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Early Detection of Lung Cancer

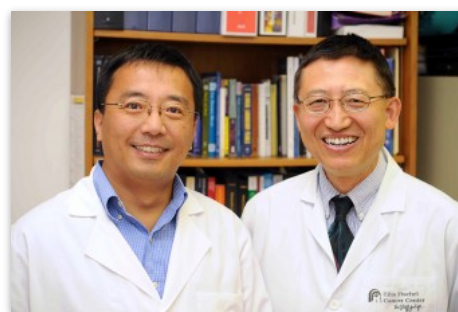
MU scientists receive Coulter funding for lung cancer treatment.

Story by Mark Barna

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Two MU biomedical scientists are working on a method for early detection of lung cancer that eventually could save tens of thousands of lives each year.

Li-Qun Gu, associate professor of biological engineering, invented the method, then collaborated with Dr. Michael Wang, associate professor of pathology and anatomical sciences, to develop it. The invention detects molecules in blood called microRNAs, or ribonucleic acids, that suggest the presence of lung cancer about one year before the disease is symptomatic.



Researchers Li-Qun Gu and Dr. Michael Wang. Photo courtesy of Ellis Fischel Cancer Center.

Early detection means cancer cells can be treated sooner, and the patient can expect a better prognosis. “This creates a much better outcome for the patient,” Wang says.

In May 2012, MU officials announced that Wang and Gu’s cancer research would receive about \$100,000 funding from the Coulter Translational Research Partnership Program.

Wang and Gu have been researching the test for two years. In 2012, their research was published in the peer-reviewed journals *Nature Nanotechnology* and the *International Journal of Clinical and Experimental Pathology*.

The Coulter funds will help the scientists fine-tune detection of the blood molecule and perform clinical testing over the next two years.

Wang and Gu’s research may also find applications in early detection of heart disease, diabetes and other forms of cancer.

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