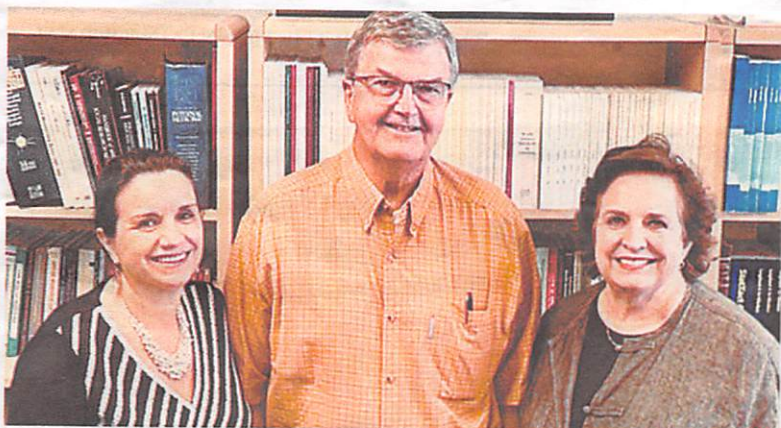


Thurs., April 19
2018

OVER THE MOUNTAIN JOURNAL

Photo courtesy UAB



From left: Isabel Scarinci, Ph.D.; Edward Partridge, M.D.; and Susan Jackson, executive director of the Birmingham Rotary Club.

UAB and Rotary Working on International Plan to Defeat Cervical Cancer in Sri Lanka

The UAB Comprehensive Cancer Center and the Rotary Club of Birmingham are teaming up with their counterparts in Sri Lanka to wipe out cervical cancer in that island country.

The Rotary clubs of Birmingham and Colombo, Sri Lanka, have a longstanding partnership and established the first regional cancer prevention and early detection center in Sri Lanka. The groups intend to build on that structure to offer cervical cancer prevention, screening and treatment, according to a statement from the UAB center.

Cervical cancer is the second most common cancer in women worldwide and in Sri Lanka. But it is preventable through HPV vaccinations and detectable through screenings, which can be provided through the health care system.

But there are socio-economic and cultural issues that stand in the way, said Isabel Scarinci, Ph.D., professor in UAB's Division of Preventive Medicine and associate director for globalization and cancer at the cancer center.

As a polio survivor, Scarinci said she has witnessed firsthand the ability of Rotary International to motivate action in communities.

"If we look to PolioPlus as an example, it was not just the vaccine that eliminated polio, it was social mobilization," she said. "The same

thing can be done with cervical cancer and other HPV-related cancers, if the scientific, public and private sectors can combine efforts and expertise."

Recently, representatives from UAB and the Rotary Club of Birmingham met in Sri Lanka with representatives from the Rotary Club of Colombo, the Sri Lankan Ministry of Health, the World Health Organization and Rotary International to unveil the plan.

It was determined that the U.S. team would assist with social mobilization, education and awareness strategies, and culturally relevant strategies to reach women who are not responsive to the message.

"This is a true public-private partnership where UAB, with its historical knowledge, can provide the scientific expertise for this initiative," said Dr. Edward Partridge, a former director of the cancer center who is representing the Rotary Club of Birmingham in the Rotary Cervical Cancer Project-Sri Lanka.

"Together, significant progress has been made toward a comprehensive cervical cancer prevention and control plan in Sri Lanka, and implementation steps are underway to be the first country to eliminate cervical cancer as a public health problem," Scarinci said in the statement. "And this is not only exciting but promising for other countries to emulate."

—Virginia Martin

MEMORY OF MIKE GRIGGS



Journal photo by Emil Wald

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