

Healthy Living

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A Lifesaver: Exceptional Cancer Care Close to Home

Claysburg resident Kirk Roudabush figures he owes his life to a rogue honeybee and the expert cancer care he received at UPMC Altoona.

In fall 2016, the mason contractor and beekeeping enthusiast was checking on his honeybees when he was inexplicably stung on the mouth. The swelling eased after a few days, but a painless lump soon appeared on his neck. "I ignored it, thinking it was from the bee sting," says Kirk, 63. At the insistence of his daughter, Danyell Knott, a radiation therapist at UPMC Altoona, he finally agreed to see a doctor. A biopsy confirmed an infection from the bee sting. But it also revealed Kirk had cancer of his left tonsil with the tumor also involving lymph nodes in his neck.

Coordinated care

At UPMC Hillman Cancer Center at UPMC Altoona, a team of specialists developed a comprehensive treatment plan for Kirk's care. In early December, he had surgery to remove his tonsil. Two weeks later, he began seven weeks of radiation and chemotherapy treatments under the care of **Jack Schocker, MD**, a radiation oncologist, and **Hasan Bit-Shawish, MD**, a medical oncologist.

"We work together seamlessly to provide sophisticated and comprehensive treatment," says Dr. Schocker. "Providing chemotherapy and radiation at the same time is effective in head and neck cancers because the chemotherapy drugs help the radiation work better."

Kirk underwent all of his treatment as an outpatient. Monday through Friday he went to UPMC Altoona for intensity-modulated radiation therapy (IMRT). "It's an extremely precise method of delivering radiation," says Dr. Schocker. "It allows us to use higher, more effective doses while sparing healthy tissue and reducing side effects."

And once a week, Kirk went from radiation to the medical oncology suite for several hours of chemotherapy. "I'm so glad all of my appointments and treatments were right in Altoona. Driving to Pittsburgh would have been a big problem for me," he says.

A grateful patient

Kirk's treatments ended in March 2017, and the feeding tube that sustained him throughout his therapy was removed in July. Today, he has no evidence of cancer.

"That bee sting saved my life. Cancer was heading to my heart and lungs, and I never would have known had it not happened," says Kirk. "I'm so thankful to be alive, and I'm grateful for the care I received at UPMC Altoona. I had the best doctors I could ask for: they cured me!"

Why choose UPMC Altoona for your cancer care?

UPMC Hillman Cancer Center at UPMC Altoona offers the most up-to-date services available to prevent, detect, diagnose, and treat all types of cancer, including:

- The latest chemotherapy and immunotherapy treatments
- Powerful evaluation and treatment planning tools, including 3D and PET-CT imaging to carefully map out targeted areas
- An arsenal of advanced radiation technology used to deliver precise therapies that attack cancer and limit damage to healthy tissue
- Access to the same "best in class" treatment protocols found throughout the UPMC Hillman Cancer Center network
- The opportunity to participate in groundbreaking clinical trials

See calendar insert for classes to help you quit smoking, lose weight, and eat a healthier diet.

THE GUIDE

Debunking myths and misconceptions about cancer prevention

Lanie Francis, MD, a medical oncologist at UPMC Hillman Cancer Center, and **Jack Schocker, MD**, a radiation oncologist at UPMC Altoona, tackle some common cancer myths and explain what you can do to reduce your cancer risk.

MYTH

1

NOTHING YOU DO CAN PREVENT CANCER

The truth is, at least 40 percent of all cancers can be prevented. "The number one thing you can do to prevent cancer is to stop — or never start — smoking," says Dr. Francis. "Obesity and lack of exercise also can play a contributing role in many cancers."



MYTH

2

CANCER ONLY RUNS IN FAMILIES

According to the American Cancer Society, about 40 percent of all adults in the United States will develop cancer during their lifetime. But only 5 to 10 percent of all cancers are linked to genetics. Still, it's important to tell your doctor if you have a family history of cancer, says Dr. Francis. "It can help you and your doctor make decisions about cancer screenings, genetic testing, and treatment."



