

## Leading Cancer Institutes Partner To Study Mesothelioma

The School of Medicine at Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center is partnering with the Clinical Trials Department of FirstHealth Moore Regional Hospital in North Carolina to conduct a clinical trial investigating the genetic causes and factors leading to mesothelioma, a rare form of cancer caused by exposure to asbestos. Wake Forest is one of the nation's leading cancer research centers, conducting more than 200 clinical trials investigating cancer. FirstHealth operates as an acute care hospital and referral center for a fifteen county region in the Carolinas.

The principal investigator of the study is Dr. Jill Ohar. A professor of genomics at Wake Forest, Ohar's primary interest for over twenty years has been studying the genealogy of inhalation diseases related to occupational exposure, such as mesothelioma and asbestosis. Clinical trials aim to increase understanding of causes and genetic factors that lead to cancer and other illnesses. The goal of mesothelioma clinical trials is to discover new methods of diagnosis and treatment into the disease, including alternatives to standard frontline treatments such as surgery, radiation and chemotherapy. The current clinical trial led by Ohar aims to identify the genetic factors that may make one more susceptible to mesothelioma. Being able to do so could greatly help in earlier diagnosis and more effective treatment by identify high risk patients before cancer has advanced to late stages.

Asbestos is a naturally occurring fibrous mineral used in many industrial and commercial products until the mid 1980's. As such, many workers in the mining, milling, automotive, shipbuilding, and construction industries were likely to have been exposed during their daily job duties. Not only were workers exposed directly, but many family members were also exposed when workers would bring home asbestos particles on their clothing or bodies.

Exposed workers and family members would then not show signs of mesothelioma until many years after initial contact, anywhere from 10 - 40 years after. Once diagnosed, prognosis is usually poor. To date, despite increase in research, mesothelioma remains an incurable form of cancer. Preventing any exposure is essential, for even a single incident of inhalation can lead to an asbestos related disease.

Mesothelioma is a rare cancer of the lining of the lungs, abdomen or chest. The latency period between time of first exposure and development of symptoms is long, making diagnosis difficult. Over 3,000 Americans each year develop mesothelioma, suffering from one of the most painful cancers caused by asbestos exposure.

Dr. Jill Ohar's aim of the study is to identify the genetic foundations that cause predisposition to mesothelioma and other asbestos related diseases, hopefully discovering why certain populations are more at risk. She hopes that by teasing out genetic factors, improvements will occur with diagnosing and treating mesothelioma.

For anyone diagnosed with mesothelioma who is interested in participating in the study, please contact Dr. Ohar at 866-487-2344 or FirstHealth at 910-715-2200. Anyone who would like more information on other mesothelioma clinical trials, doctors or medical centers or who would like more information on how to get financial help to cover the cost of treatments, please call toll free and speak to a mesothelioma attorney who specializes in asbestos litigation at 1-800-440-4262.

### About the Author

Sally Clapper is a representative for the law firm of Clapper, Patti, Schweizer & Mason in Sausalito, CA. If you or someone you know is in need of a [attorney for mesothelioma](#), please contact the firm at 1-800-440-4262. As experts in the field of mesothelioma, the firm's attorneys are recognized as some of the leading plaintiffs' [asbestos lawyers](#) in the nation.

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