

NEW MEXICO

BUSINESS WEEKLY

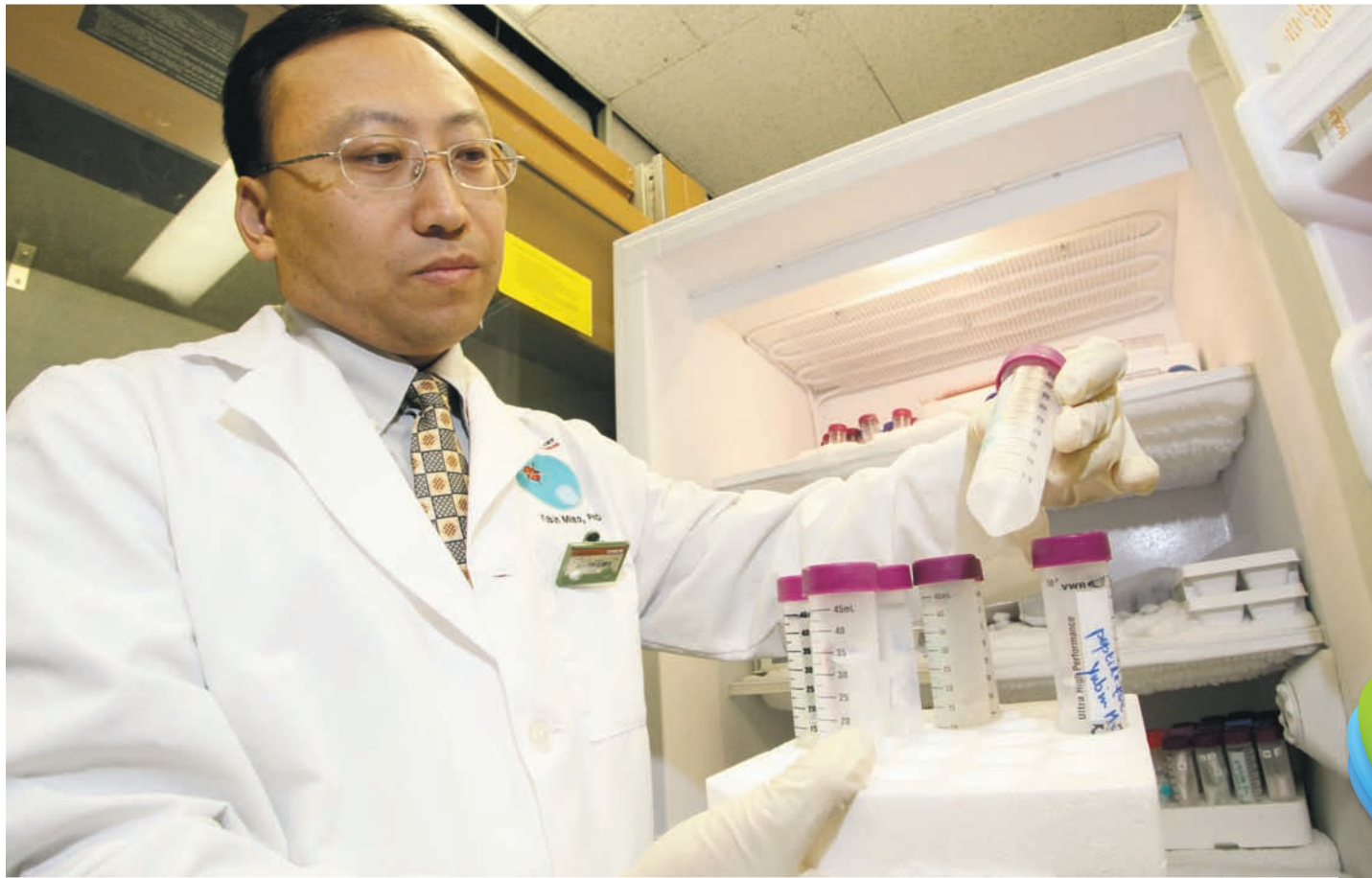
Power Book Meet the families who have shaped NM's business community **See insert**

HOPE UNM cancer researchers think they've found a better way to diagnose and treat lethal melanoma cells **3**

RECOLLECTIONS Personal memories of 9/11 **4**



UNM scientists attack lethal skin cancer with new vigor



RANDY SINER | NMBW

UNM Cancer Center researcher and Assistant Professor of Pharmaceutical Sciences Dr. Yubin Miao, holds a tube containing unique melanoma-targeting compounds that eventually could image and treat metastasized skin cancers.

BY DENNIS DOMRZALSKI | NMBW STAFF

Although melanoma is the least common skin cancer, it is the deadliest. Once it metastasizes, or spreads throughout the body, it is virtually a death warrant.

In New Mexico, 300 to 400 new melanoma cases are reported each year, according to the New Mexico Tumor Registry, and about 50 die of the disease annually.

