Processed meat may increase breast cancer risk for Latinas

By Zen Vuong

Latinas who eat processed meats such as bacon and sausage may have an increased risk for breast cancer, according to a new study that did not find the same association among white women.

The study, published Feb. 22 in the journal Cancer Causes & Control, suggests that race, ethnicity, genetics, culture and lifestyle choices could all affect cancer risk, said Mariana Stern, PhD, senior author and director of graduate programs in molecular epidemiology at the Keck School of Medicine of USC.

The findings come months after the World Health Organization (WHO) declared processed meat a carcinogen that increases the risk of colorectal cancer. Stern was among the panel of international scientists who helped come to that conclusion.

"Now, a new study shows there is an association between processed meat and breast cancer for one understudied population," Stern said. "In light of the WHO report, this discovery could be a wake-up call about the negative health effects associated with consuming processed meat such as bacon, beef jerky and lunch meats."

In the study, Latinas who consumed about 20 grams of processed meat per day (the equivalent of a strip of bacon) were 42 percent more likely to be diagnosed with breast cancer compared to Latinas who ate little or no processed meats.

Researchers also looked at consumption of red meats, poultry, all fish and just tuna. White women who ate an average of 14 grams of tuna daily (roughly the size of a thimble) were 25 percent more likely to have breast cancer than those who did not. The association for tuna on Latinas was comparable but not statistically significant.
A new clinic of the USC Eye Institute is now open at the University Park Campus, offering faculty, staff and their dependents, as well as USC students, a convenient location for their eye care and optical needs.

EYE: Priority is to provide exceptional care, service

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“We are very focused on the quality of care we provide each and every patient,” said Lernik Torossian, OD, assistant professor of clinical ophthalmology. “Our priority each day is to provide our patients with the exceptional care and personalized service that Keck Medicine is known for.”

Both locations are open for walk-in purchases of contact lenses or eyewear Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

To schedule an appointment, call (800) USC-CARE.

Neurosurgeon leads first BrainPath training session

The Keck School of Medicine USC recently hosted an inaugural one-day resident and fellow training on the comprehensive management of subthalamic lesions using the NICO BrainPath Approach, a tool developed by the NICO Corporation for removing deep-seated brain tumors using an endoscopic-channel-based approach. Gabriel Zada, MD, assistant professor of neurological surgery and director of the USC Endoscopic Skull Base Surgery Program, was joined by colleagues from the University of California, Irvine, and Indiana University School of Medicine for the event. Attendees had a chance to engage at stations demonstrating BrainPath and Myriad, tools developed by NICO for use in subcortical brain surgery, as well as participate in various skills labs.

Calendar of Events

Friday, March 11

11 a.m.-5:30 p.m., Center for Computational Molecular Biology Symposium. Eli and Edythe Broad BCRM Center, First Floor Seminar Room. Info, https://csmb.usc.edu.

Tuesday, March 15

Wednesday, March 16


Friday, March 18
8:45 a.m., Office of Student Affairs. “Match Day Class of 2016.” Carmen A. Piedrahita, MD, MBA, HSC Quad. Info: Teresa Cook, (323) 442-2419, teresa.cook@med.usc.edu.

Saturday, March 19
7:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m., Tao and Rick Camuso Department of Orthopaedics — Head & Neck Surgery, Continuing Medical Education Event. “Breakthroughs in Clinical Orthopaedics: Pragmatic, Cost-Effective Approaches,” Huntington Library.

San Marino. Info: Ashley Foster, (323) 442-6268, Ashley.Foster@med.usc.edu.

Wednesday, March 23

National Eye Institute, National Eye Institute Seminar. “Pictures at an Exhibition’ – ‘Confetti’ Vignettes of Retinal Pathologies,” Xuefeng Chen, MD, PhD, University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center. Info: Ashley Foster, (323) 442-6268, Ashley.Foster@med.usc.edu.

HACKS

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For this year’s Broad Fellowship, Linares said, “I have to say the turning point that sparked my interest in science was when I was in high school and my grandfather suffered a stroke.”

“I remember going to the hospital and he was just incapacitated. There was not really any effective treatment for him. The need for finding new medical treatments for these patients stimulated my interest in biomedical research.”

Broad Fellows are exceptional senior postdoctoral researchers at the transition point of starting their own stem cell laboratories. The fellowship was established as part of a $2 million gift from The Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation to USC’s stem cell research center.