MYTH

3

CANCER SCREENINGS ARE A WASTE OF TIME

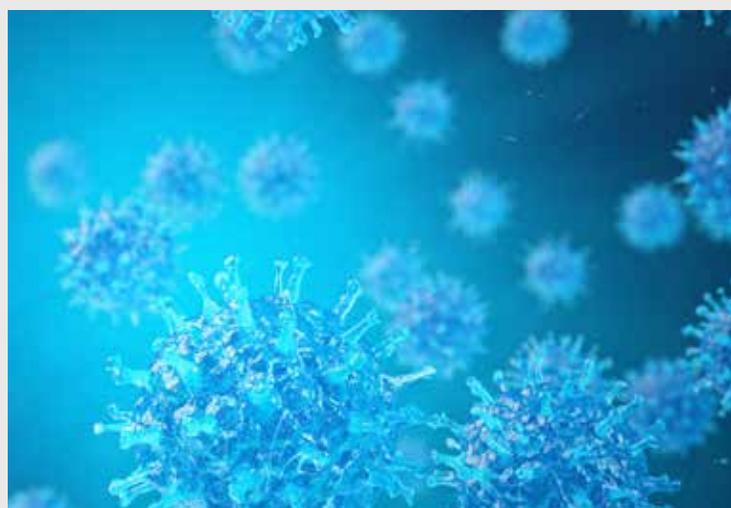
Wrong! Early detection is your best defense against cancer, says Dr. Francis. Pap smears and colonoscopies can detect precancerous lesions that can be removed before developing into cancer. Mammograms can detect cancer early, when treatment is more likely to be successful.

MYTH

4

CANCER IS CONTAGIOUS

No, it's not, but certain cancers are caused by viral infections. That's why vaccines are important, says Dr. Schocker. The human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine helps prevent most cervical cancers, as well as head and neck cancers. The hepatitis B vaccine lowers the risk of liver cancer.



WHAT YOU CAN DO

Reduce your risk of developing cancer by adopting a healthy lifestyle:

- **Maintain a healthy weight.** According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, at least 13 types of cancer are associated with being overweight or obese.
- **Be active.** Get at least 150 minutes of exercise each week.
- **Follow a healthy diet.** Eat more whole grains, fruits, and vegetables, and limit red meats and processed foods. Keep alcohol to a minimum.
- **Protect your skin.** Apply sunscreen every day, and wear protective clothing and sunglasses.
- **Quit smoking.** Lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer deaths, and smoking causes almost all cases.

Talk to your doctor about your cancer risk and what cancer screenings are right for you.

100 Times Stronger

UPMC Altoona has grown by more than **100 new doctors** since becoming part of UPMC — all to better serve you and the needs of our community.

“FIRST-EVERS”

Our new doctors include these exciting “first-ever” specializations at UPMC Altoona:

- **Endovascular neurosurgeon** — uses less invasive methods to treat blood vessel problems
- **Heart failure cardiologist** — focuses on treating patients whose heart muscle is too weak to effectively pump blood through the body
- **Interventional neurologist** — uses minimally invasive, image-guided techniques to treat complex diseases of the brain, neck, and spine
- **Neurohospitalist** — specializes in providing neurological care for hospitalized patients
- **Neurointensivist** — provides critical care for hospitalized patients with life-threatening neurological illnesses

Over the last several years, 115 new doctors — many recruited from across the country — have chosen to come and work at UPMC Altoona. They represent 30 different specialties and six subspecialties.

“We have a careful plan for growth that is guided by an in-depth look at who we are and what we need as a hospital, as well as the needs of the communities we serve,” explains **Kevin Hockenberry**, vice president and assistant to the president at UPMC Altoona.

As part of long-range planning, the hospital identified five targeted areas of growth, each requiring the expertise of new doctors:

- Heart and Vascular Medicine
- Neuroscience
- Oncology
- Orthopaedics
- Women’s Health (including obstetrics, gynecology, and breast health)

“Being part of UPMC has tremendously expanded our resources and expertise. It’s allowed us to broaden our services, develop new facilities, and acquire the latest equipment,” says Kevin. “That kind of growth — and the opportunity to be part of an internationally recognized health system — makes UPMC Altoona even more attractive to new doctors.”

“We’ve seen an increase in the number of residents from our own Family Medicine Residency program and from UPMC in Pittsburgh who are beginning their careers here,” says **Jessica Lattanza**, director of physician relations. “We’re also attracting highly experienced specialists from throughout the United States. While they’re drawn to the many professional opportunities we offer, their decision to choose us is heavily influenced by the people and lifestyle they find in Altoona.”

