September 12, 2013

The UAB Division of Hematology & Oncology and Bone Marrow Transplant Program have established the only multidisciplinary myeloma clinic in Alabama.

Myeloma is a blood cancer that develops in the bone marrow, the soft, spongy center of most bones. Many blood cells are produced in the bone marrow, and myeloma affects plasma cells, a type of bone marrow cell that helps fight infection. In multiple myeloma, normal plasma cells transform into malignant myeloma cells. The affected marrow space weakens, resulting in destruction of the bones of the spine, pelvis and ribs, as well as those of the shoulders and hips.

Treatment options in myeloma have significantly improved over the last five years with development of novel agents that target malignant myeloma cell growth. The Multiple Myeloma Clinic was developed by a group of UAB physicians who have a special interest in clinical trial development and the identification of therapeutic and preventive targets, as well as understanding the pathogenesis of the disease and environmental and genetic events that lead to malignant transformation of the plasma cell.

“Caring for the myeloma patient involves specialized management of the multiple organ systems affected by the disease,” said Racquel Innis-Shelton, M.D., medical director of the UAB

Multiple Myeloma Clinic and assistant professor in the UAB Division of Hematology and Oncology.

“At our clinic, all newly diagnosed and established patients will have access to a team of board-certified physicians with expertise in the fields of hematology/oncology, bone marrow transplantation, nephrology, interventional radiology, radiation/oncology and orthopedics,” said Innis-Shelton. “Our consultations will include a streamlined, comprehensive assessment with therapeutic recommendations to myeloma patients from the time of initial diagnosis throughout their treatment course. We’ll be able to identify patients with high-risk features early on and determine eligibility for clinical trials and disease-specific interventions.”

Supported by the resources within the UAB Comprehensive Cancer Center, UAB clinicians will collaborate with local physicians, offering patients updated treatment recommendations and access to cutting-edge research.

“It’s exciting that patients will now have access to this first-of-its-kind multidisciplinary facility in Alabama with a comprehensive plan of care including systemic therapy, pain control and supportive care measures for optimal management of this disease.”

To make an appointment, patients can request a referral from their doctor or call Myeloma Clinical Care Nurse Coordinator Edna Foshee through the UAB operator at 205-934-3411.