Researchers at the University of New Mexico Cancer Center, however, think they have found a way to better diagnose and treat the disease.

The research involves creating proteins that bind to melanoma cells. When those

proteins are loaded with radioactive tracers and attach themselves to melanoma cells, they can give doctors a view of where the cancer is in the body, said Cancer Center researcher Yubin Miao, who has filed for a patent for the cancer-seeking protein he has developed.

In theory, those proteins can be loaded with cancer-fighting drugs and put into the body, where they will seek out and destroy melanoma cells.

Miao, an assistant professor of pharmaceuticals at the UNM College of Pharmacy, and other Cancer Center researchers have successfully tested the new diagnostic model in animals. They hope to test it in human

clinical trials in three years, Miao said.

"Melanoma is deadly and not curable. Once it has metastasized, there is no way to treat it, and the average survival time is less than a year," Miao said. "Our ultimate goal is to change the diagnostic model into a therapeutic model and specifically deliver radiation [treatment] to the cancer cells while sparing the normal cells."

Miao's melanoma-specific protein diagnostic model is different from what is available. Current diagnostic methods use glucose-filled radioactive tracers that are injected into the bloodstream. They attach themselves to cells that have high glucose

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SCENE HEARD

► Two of New Mexico's biggest annual visitor attractions will take place over the next five weeks in Albuquerque. The first is the **New Mexico State Fair**, which runs from Sept. 9 through Sept. 25 on the Expo New Mexico grounds bounded by Central, Louisiana, San Pedro and Lomas boulevards in the Northeast Heights. The fair will be closed Mondays and Tuesdays during its two-week-plus run. Hopefully, those will be the days it rains, so visitors will be able to enjoy, um, fair weather. Last year, the fair's revenue rose 14 percent over 2009, while its attendance (due to weather and the Monday-Tuesday closures, say Fair officials) declined from 611,231 to 535,567. The 2010 revenue increase partly resulted from a 73 percent decline in unpaid attendees. For more about this year's event, visit exponm.com.



► The second visitor event, the state's largest in terms of attendance (761,864 in 2010), is the Oct. 1 to 9 **Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta**. This year's fiesta, the 40th, is dedicated to the late **Sid Cutter**, founder of the fiesta. Among the highlights of this year's hot air party in the North I-25 corridor of Albuquerque is the **Sandia Resort and Casino \$100,000 Challenge**. To win the cash requires pilots to fly close enough to a pole (such as a telephone pole) so they can drop a ring over it. Each time they do, they progress. All qualifying pilots who place their ring over a pole for four consecutive days will share the prize. Since the hot air machines can't be steered, except by wind currents, such pole challenges are a lot of fun to watch. To learn more about the fiesta, which has registered 550 balloons this year, go to www.balloonfiesta.com.

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VISITORS: In New Mexico, 9/11 tripped up the travel and domestic markets, but not for very long

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among them is the market share of foreign travelers the U.S. has lost, even though millions more people from other countries have been traveling since 2001.

That's according to the U.S. Travel Association. Global long-haul travel grew 40 percent from 2000 to 2010, but overseas travel to the United States rose just 2 percent, according to USTA, which compiles data from the U.S. Department of Commerce and the Office of Travel & Tourism Industries.

