.

"Mountain Empire Older Citizens is excited to serve on the Cancer Center without Walls Community Advisory Board and provide to leadership for the Early Detection Community Action Team, said Michael Wampler, executive director of Mountain Empire Older Citizens, Inc. "We are eager to help identify cancer-related priorities in southwest Virginia and expand community-based research opportunities."

### **How to Get Involved**

The UVA Cancer Center Without Walls is seeking residents from the counties of Bland, Buchanan, Carroll, Dickenson, Grayson, Lee, Russell, Scott, Smyth, Tazewell, Washington, Wise and Wythe, along with the cities of Bristol, Galax

and Norton, to join the existing advisory board members in forming community action teams. The initiative is specifically seeking to add patients with cancer, cancer survivors and caregivers for cancer patients to the community action teams. The initiative also aims to involve more oncologists, clinicians, researchers and policy makers who serve this region.

To learn more about the initiative, please contact Betsy Grossman at [elq6y@virginia.edu](mailto:elq6y@virginia.edu) or 276-376-3437.

### **About PCORI**

PCORI is an independent, nonprofit organization authorized by Congress in 2010 to fund comparative effectiveness research that will provide patients, their caregivers, and clinicians with the evidence needed to make better-informed health and healthcare decisions. PCORI is committed to seeking input from a broad range of stakeholders to guide its work.

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