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OU researchers and students pair with Beaumont in cancer study

*By **Katie Land**, news editor*

Oakland University researchers and doctoral students have joined forces with Beaumont Hospital, Troy, in a study to help reduce fatigue and improve the overall health of people with cancer.

For their role in assisting with the original research, the three students will be awarded the 2009 National Student Research Award by the Oncology Section of the American Physical Therapy Association.

“This work is terrific for getting students involved in the research process,” said Jacqueline S. Drouin, associate professor and coordinator of Post-Professional & Graduate PT Research. “The students working with me will be the next generation of educators and researchers. I don't think this excellent opportunity exists for students at many other institutions.”

The three doctor of physical therapy students assisting with the study are Emily Wilson, Emily Battle, and Kathryn Slevin. The students will be presenting their original research at the American Physical Therapy Association's Combined Section's meeting in San Diego, California in February 2010.

“Our students are actually working with professionals in the field to find evidence to support clinical practice,” Drouin continued. “This is also part of the Prevention Practice Research Center in the School of Health Sciences, which is one of only a few in the country.”

A common side effect of cancer treatments such as radiation therapy, chemotherapy and hormonal therapy is fatigue. Initially focusing on patients undergoing radiation treatments for breast cancer, the fatigue study monitors fatigue and energy expended.

“We are hoping to obtain preliminary data to assist in explaining why individuals become so fatigued during cancer treatment,” Drouin said. “Moreover, this study will evolve into an exercise and wellness study that will determine the positive effects that individuals can derive from exercise, proper nutrition, and stress management during and following treatment for cancer.”

The larger study on exercise training will to determine the positive effects from exercise training during treatment for cancer, according to Drouin. “Some of my previous studies found evidence that women do indeed experience positive effects from training such as increased aerobic capacity, reductions in body fat, improved mood, and surprisingly, positive effects on anemia.”

Drouin was instrumental in bringing about the partnership and study. She had been working on research in oncology rehabilitation for seven years before joining Oakland’s team in 2007. With personal connections on both sides, it was an easy match.

Planning for the study began in fall 2007, and received a boost from a WBH OU Multidisciplinary Grant in spring 2008. Participants include OU researchers, doctoral students, radiation oncologists, oncology nurses, Wilson Cancer Center physical therapists and physiatrists. The study also took into account other factors such as blood hemoglobin and sleep quality.

The original study concluded this fall, but will expand to a broader scope. As the study progresses, researchers will begin to examine the same effects on patients with breast cancer, prostate cancer and eventually lung cancer.

“The experience has been very positive,” Drouin said. “Everyone involved with the study, including the subjects have been enthusiastic and supportive, so I think it is a positive experience for everyone. I believe we could not have accomplished this work anywhere else, in such a short time, with such great and precise results.”

For more information about Oakland programs, visit the **School of Health Sciences Physical Therapy Program Web site**.

SUMMARY
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