As a Broad Fellow in the USC Stem Cell laboratory of Assistant Professor of Stem Cell Biology & Regenerative Medicine Justin Ichida, PhD, Linares is seeking innovative therapies for patients with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), also known as Lou Gehrig’s disease.

In ALS, patients suffer from the death of the cells that transmit signals from the brain to the muscles, called motor neurons, leading to progressive paralysis and usually resulting in fatal respiratory failure within three to five years of diagnosis.

In the most common form of ALS, patients have a specific mutation, in which their DNA contains hundreds of extraneous repetitions in a gene called C9ORF72. To understand why this particular mutation causes ALS, Linares is studying diseases caused by mutations from patients’ skin or blood cells.

He is also exploring these mutations to thousands of potential drugs to see if any of them halt or reverse the progression of the disease.

“Any drugs that you test in these patient-specific mu
tor neurons could potentially be easily translated to the clinic,” Linares said.

The clinic is never far from Linares’ mind. After receiving his bachelor’s degree in neurobiology, physiology and behavior from the Uni-
versity of California, Davis, he conducted research into the role of newly discovered genes that regulate bone formation and breakdown as a PhD candidate in the laboratory of Sanford Mohan, PhD, at Loma Linda University.

For this work, he won a young investigator award from the American Society for Bone and Mineral Research.

“I would often look at videos of people with osteoporosis to remind myself about the disabling aspects of this disease,” Linares said.

He then pursued a four-year postdoctoral fellowship in the laboratory of De-Maw Chuang, PhD, at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) before moving to the Ichida Lab at the Eli and Edythe Broad Center for Regenerative Medicine and Stem Cell Research at USC.

He is thrilled to join the ranks of the Broad Fellows, a distinguished group of researchers.

“I am privileged to be selected as a Broad Fellow,” Linares said. “I applied the foundation for their continued generosity and support of stem cell research at USC.”
**School of Pharmacy debuts learning center**

**By Michele Kellar**

The USC School of Pharmacy announced the grand opening of its new Walgreens Conference Room with a ribbon-cutting ceremony on Feb. 26. Nearly 19 months in the making, the state-of-the-art conference and learning center, located on the second floor of the John Stauffer Pharmaceutical Sciences Center on the Health Sciences Campus, features an interactive smart board, multiple large video screens, wireless-enabled workshop stations with modular seating and audio/videoconferencing capability, among many other features.

In addition to serving as a conference and learning center, the Walgreens Conference Room will be the location for the school’s new Margaret and John Biles Leadership Center, which will bring influential leaders from the public and private sectors to address pressing health-related concerns and provide students with an opportunity to develop essential leadership and entrepreneurial skills.

It was made possible by a $250,000 gift from Walgreens as well as more than $500,000 in funding from the university.

“Walgreens commends (USC School of Pharmacy) on the initiative and the education you provide to students,” said Paul Huynh, Walgreens area health care supervisor.

“We will join you and walk with you on this journey of partnership and friendship.”

Interim Dean Glen Stimmel acknowledged Walgreens for its long history of supporting the school’s scholarships, student organizations and programmatic advances, and said the newly renovated, highly customizable room will be the school’s premier conference space.

“The USC School of Pharmacy has always been a welcoming place where talented individuals solve complex problems by working collaboratively,” Stimmel said. “We’re proud to open a state-of-the-art facility that encourage innovation and collaboration, and I look forward to the transformative ideas and outcomes that will be generated there.”

**LIVES:** Surgeons used ultrasound to guide needle into heart of fetus in mother’s womb

**Continued from page 1**

chamber of a HLHS fetus to flow back to the right side of the heart. The successful procedure was a first for the Institution for Maternal-Fetal Health and a first for a Southern California hospital.

The fetal interventionalist conducting the procedure was Ramen Chmait, MD, director of Los Angeles Fetal Surgery, a branch of the CHLA-USC Institute for Maternal-Fetal Health, and associate professor of obstetrics and gynecology at the Keck School. Chmait guided a needle into the heart of the fetus in the mother’s womb.

Pediatric interventional cardiologist Frank Ing, MD, co-director of the CHLA Heart Institute and a professor of clinical pediatrics at the Keck School, then deployed a stent device from the public and private sectors to address pressing health-related concerns and provide students with an opportunity to develop essential leadership and entrepreneurial skills.

