

Editorial: N.M. Universities Foster Innovative Research

By Albuquerque Journal Editorial Board on Fri, Oct 28, 2011

Cutting-edge research is putting New Mexico on the innovation map.

University of New Mexico Cancer Center researchers are exploring the use of viruses to fight cancer. “We’re essentially exploiting something that already exists in nature and engineering it for a different application,” says David Peabody, a UNM professor of molecular biology and an author of an article about the work.

Peabody and others created virus-like particles that seek out cells that cause liver cancer and deliver a drug cocktail directly into them. The hope is to avoid dangerous and painful side effects and the death of healthy tissue that results when chemotherapy drugs are injected directly into the bloodstream.

The study was funded primarily by the National Institutes of Health. Researchers plan to begin animal studies next year.

Earlier this year, UNM researchers announced work on another type of nanoparticle for targeted drug delivery called “protocells,” which are composed of synthetic materials surrounded by a cell-like membrane. Like the virus-like particles, they can be loaded with drugs to be delivered to cancer cells.

And though it isn’t groundbreaking medical research, some smart engineering presented at New Mexico State University could also save lives — sooner rather than later.

In the wake of the nationwide listeria outbreak from Colorado cantaloupe, a device entered in the 2011 International Environmental Design Contest at NMSU is emerging as a possible food safety solution.

Four University of Idaho students designed a machine that washes listeria and other deadly bacteria off cantaloupe. The bad bacteria, if any, can then be detected in the wash water before shipping.

New Mexico’s institutions should be commended for fostering innovative work that shows promise for making the world a healthier and safer place.

This editorial first appeared in the Albuquerque Journal. It was written by members of the editorial board and is unsigned as it represents the opinion of the newspaper rather than the writers.
