

# Overview of the Georgia Cancer Study

## Background

The Georgia Cancer Coalition (GCC) and Emory University have joined together to design and implement a prospective community-based cohort study of cancer in Georgia. Georgia represents a rare mix of diverse communities in terms of race, geography and socioeconomic status. For this reason, and because cancer is a major public health problem in Georgia, a prospective cohort study based on representative communities throughout the state offers a unique opportunity to make progress in both understanding the causes and preventing the development of cancer in different racial and socio-demographic groups.

## Description of the Program and Its Benefits

The general strategy of the cohort study involves recruitment and prospective follow-up of approximately 140,000 cancer-free individuals of various ages. Participants will be residents of communities in Georgia that are geographically and demographically representative of the diverse Georgia population. Upon recruitment, each participant will be interviewed to obtain signed informed consent and to collect information on family history, medical conditions, dietary and lifestyle factors, and occupational history. The research team, being led by Dr. Jack Mandel of the Rollins School of Public Health at Emory University, will collect baseline blood samples for DNA, plasma, serum, and blood cells. All cohort participants will be contacted annually either by regular mail, by email, by phone, or through personal interview to determine their vital status, to obtain information on self-reported health-related events and to provide them with new information on cancer prevention. Through close collaboration with the local and regional medical centers and with the signed consent of the participants, the research team will obtain medical records on all cases of incident cancers and potentially, other chronic conditions. As new cases are identified, the team will systematically obtain and store tumor tissue as well as normal biopsy tissue specimens.

The following tasks have been completed by the research team of the Georgia Cancer Study (GCS), primarily funded by the State:

1. Development of a detailed pilot-tested protocol outlining the early aspects of the GCS implementation from subject recruitment through baseline data and specimen collection, processing, and preliminary analysis.
2. Selection of participating regions/cities in Georgia – 4 to 6 sites are to be chosen for this study. The first site includes the geographic area of southwest Georgia; the second site is in Roberta and Crawford County, Georgia; the third site will be in the metro Atlanta area; and, the fourth site will be in southeast Georgia. More sites may be added depending on participation rates.
3. Development of recruitment strategies.
4. Creation of study infrastructure, including space, personnel, and equipment needs.
5. Development and testing of the study forms and procedures completed.
6. Promotion of the study across Georgia.
7. Preparation of study protocol.