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**Study: Team-based approach still leaves gaps in child care**

**By Mary Dacuma**

While medical home care may be improving primary care for children, these youngest patients may be disadvantaged by this team-based health care approach in other ways, according to a new study. Researchers at the Keck School of Medicine of USC examined medical home trends in children’s primary care from 2003 to 2012 and found that while this specific health care model has improved children’s primary care overall, certain aspects of children’s patient care experience have worsened.

Medical home-uninsured children were subject to more insufficient levels of care.

The medical home is a team-based approach to health care that includes a personal physician who provides accessible, continuous, comprehensive and family-centered care to each patient.

The study was published in the March issue of *Maternal and Child Health Journal.* “Overall, the medical home experience has improved over time for children across the nation, although some aspects have worsened,” said Gregory Stevens, PhD, associate professor of family medicine and preventive medicine at Keck School of Medicine and lead author of the study. “Children have better access to health care and a more continuous experience with their physicians. But children do not always have sufficient time with their physicians, and may not be receiving all the medical care that they need.”

To better analyze children’s medical home experiences, the team created several sociodemographic subgroups. In situations where children did not have positive medical home experiences, the team identified risk factors that may have contributed to poor outcomes, such as the level of education of the child’s parents, amount of insurance coverage and whether or not the child lived under the poverty line.

One subgroup seemed to fall behind even when other at-risk subgroups improved. Uninsured children had the lowest and most unstable medical home experiences over the past decade. The uninsured subgroup also had the children in most need of constant, quality care.

“We need to make extra efforts to ensure that all children have access to quality healthcare,” Stevens said. “Even if the Affordable Care Act is implemented exactly as planned, millions of people are expected to go without insurance, including children. We need to think of other ways to ensure that insurance is available for all children, or we need to expand other community resources.”

The resources to which Stevens refers include federally qualified community health centers (FQHC) and free clinics that cater to those who are not insured.

Because the medical home model is a widely supported as a strategy for delivering high-quality primary care, FQHCs that operate using the medical home model have been entitled to additional federal funding.
Antidepressants may shrink brain tumors, fight cancer, study finds

Antidepressants can shrunk and stunt cancerous brain tumors that are otherwise difficult to treat, an international team of researchers has found. USC School of Pharmacy researchers who led the study on mice found that the drugs stifle the growth of brain cancer, glioma or glioblastoma by suppressing the enzyme monoamine oxidase A, which affects the release of emotional brain chemicals such as dopamine and serotonin. Typically, brain cancer is treated with TMZ — temozolomide — an oral drug that attacks the cell nucleus of the tumor cells. Some tumors become resistant to TMZ. University Professor Jean Chen Shi at the USC School of Pharmacy and the Keck School of Medicine of USC, and her collaborators found that the MAO-A inhibitors reduce cell proliferation and increase immune response. Their study was published on Feb. 9 in the journal Oncotarget. — Michele Keller

USC Eye Institute Director Varma releases new glaucoma book

Rohit Varma, MD, MPH, has released a new educational book, Advanced Glaucoma Surgery. Varma, the director of the USC Eye Institute and chair of the Department of Ophthalmology at the Keck School of Medicine of USC, co-edited the book with Ahmad A. Aref, MD, and covers the spectrum of techniques for surgical treatment of glaucoma. Advanced Glaucoma Surgery provides in-depth information on indications, preoperative considerations, potential intra- and postoperative complications, and strategies for reducing the incidence of such adverse events. — Sherri Snelling

Physical therapy researcher: More therapy is not always better

RECOVERING THE ABILITY to move arms and hands after a stroke often requires hours of physical therapy, though clinicians lack science-based evidence as to which type and amount of therapy is most effective. But a new study led by Carinlee Winston, PhD, and published in the Feb. 9 issue of the Journal of the American Medical Association has changed that, providing some much-needed scientific data for clinicians. In short, more therapy doesn’t necessarily provide better outcomes. In the study, the Interdisciplinary Comprehensive Arm Rehabilitation Evaluation (ICARE), researchers compared two different rehabilitation strategies to determine each one’s effectiveness. After one year, the groups were tested on their arm and hand movements and researchers discovered there wasn’t much of a difference between the two interventions. “We were surprised that (intensive, high-repetition therapy) did not, in fact, accelerate motor outcomes,” Winston said. “We were also surprised that more than doubling the dose of usual occupational therapy did not appear to have an impact either.” — John Hobbs

Traffic lanes modified to adjust for HSC Beautification Project

Traffic lanes have been modified on Alcazar Street as part of the ongoing HSC Beautification Project. The lanes will be modified through May.

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