

## **Tobacco Commission awards research funding to Massey**

For the third time, the Tobacco Indemnification and Community Revitalization Commission (TICRC, a.k.a. Tobacco Commission) awarded funding to VCU Massey Cancer Center to support cancer research in the tobacco-dependant counties of Southside and Southwest Virginia.

Nearly \$600,000 was given to support research projects that involve a cohesive mission of cancer prevention and control. As indicated in published reports, residents of the Southside and Southwest tobacco footprint counties have higher rates of cancer incidence, are diagnosed at later stages and have a higher mortality rate than residents in other counties of the state. Massey's research projects aim to improve cancer prevention, screening and treatment options in an effort to address these health disparities.

Each project will receive a portion of the award to fund its initiatives. The grant is a one year award from October 1, 2012, to September 30, 2013.

Below are the researchers and projects awarded:

[Arpita Aggarwal, M.D.](#), Massey Cancer Prevention and Control research member and VCU assistant professor of internal medicine

### **"Dissemination of community engaged education project"**

In conjunction with community resources and input, as well as the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) recommendation for cancer screening guidelines for patients with limited health literacy, a computer-based audiovisual interactive 'Health Promotion educational tool (HPet)' on cancer risk behaviors was designed and is being tested. The goal is to improve community knowledge of cancer screenings.

**Andrew Barnes, Ph.D.**, VCU assistant professor of health care policy and research

### **"Designing around health behaviors: What we can learn about uninsured smokers' health literacy and health insurance choices to help them make better coverage decisions in Virginia's individual and small group markets?"**

This project aims to inform and influence how state policymakers communicate the details of insurance products sold in Virginia's individual and small group markets in order to improve the coverage decision of uninsured smokers residing in the Tobacco Commission's footprint.

[Richard Brown, Ph.D.](#), Massey Cancer Prevention and Control research member and VCU assistant professor of social and behavioral health

### **"Using online communication training to promote employment retention among cancer survivors"**

A cancer *patient-focused* intervention is being developed and tested. The intervention involves an online educational and communication skills training program that will specifically target the employment needs of employed cancer patients in the Southside and Southwest regions of Virginia. The goal is to decrease the negative impact of cancer treatment on patients' employment by equipping them with legal workplace information and communication tools.

[Jennifer Elston Lafata, Ph.D.](#), Massey Cancer Prevention and Control program co-leader and VCU professor of social and behavioral health

### **"Colorectal cancer screening"**

A mail survey that targets residents in the Crater, Piedmont and Southside Health Districts is being used to identify the barriers to colorectal cancer screening and determine how these barriers differ by obesity status.

[Donna McClish, Ph.D.](#), Massey Cancer Prevention and Control research member and VCU associate professor of biostatistics and internal medicine

**"Can health literacy be measured online and does it predict cancer prevention and screening?"**

An online Short Test of Functional Health Literacy in Adults (S-TOHFLA), a generally accepted and well-validated tool, will be used to determine whether health literacy scores predict cancer prevention and screening behaviors and to obtain a baseline measure of health literacy in the region.

**Carlin Rafie, Ph.D.**, Massey clinical research affiliation coordinator

**"Comprehensive cancer needs assessment for five remaining health districts composed of tobacco commission counties"**

A comprehensive cancer needs assessment will be implemented in five health districts to identify areas of need in cancer prevention, early detection, treatment and survivorship, as well as to provide a baseline of information that will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of policies and programs in the health districts.