

## **Consortium Will Focus on Esophageal Disease in Asia**

International collaborations in clinical and epidemiologic research on esophageal adenocarcinoma and its precursor, **Barrett's** esophagus, reached a new milestone in May with the formation of the **Asian Barrett's Consortium** (ABC). Although the rapid increases of these diseases have been noted in Western countries for more than three decades, their occurrence in Asia has been reported only recently and may signal an early stage of a similar epidemic. As many of the **Asian** countries have experienced recent, rapid environmental, socioeconomic, and lifestyle changes, this region may provide a unique opportunity for research into the initiating factors for **Barrett's** esophagus and esophageal adenocarcinoma.

DCEG, along with the Division of Cancer Control and Population Sciences, Division of Cancer Prevention, and the NIH Office of Rare Diseases, hosted an **Asian Barrett's** Workshop, chaired by **Wong-Ho Chow, Ph.D.**, Occupational and Environmental Epidemiology Branch, **Sanford M. Dawsey, M.D.**, Nutritional Epidemiology Branch (NEB), and Dr. Emad El-Omar from the University of Aberdeen, United Kingdom. The workshop was attended by clinical investigators from China, Hong Kong, India, Japan, Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan as well as by invited experts from Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Recognizing the emergence of **Barrett's** esophagus and esophageal adenocarcinoma in Asia and the potential for more powerful research with pooled resources and expertise, the workshop participants formed a **consortium** to continue the dialogue and to plan future collaborative research projects. Modeled after the successful **Barrett's** Esophagus and Adenocarcinoma **Consortium** (BEACON), the ABC has several working groups, focusing on endoscopy, pathology, epidemiology, and protocol development, as well as a steering committee chaired by Dr. Lawrence Khok-Yu Ho from the National University of Singapore. A proof-of-principle study of interobserver reliability of endoscopy diagnosis is being planned by Dr. Prateek Sharma from the University Of Kansas School Of Medicine with support from **Michael B. Cook, Ph.D.**, Hormonal and Reproductive Epidemiology Branch.

May also marked the third annual meeting of BEACON, a **consortium** of studies from Western countries established at a similar workshop chaired by Dr. Chow, Dr. Olof Nyrén from Karolinska University in Sweden, and Dr. Thomas Vaughan from the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center. To date, the **consortium** has received grants from NIH, Cancer Research UK, and the Swedish Cancer Board. With **Farin Kamangar, M.D., Ph.D.** (NEB), leading the effort, a database of approximately 22,000 cases and controls has been established. Several manuscripts are in preparation, and new projects were discussed and planned.

Dr. Chow credits the success of BEACON to the collegial spirit of the members, their generosity in donating time and study resources, and the exemplary leadership of the current chair, Dr. Vaughan. She also expressed confidence that the ABC will become an equally successful and productive **consortium**. The ABC chair, Dr. Ho, noted: "As we take our first stride in this endeavor, we look forward to seeing the **consortium** blaze the trail to uncovering many clues that will help us take meaningful steps toward intervening on this potentially malignant disease." —Wong-Ho Chow, Ph.D., and Farin Kamangar, M.D., Ph.D.

