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CONTACT:

David Haney, Director of Strategic Communications
University of Illinois College of Medicine at Peoria
309.671.8404 | dhaney@uicomp.uic.edu

UICOMP receives grant to further pancreatic cancer research

PEORIA – (Aug. 18, 2014) Research aimed at improving treatment of patients with pancreatic cancer got a boost at the University of Illinois College of Medicine at Peoria (UICOMP) thanks to a 2-year \$50,000 grant from the William E. McElroy Charitable Foundation.

The McElroy Foundation grant, the third in as many years to UICOMP, will help fund work in identifying how some pancreatic cancers are resistant to chemotherapy and methods to overcome that resistance. Pancreatic cancer is the 4th leading cause of cancer-related death in the U.S. with about 38,000 deaths annually. About 94 percent of patients die within 5 years of diagnosis.

“Despite decades of research that have led to a better understanding of the molecular and cellular signaling pathways in pancreatic cancer cells, few effective therapies have been developed to target these pathways,” said Christopher Gondi, PhD, a research professor at UICOMP leading the project. “We believe our discoveries in the lab will lead to novel methods for treatment of this devastating disease, improve patients’ quality of life, and extend the lives of many.”

In the UICOMP lab, Dr. Gondi has developed a new substance which suppresses the chemotherapy-resistance of pancreatic cancer cells. The study will provide a better understanding of the mechanisms of chemotherapy-resistance and improve viable strategies for treating pancreatic cancer, and possibly other cancers where chemo-resistance is an issue.

According to the American Cancer Society:

- About 46,420 people will be diagnosed in 2014 with pancreatic cancer and about 39,590 people will die
- Rates of pancreatic cancer have increased. The lifetime risk of developing pancreatic cancer is about 1 in 78.
- The risk is at least twice as high among smokers, and nearly 9 in 10 patients are at least 55 years old.

ABOUT THE MCELROY FOUNDATION

William E. McElroy, a long-time resident and Postmaster of Springfield, Ill., established the foundation. Mr. McElroy passed away in 1992. The Foundation makes grants to students pursuing an education involving research in the fields of heart disease and cancer, and to institutions doing such research.

ABOUT UICOMP

One of four campuses that make up one of the largest public medical school in the U.S., the University of Illinois College of Medicine at Peoria educates more than 150 medical students annually and more than 170 residents and fellows in 18 graduate medical programs. UICOMP is home to the cutting-edge Cancer Research Center, the Center for Outcomes Research and is a collaborator in the Jump Trading Simulation & Education Center.

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