Jerry Murray, president and chief executive officer of UPMC Altoona and UPMC Bedford Memorial, says UPMC Altoona has quickly and efficiently recruited a “tremendous wave of top talent and medical expertise” in both new and underrepresented areas of practice. “We’re a stronger and better hospital with these new doctors,” he notes. “And we’re very excited about what their presence means for the greater community. Our new doctors and their families are quickly becoming involved in their churches, schools, and neighborhoods. It’s a win/win for us all.”

You’ll find a complete list of these new doctors and their specialties at UPMCAaltoona.org/100docs.

What our new doctors say

The opportunity to work at a regional trauma center was a major draw for **David Slocum, MD**, an emergency medicine doctor who started at UPMC Altoona in June 2017. He especially values being part of a collaborative team of doctors in the emergency department. “It’s a real priority for us to work together, share information, and learn from each other’s experiences. The result is more informed and better patient care,” he says.

Dr. Slocum and his wife, Christy, have four children ranging in age from 4 to 13 years old. “Our three daughters love gymnastics, so we’ve become active in the local YMCA where they take lessons. We’re also involved in our local church,” he says. “It’s a great community for us to raise our family.

“I look forward to bringing new treatments that offer hope and relief for my patients — and eliminate their need to travel far to get the care they require.”

“Coming to UPMC Altoona from Atlanta has been a great experience for our family. We feel right at home.”

— Dr. David Slocum





“Working and living here is professionally and personally rewarding. We’re finding the right work/home balance that’s often hard to achieve.”

— Drs. Cameron and Jill Murphy

Parents of twin 7-year-old boys, **Jill Murphy, MD**, and **Cameron Murphy, MD**, find that central Pennsylvania has something to offer everyone in their family. They relocated here last year from Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

“Cameron enjoys hiking the hills and trails here,” says Dr. Jill Murphy, who now leads UPMC Altoona’s plastic surgery practice. “Our boys love it all: they build forts in our backyard, hate to miss a day of school, and can’t get enough of DelGrosso’s Amusement Park!

“I always hoped to be part of a multispecialty practice and a hospital setting where I can support my patients and those of other doctors through reconstructive and plastic surgery,” she adds. “My staff and colleagues have been terrific in helping make our practice transition a smooth one.”

Dr. Cameron Murphy — a board-certified family doctor with a special interest in sports medicine and concussion care — practices at UPMC Altoona Elite Orthopaedics, where he cares for the non-surgery problems of patients of all ages. “From geriatric falls to high school sports injuries, every patient is different. I’m challenged and excited by the cases I encounter every day,” he says.



Rodney Landreneau, MD, is a pioneer in minimally invasive lung cancer surgery and the surgical management of mesothelioma, an aggressive, asbestos-related cancer. His world-class credentials make him an ideal choice to develop the hospital’s first thoracic surgery program.

Dr. Landreneau established UPMC’s first thoracic surgery program in Pittsburgh nearly three decades ago. He spent 25 years at UPMC and the UPMC Hillman Cancer Center before returning to his hometown of Ochsner, Louisiana, in 2013.

“At UPMC Altoona, I’ll be providing comprehensive and coordinated care for patients with lung cancer, cancers and benign diseases of the esophagus, and mesothelioma,” says Dr. Landreneau. “Though I’ve only been here since January, it’s been a very rewarding experience. I’m averaging nearly a surgery a day because the need for this type of advanced care is so great in this region. Otherwise, patients must travel hours for treatment.”



“The people I’ve met remind me very much of those in my hometown — they’re warm and welcoming. I hope to make a real difference here.”

— Dr. Rodney Landreneau



What Your Blood Can Reveal About You

Your blood provides important clues about how your body is working and can help your doctor identify potential health problems.

“Routine screening blood tests combined with a physical exam give doctors valuable information about a patient’s health and well-being,” says **Jessica DeStefano, DO**, a family practice doctor with UPMC Altoona Blair Medical Associates.

Common blood tests explained

While testing may vary based on your medical history, Dr. DeStefano describes four of the most routine blood tests doctors typically order and why the results are important.

Complete blood count (CBC) measures white and red blood cells and platelets, and can show abnormalities in your blood cells, she explains. Results can indicate anemia, an infection, a blood disorder, or other health issues.

Basic metabolic panel (BMP) reveals how well your heart and kidneys are functioning and evaluates your blood glucose levels to screen for prediabetes or diabetes.

Complete metabolic panel (CMP) includes all BMP tests plus tests that show the doctor how well your liver is functioning.

