April 25, 2012

Shih-Hsin (Eddy) Yang, M.D., Ph.D., assistant professor in the University of Alabama at Birmingham Department of Radiation Oncology and associate scientist in the experimental therapeutics program at the UAB Comprehensive Cancer Center has been awarded the AACR-Genentech BioOncology Career Development Award for Cancer Research at the American Association for Cancer Research annual meeting in April. The two-year, $100,000 award represents a joint effort to encourage and support junior faculty who are in the first four years of a faculty appointment to advance the field of cancer research on the human epidermal growth factor receptor family pathway and establish successful career paths in this field.

Yang's award will fund research investigating novel DNA repair independent mechanisms of breast tumor susceptibility to PARP inhibitors, a highly publicized new class of compounds that target tumor cells that are defective in repairing damage to their DNA. Using pilot funding from the UAB Breast Cancer Specialized Program of Research Excellence grant, the Yang lab unexpectedly uncovered exquisite susceptibility of certain breast cancer cells to PARP inhibitors as a single agent despite being able to repair damaged DNA.

"These inhibitors are very well tolerated, and our observations may explain the better-than-expected tumor response in recent clinical trials in heavily treated patients," Yang says. "This award from the AACR will allow us to potentially uncover other targets that may lead to future therapeutic strategies and ultimately improve outcomes and patient quality of life."

Eddy Yang, M.D., right, with Judy Garber, M.D., past president of AACR. Photo: AACR/Todd Buchanan