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For Immediate Release

IMPROVED TESTING HELPS IMPROVE OUTCOMES OF SKIN CANCER DIAGNOSES
"Melanoma cocktail" identifies cancer's spread faster, more accurately

Plainview, NY, January 2009 -- Melanoma, or deadly skin cancer, is fast becoming one of the most common cancers in the United States, with the rate of diagnosis growing more quickly than that for any other type of cancer, according to the Oncology Resource Center. In fact, the rate of melanoma diagnoses is increasing so fast that the Center estimates that one of every 63 Americans will be diagnosed with melanoma at some point in their lifetimes.

Today, melanoma is the sixth most common cancer among American men and the seventh among U.S. women. While most people are diagnosed between ages 45 and 55, a quarter of all cases occur earlier than that, according to a report of the Melanoma Center, which cites melanoma as the second most common cancer in women between the ages of 20 and 35, and the leading cause of cancer death in women ages 25 to 30.

The good news for those fighting skin cancers is that the mortality rate for this disease has remained stable during the past decade and the five-year survival rate among patients with melanoma has been increasing, according to the American Cancer Society. "One of the reasons for this positive change is our ability to detect metastasis, or spreading of the disease, faster and more accurately than ever before," says Dr. George Hollenberg, M.D., a leading NY-area pathologist and founder of Acupath Laboratories.

"Using new techniques and technologies, we can more quickly diagnose and "stage" melanoma, or determine the cancer's stage. We can also improve quality of life issues for patients by reducing the number of invasive surgical procedures and recoveries they must endure to achieve a proper diagnosis, and by providing critical prognosis information up to a week or two sooner," Dr. Hollenberg says.

Acupath uses the "MCW Melanoma Cocktail," developed by researchers at the University of Wisconsin, which mixes together several antibodies that can detect melanoma cells in the lymph nodes. When applied to slides containing tissue from the patient's sentinel lymph nodes, this mixture can detect cancer cells within 30 minutes. Using routine protocol, this process can take 24-48 hours, and if the result is positive, a second surgery to remove the surrounding nodes for study must be scheduled after the patient has recovered from the first procedure, with results available in 2-3 days.

"Surgeons and pathologists can now determine in the operating room during a patient's first surgery whether the sentinel nodes show sign of metastasis," Dr. Hollenbeck explains. "If so, the remaining nodes can be removed during that same surgical procedure, eliminating the second invasive surgery entirely." "Using the Melanoma Cocktail also helps patients emotionally, since the information regarding the stage of their cancer can be provided up to a week or two sooner. And the sooner a clear, definitive diagnosis can be made, the sooner patients and their physicians can establish their disease management plan," Dr. Hollenberg adds.

While quick, accurate staging of melanoma is important for disease management at any stage, early detection remains a patient's best chance by far for a cure. Melanoma is a particularly virulent form of cancer, metastasizing at a much faster rate than other cancers. In fact, scientists recently discovered that melanoma spreads more quickly than other cancers because the cells in which melanoma begins -- the melanocytes -- originate already knowing how to metastasize.

Dr. Hollenberg urges self-awareness and self-care measures like sunscreen use and monthly skin self-exams in order to catch melanoma in its earliest, most curable stage.

About Dr. George Hollenberg

Dr. George Hollenberg, M.D. is an authority in the fields of pathology, clinical pathology and dermatopathology with expertise in the areas of dysplastic nevi, melanoma, prostate and gastrointestinal

cancer. Board-certified in Pathology and Dermatopathology, Dr. Hollenberg is a Fellow of the College of American Pathologists, The American Society of Dermatopathology and the AMA. He has published articles on skin, prostate and gastrointestinal cancer, and is the Consultant in Dermatopathology to The North Shore University Hospital Center. As the founding director of Acupath Laboratories, Inc., Dr. Hollenberg supervises the analysis of tens of thousands of biopsies per year, using the latest cutting-edge technology in histology and immunocytochemistry, as well as the latest advances in computerized report preparation.

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