Lipid profile tests measure the level of cholesterol and triglycerides in your blood. Elevated levels increase your risk of cardiovascular disease, heart attack, and stroke, says Dr. DeStefano.

Fast, easy blood testing services

“UPMC Altoona offers four convenient off-site locations — two in Altoona, and our new locations in Hollidaysburg and Ebensburg — where you can have blood drawn,” says **Joe Pufka**, administrative director of Laboratory Services at UPMC Altoona. These locations also offer urine sample collection, specimen drop-off, EKG testing, and throat cultures/strep tests. “If your health insurance requires blood samples to be tested at a laboratory other than ours, we can collect the samples and forward them to the appropriate laboratory,” he explains.

You’ll be asked to provide the name of a doctor to receive your test results. Be sure to request a copy of the results for your records, and review them with your doctor to understand what they mean.

If the lab results show any abnormalities, the doctor will likely order additional tests. “For normal test results, my office typically calls the patient with that information. If they have a MyUPMC account, I’ll send them a message,” says Dr. DeStefano.

To schedule an appointment with Dr. DeStefano, call UPMC Blair Medical Associates at **814-947-4300**.

WE’RE HERE FOR YOU!

UPMC Altoona offers fast, professional lab services — without an appointment — at four convenient locations.



Blair Medical Associates

1414 9th Ave.
Altoona
814-946-1655

Monday through Friday,
6:30 a.m.-4 p.m.



Station Medical Center

1516 9th Ave.
Altoona
814-889-2378

Monday through Friday,
6:30 a.m.-6 p.m.
Saturday and Sunday,
6:30 a.m.-3 p.m.



Logan Medical Building

800 S. Logan Blvd.
Hollidaysburg
814-889-4500

Monday through Friday,
6:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m.



Ebensburg Outpatient Center

152 Zeman Dr.
Ebensburg
814-471-2221

Monday through Friday,
6:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m.

News from the UPMC ALTOONA FOUNDATION

Planned Giving Can Make a Powerful Difference

A gift to the UPMC Altoona Foundation can help ensure that we'll be able to carry out our mission for years to come. While a planned gift has a significant philanthropic impact on the Foundation, it also can give you the benefits of a tax deduction and tax-free income.

To learn more, visit the Foundation website at UPMCAltoonaFoundation.org and click on How to Give. Under Planned Gifts, there's a link to more information about the different giving options available.



Donna Y. Deichert Scholarships Presented

Victoria Scott, RN, and Brittany Polke, RN, received scholarship awards from the Donna Y. Deichert Scholarship Fund of the UPMC Altoona Foundation. The awards are given annually to cardiac and critical care nurses at UPMC Altoona who are pursuing additional nursing education. Endowed by her family, the scholarship honors Donna, who was a long-time ICU and cardiac care nurse at UPMC Altoona.

Six Laboratory Science Scholarships Awarded

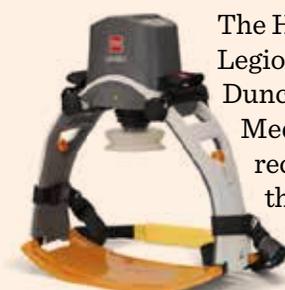
Six medical laboratory science students serving one-year clinical internships through the UPMC Altoona School of Medical Technology/Medical Laboratory Science received scholarships from the UPMC Altoona Foundation. Students in this program complete three years of study at an affiliated college or university before serving a clinical internship year at UPMC.

"This scholarship award is valuable to these students who are self-funding their educations while attending the program," says **Deborah Pallas-Riley**, the school's program director and outreach manager.



Joseph Pufka, director of Laboratory Services at UPMC Altoona (far right), with scholarship recipients (front row, from left) Ethel Chafloque, Tara Miller, and Alex Carr; (back row, from left) Cori Miknis, Shondra Ginther, and John Galebach.

Foundation Grant to Purchase Emergency Equipment



The Hollidaysburg American Legion Ambulance and Duncansville Emergency Medical Services have received funding from the UPMC Altoona Foundation to purchase a LUCAS® 3.0 chest compression system.

"This system performs continuous, uninterrupted CPR on patients, which enables emergency responders to focus on other life-saving efforts," says **Michael Seiler, EMT-P**, pre-hospital outreach coordinator, UPMC Altoona Department of Emergency Medicine and Trauma Services.

