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National Cancer Institute Scientists Win Award

The Mid-Atlantic Region of the Federal Laboratory Consortium this year presented the Regional Excellence in Technology Transfer Award to a team consisting of Dr. Jeffrey S. Rubin, Senior Investigator, National Cancer Institute, National Institutes of Health, Dr. Paul W. Finch, Scientific Consultant, and Dr. Stuart A. Aaronson, Professor and Chairman, Mount Sinai School of Medicine for their work on “Kepivance®: Improving the Quality of Life for Cancer Patients.”

Thus far the progress in our fight against cancer has come at a heavy price in the form of devastating side effects. While they are meant to kill cancer cells, most cancer drugs also destroy normal tissues. Mucositis (painful sores and ulcers in the lining of the mouth) is a common complication of chemotherapy and/or radiation, affecting approximately 80% of patients who undergo this intensive treatment prior to bone marrow transplantation. In this condition, the cells lining the mouth and throat are damaged, making the patients' everyday activities, such as eating, drinking, swallowing and talking, difficult or impossible. They require longer hospitalization, high doses of narcotics such as morphine, and intravenous feeding.

With the discovery of a recombinant human keratinocyte growth factor (KGF), trade name Kepivance®, there now is an effective treatment for this condition. Approved by the FDA in 2004, Kepivance®, this is a first of its kind of medicine that directly and effectively addresses the issue of a cancer patient's quality of life. Currently this drug benefits approximately 11,000 adult Americans with hematologic malignancies who undergo bone marrow transplantation each year, and its use is projected to increase as it is used in conjunction with other cancer treatments.

One of the most coveted awards in the field of technology transfer, the FLC awards for Excellence in Technology Transfer recognize laboratory employees who have accomplished outstanding work in the process of transferring Federally-developed technology to the marketplace. The award was made on September 15 at the region's annual meeting.

The Federal Laboratory Consortium is comprised of the technology transfer offices of all of the Federal laboratories throughout the country while its Mid-Atlantic Region focuses on the 70 Federal laboratories in DC, DE, MD, PA, VA and WV.