

In the News

A recap of recent articles, TV segments and other media coverage of the region's leading academic medical center

► **Stroke age disparity rising among races** – *MedPage Today*, May 1. Strokes among black and Hispanic Americans occurs at a younger age than among whites, and the disparity is growing, according to research conducted by **Cynthia Costa, MD**, neurology resident at the University of Kansas Medical Center. Average age for strokes has dropped to 65 for blacks and 68 for Hispanics, while the age for whites has held steady at 75. Reasons could be due to inadequate healthcare among those populations, Costa speculated.

► **Selfie craze boosts plastic surgeries** – *KCTV-5*, April 30. A third of the 123 plastic surgeons who responded to a survey said they saw an increase last year in requests for plastic surgery as a result of “patients being more self-aware of their looks because of social media.” “To some extent there is a greater pressure to always be on, to always look good,” said **Richard Korentager, MD**, Plastic Surgery chair at the University of Kansas Medical Center. However, he said his main worry is unrealistic patient expectations.

► **Annual events help battle skin cancer** – *The Kansas City Star*, April 29. The third annual Outpacing Melanoma 5K was May 4 followed by Melanoma Monday the next day. Oncologist **Gary Doolittle, MD**, at The University of Kansas Cancer Center said the events are important to raise awareness of the skin cancer. “Anytime this disease has spread beyond where it started, we have a great challenge trying to treat it,” he said. “Early detection results in a better shot at a cure.” At least half his patients are under age 50.

► **Students exploring Alzheimer’s through patients’ lives** – *Fox 4 News*, April 23. **Scott Koppel**, a first-year medical student at the University of Kansas Medical Center, is gaining special insight into Alzheimer’s disease through patient **Herb Miller**. Their close relationship is part of a new Alzheimer’s Association program called PAIRS. “These are wonderful, intricate people just like you and me,” said Koppel, who plans to become an Alzheimer’s researcher. “They haven’t lost that part of themselves that made them special.”



Helping hands

Patient care assistant **Danniele Hickman** and 33 other staff, friends and family members from The University of Kansas Hospital participated in a city-wide service event May 3. They tackled a variety of minor home repairs for area residents in need. The project was part of Nurses and Nursing Support Staff Week.

News Briefs

Screening rural Kansas for skin cancer

The Midwest Cancer Alliance is holding 11 free skin cancer screenings in rural Kansas communities. The alliance, which is the outreach arm of The University of Kansas Cancer Center, has provided the screenings for about 10 years, but this year’s number of stops is more than double previous years’.

Residents from the University of Kansas School of Medicine’s Dermatology program perform the screenings. They begin May 24 in Parsons and will wrap up in Pittsburg this fall. Other stops are in Pomona, Independence, Manhattan, Walnut, LeRoy, Moran, Goodland, Louisburg and Girard.

The screenings are held by the Kansas Masonic Foundation in collaboration with the Midwest Cancer Alliance.



Dermatology resident **Kim Tefft, MD**, screens for skin cancer.

Dogs and people: Link to osteosarcoma?

Researchers at the University of Kansas Medical Center, working with colleagues at Children’s Mercy Hospitals and Clinics and Colorado State University College of Veterinary Medicine, will screen thousands of drugs in a new project that seeks to improve the treatment of a rare bone cancer in humans and dogs alike.

Osteosarcoma is the most common bone tumor among children and young adults, with about 400 U.S. cases diagnosed each year. While advances in chemotherapy have helped, the five-year survival rate is still 50-60 percent.

The disease in dogs is much more common, with more than 10,000 cases diagnosed each year.

Because osteosarcoma is one of the few cancers that behaves the same in dogs and humans, the team of scientists believes finding treatments that work in one species will also help the other.

Funded by \$500,000 from the Midwest Cancer Alliance and working with scientists at the National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences, the researchers will explore both human and dog cancer cell lines, looking for the most effective drugs. No dogs will be harmed while obtaining tissue.

“You can almost think of it like a tournament of drugs,” said **Scott Weir, PharmD, PhD**, professor of pharmacology, toxicology and therapeutics at our medical center. “We’ll identify winners and losers, finding the drugs that have the most promise and then we’ll move forward.”

The most promising candidates will be tested in dogs that have osteosarcoma. With more cases to work with, it is easier to gather critical preclinical data in dogs by seeing which drugs are most effective. A breakthrough could lead to a cure for both dogs and people.



Scott Weir, PharmD, PhD, said researchers will pursue new treatments for people and dogs at the same time.