Hope and Help for Grieving Children



The death of a family member turns a child's life upside down. The Home Nursing Agency at UPMC Altoona, part of UPMC Community Provider Services, received a major grant from the UPMC Altoona Foundation to fund its Healing Patch program, which provides support for children and families who have suffered the loss of a loved one.

Services are free and available to children from preschool to age 18. "This program is largely staffed by volunteers and receives no government funding," says **Paula Thomas, DNP**, president, UPMC Home Health. "This grant will have a significant impact on the program's ability to serve children and families in this community."

In Memory of a Young Son

After Connor Hinish passed away in November 2017 at the age of 5, his grieving family found money he'd been saving up in his piggy bank. Together, they decided to purchase games and toys and donate them to UPMC Altoona in Connor's memory. In honor of Connor's birthday, the gifts were presented in March 2018.



Jeff Hinish (Connor's dad), Lydia Schimansky (family friend), Sydney Hinish (Connor's sister), and Tami Hinish (Connor's mom) with games and toys donated in Connor's memory.

UPMC Altoona
620 Howard Ave.
Altoona, PA 16601

Change Service Requested

Q & A

Ask the Experts

Black Lung: what is it and who gets it?

Over the past 20 years, black lung cases have surged in the nation's coal country, with large numbers reported in the Appalachian region including western Pennsylvania. A new study indicates miners are being diagnosed at a younger age and after spending less time in the mines.

The Black Lung Program at UPMC Altoona is an independent, federally funded partnership designed to help coal miners suffering from black lung disease or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) get medical attention and compensation to improve their quality of life.

Renée Henry, program coordinator (right), and **Katelyn Grados** (left), benefits coordinator and outreach specialist, answer some basic questions about black lung disease and the quality comprehensive care the UPMC Altoona program offers.

Q.

What is black lung and what causes it?

A. Black lung, or coal workers' pneumoconiosis, is a chronic, irreversible, and progressive lung disease caused by inhaling coal mine dust. Long-term exposure to tiny coal dust particles causes inflammation and scarring of the lung tissue.

Q.

How is it diagnosed?

A. Black lung and other occupational breathing difficulties that result from inhaling coal mine dust are diagnosed through chest x-ray, EKG, laboratory services, arterial blood gas testing, and a complete pulmonary function test. Results are reviewed by a board-certified pulmonologist, who also performs a physical evaluation.

Q.

What are the symptoms of black lung?

A. The most common symptoms are coughing, tightness in the chest, and shortness of breath, as well as a higher risk of respiratory tract infections, such as bronchitis. In its earliest stages, the disease may have no noticeable symptoms.

Q.

What treatments are available?

A. Although there is no cure for black lung, treatments focus on addressing black lung symptoms as they arise and preventing the disease from progressing. Medicines, oxygen, therapies, and pulmonary rehabilitation are used to treat black lung symptoms.

Q.

Who should be tested for black lung?

A. "If you've worked in the coal industry, have a breathing problem, or suspect you might have black lung or another occupational lung disease, you should be tested," says Renée. Even if you don't have symptoms, black lung can still be present. "This disease is progressive, so symptoms may not appear until long after someone has left the coal mines."

Q.

Do I need a doctor's referral to be tested?

A. Absolutely not. Testing can be set up with a simple phone call to **814-889-2853**.

Q.

What other services and resources does the UPMC Altoona Black Lung Program provide?

A. Our program is staffed by respiratory therapists with many years of experience and specialized training in testing to determine black lung. "In addition to testing, we offer education, pulmonary rehabilitation, and benefits counseling for those interested in filing claims with the U.S. Department of Labor," explains Katelyn. Lay advocacy support also is available to miners who require some legal advice. "Most people don't know we have this program or that they might be eligible," she adds.

To learn more about the UPMC Altoona Black Lung Program, call **814-889-2853** or **1-866-538-9884**, or visit UPMCAaltoona.org/BlackLung.

Is there a health topic you'd like to see covered in the magazine or a great experience at UPMC Altoona that you'd like to share?

Call **814-889-6405** or email HLMAaltoona@UPMC.edu.

UPMC Altoona's *Healthy Living Magazine* is published four times a year. If you would like to be added to our mailing list, join our Healthy Living Club online at UPMCAaltoona.org or call **814-889-2630** or **1-888-313-4665**. It's FREE, and the magazine is just one of many benefits!

Looking for a doctor or specialty service? Visit FindADoc.UPMC.com or call **1-800-258-4677**.