BOISE STATE BIOLOGY RESEARCHER BATTLES CANCER WITH $600,000 KOMEN FOR THE CURE GRANT

In the fight against cancer, research is the ultimate weapon. Billions are spent every year to support projects that are bringing us closer to fully understanding the disease and finding definitive cures. Some of these projects are being conducted in the Boise State University Department of Biological Sciences, including an ongoing breast cancer study led by associate professor Cheryl Jorcyk.

Jorcyk’s current work is focused on Oncostatin M (OSM), a protein produced by breast cancer and immune cells that plays a role in inflammation. A newly awarded $600,000 Komen for the Cure grant — the first Komen grant in Boise State history — will enable exploration of an existing antibody’s therapeutic effectiveness against the metastasis of cancer from breast to bone, which Jorcyk believes is connected to OSM.

Jorcyk’s award is part of a $59 million portfolio of research grants that Susan G. Komen for the Cure is investing with scientists worldwide. Of that total, more than $1.3 million has been funneled into Idaho over the last year. Komen Idaho Affiliates in Boise and Coeur d’Alene have invested more than $783,000 in community programs such as breast health education and outreach related to early detection and treatment, with the remainder of the funding going to Jorcyk’s research.

“It’s extremely exciting to be entrusted with such important resources and the responsibility to produce results,” Jorcyk said. “It is every investigator’s hope that the return on investment will be significant, and this project has the potential to deliver.”

One of the expectations of the Komen grant is that Jorcyk’s research will lead to a new treatment product in the next 10 years, a targeted therapy to better address the complexity of breast cancer. Jorcyk plans to test an existing receptor antibody she says could block the binding mechanism of OSM and translate to such a product.

If she is successful Jorcyk will have made a major contribution when it comes to combating breast cancer, which is part of cancer’s overall statistic as the second leading cause of death in America.

“Dr. Jorcyk exemplifies the spirit of Boise State’s research mission, to surpass expectations and define powerful new possibilities,” said Director of Technology Transfer Mary Givens. “The knowledge generated by her research has great promise to impact health and society across the world.”

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