



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **\$1.2M Grant awarded to LSU LCMC Health Cancer Center to help break down barriers to cervical cancer prevention**

*LSU Health New Orleans commits an additional \$75,000 annually for five-years*

**NEW ORLEANS** (Jan. 24, 2024) – A research team from LSU LCMC Health Cancer Center has been awarded a \$1.5 million grant to eliminate barriers from cervical cancer prevention. The five-year program combines a \$1.2 million award from the American Cancer Society and \$75,000 a year for five years investment from LSU Health New Orleans.

Louisiana has one of the highest cervical cancer death rates in the country. Cervical cancer rates are higher in predominantly African American communities represented in both urban (New Orleans) and rural areas of Louisiana. Black women in Louisiana are diagnosed with and die from cervical cancer at a significantly higher rate than the US rates for Black women. The research project at LSU LCMC Health Cancer Center will not only focus on increasing screenings, but on removing barriers that prevent women from accessing cancer prevention services after they have been screened – helping to close the gap between screening and prevention.

“With prevention through an HPV vaccine and early detection, no one should develop or die from cervical cancer,” said Dr. Michael Hagensee, professor, LSU Health New Orleans Department of Medicine. “We have the tools to prevent cervical cancer, but we aren’t using them to their fullest potential. By identifying barriers to cancer prevention services and better understanding why there is resistance to accessing screening, we can focus on overcoming these barriers to ultimately eradicate cervical cancer.”

Studies have shown that transportation constraints, economics, healthcare system distrust, fear and reduced access to cancer prevention education can contribute to barriers in care. This research grant will help determine the obstacles some women may face and work on strategies to overcome those hurdles.

"We are proud of the work LSU LCMC Health Cancer Center is doing to address the disparities in cervical cancer screening and prevention among African American women in our city. This grant is a vital step toward reducing the burden of this disease and

improving the health outcomes of our community," said New Orleans Health Director Dr. Jennifer Avegno.

Principal investigator Dr. Hagensee, along with Dr. Donna Williams, Dr. Bilikisu Reni Elewonibi, Dr. Jennifer Cameron and Dr. Andrew Chapple, all from LSU Health New Orleans and Dr. Jerry McLarty from LSU Shreveport, will utilize kits that test for HPV and identify barriers to clinical follow-up for those women who test positive for HPV.

During the discovery phase of the research project, approximately 750 women from the Greater New Orleans and Shreveport areas will be screened for HPV by self or provider collected HPV tests in the privacy of their own home, a local clinic or on a mobile health unit. Patients will also be asked to complete a survey to help researchers better understand barriers to cervical cancer prevention, detection and treatment. Answers to the survey will be used to develop educational materials designed to improve follow-up care after screening results.

A holistic view of patient needs based on these surveys will be implemented in phase two of the project to improve local access to follow up care and will compare rates of follow-up care to the pre-intervention phase using a state-of-the-art adaptive clinical trial design developed by LSU Health New Orleans biostatistician Dr. Andrew Chapple.

For more information about the LSU LCMC Health Cancer Center, visit [www.lsulcmchealthcancercenter.org](http://www.lsulcmchealthcancercenter.org).

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#### **About the LSU LCMC Health Cancer Center**

LSU LCMC Health Cancer Center has reimagined, reinvented, strengthened, and modernized how Louisianians tackle a cancer diagnosis and more importantly, how they can prevent it. Home to more than 100 cancer researchers, the LSU LCMC Health Cancer Center's research programs through the Stanley S. Scott Cancer Research Center of Excellence directly benefit the Louisiana community by conducting focused research necessary to better prevent cancer, detect it earlier when it can be more effectively treated, and to develop the new cancer therapies of tomorrow. Through funding and critical partnerships such as those with LSU, LCMC Health and Louisiana Cancer Research Center, LSU LCMC Health Center brings together cancer care and research in Louisiana to focus on the specific challenges the state faces to reduce the inordinate cancer burden. To learn more, visit [lsulcmchealthcancercenter.org](http://lsulcmchealthcancercenter.org).

#### **About LSU Health Sciences Center (LSU Health New Orleans)**

LSU Health Sciences Center New Orleans educates Louisiana's health care professionals. The state's health sciences university leader, LSU Health New Orleans includes a School of Medicine with campuses in Baton Rouge and Lafayette, the state's only School of Dentistry, Louisiana's only public School of Public Health, and Schools of Allied Health Professions, Nursing, and Graduate Studies. LSU Health New Orleans faculty take care of patients in public and private hospitals and clinics throughout the region. In the vanguard of biosciences research, the LSU Health New Orleans research enterprise generates jobs and enormous annual economic impact. LSU Health New Orleans faculty have made lifesaving discoveries and continue to work to prevent, advance treatment or cure disease.

