

## DERMATOLOGY PROGRAM EXEMPLIFIES SPIRIT OF DISCOVERY

When University of Kansas dermatologist Daniel Aires, MD, JD, learned to identify cutaneous t-cell lymphoma (CTCL) in medical school, he never expected this area would become a major career focus. All that changed when he diagnosed his father's CTCL in 2002.

He was completing a fellowship at Harvard at the time, and during a visit home to Kansas City, his mother asked him to look at his father's persistent hip rash. "I told him it looked like CTCL, and he underwent a biopsy that confirmed the diagnosis," he said. His father was successfully treated at the University of Kansas Medical Center (KUMC). "Shortly after that," Aires says, "I began working on a CTCL study with Tom Kupper, Chairman of Dermatology at Brigham and Women's Hospital and a leader in the field of CTCL."

Aires is now director of the Dermatology Division at KUMC, and he says treating cancer patients is one of the most rewarding aspects of his job. "Being able to help people is the best feeling in the world," he says. "And KUMC is a great place to do this, because there is tremendous growth in every dimension of cancer care.

Also, teamwork between different experts across KUMC allows for very sophisticated treatment. For instance, both our CTCL and our melanoma patients benefit from the close interplay between the KUMC Dermatology, Pathology, and Oncology groups."

The University and the Department of Medicine are also helping to bring new KUMC treatments from the bench to the bedside by promoting entrepreneurial ventures. For instance, Aires is involved in a KUMC start-up company called HylaPharm, which is developing a new, patented method for delivering chemotherapy drugs directly to cancer cells in tumors and nearby lymph nodes.

An injection attaches chemotherapy drugs to nano-sized particles of hyaluronan, a natural polymer found in the body. This will more precisely direct drugs to the targeted area, while simultaneously limiting exposure in healthy areas such as kidneys, nerves and auditory organs.

HylaPharm is led by Aires and University of Kansas pharmaceutical chemist Laird Forrest, PhD. Forrest has an affiliate academic appointment in the Division of Dermatology, as well as his

home department of Pharmaceutical Chemistry. HylaPharm is located in the KU Bioscience and Technology Business Center Expansion Facility, and in January was awarded a \$200,000 development grant by the Kansas Bioscience Authority for upcoming animal trials.

The work in the Division of Dermatology demonstrates how KUMC is not only a great place to come for sophisticated treatments today, but is also poised to create tomorrow's breakthroughs.



Daniel Aires, MD, JD