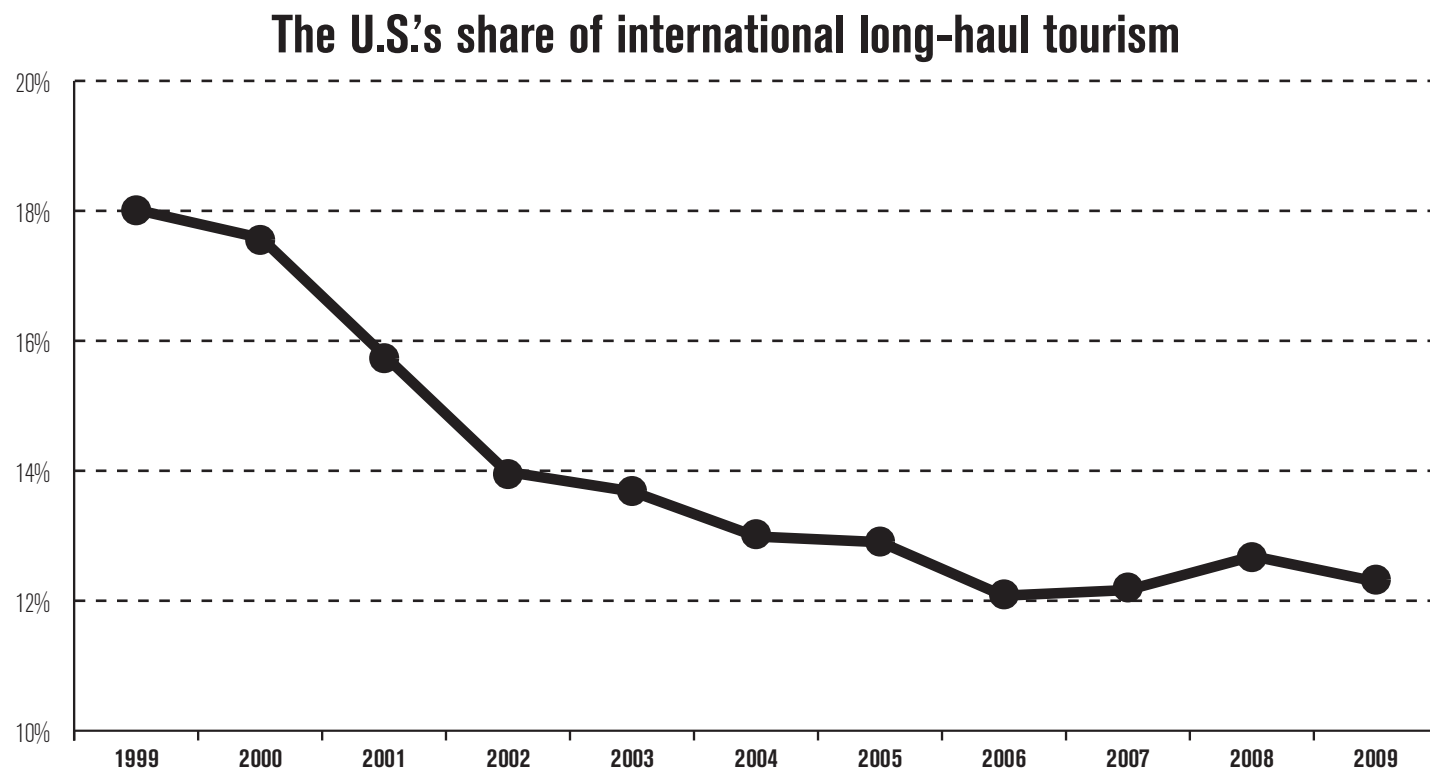
"We have referred to this as the lost decade," Dow said recently in a conference call. "Had we just kept pace from 2000 to 2010, we would have had another 78 million visitors, another \$60 billion in the economy and 467,000 more Americans working."

Among the issues are the lengthy time it takes to obtain a visa, the fear of going through customs and the fact that, unlike many other countries, there was no budget or effort to promote the U.S. abroad to potential visitors.

USTA and other industry groups lobbied for the passage of the Travel Promotion Act, signed into law in 2010. It created the Corporation for Travel Promotion, which will start a marketing campaign later this year.

Since 9/11, all visitors must get a visa unless their country is part of the visa waiver program. Ten years ago, 27 countries were. In 2009, the U.S. added nine more countries. But delays can be extreme, said Geoff Freeman, executive vice president of USTA. The group did not object to extra security requirements, such as in-person interviews, but rather the lack of additional resources.

"There were only four consulates in Brazil before 9/11, and there were only four after," Freeman said. "It's a greater land mass than the U.S. If you lived in New Mexico, imagine you had to go to Seattle or Dallas



Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Office of Travel & Tourism Industries and Tourism Economics

or Miami for a visa interview. You probably wouldn't go. You'd go somewhere else."

And travelers have been going elsewhere for business and leisure purposes, USTA said. Emerging markets such as Brazil, China and India are predicted to gain significant growth in outbound tourism, said Julie Heizer, deputy director of industry relations with the Office of Travel and Tourism in the U.S. Department of Commerce. She spoke last April at the Governor's Conference on Tourism in Las Cruces.

"At the same time, this will cause us angst, because just as their travelers are increasing, they are also working hard to encourage our travelers to go to their countries," she said.

And the changed security environment

has impacted domestic travel, Dow said.

USTA conducted a study two years ago in which it interviewed frequent travelers to gauge whether they had avoided taking trips due to the hassles of getting from one place to another. It estimates that in one year, 41 million trips did not take place because of such frustrations. However, respondents said if there was a predictable process that would ensure security as well as efficiency, they would travel more, Dow said.

In Albuquerque and in New Mexico, 9/11 tripped the leisure and domestic markets, but not for long, according to numbers from the state's visitor information centers and lodgers' tax numbers. Lodgers' tax receipts in Albuquerque dipped by about 2

percent to \$8.3 million in fiscal year 2002, which started July 1, 2001.

As psychologically devastating as the 9/11 attacks were, the lingering recession has had a more lasting and severe impact on the industry, said Dale Lockett, CEO of the Albuquerque Convention & Visitors Bureau. However, he is hopeful about indicators of an improved travel market.

Business travel increased nationwide by 4 percent in 2010, according to USTA, and it's expected to grow from 1.2 to 1.7 percent annually through 2014. And leisure travel volume has increased by 17 percent since 2000. USTA expects it to grow by about 2 percent annually through 2014.

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CANCER: NM Anglos' skin cancer rates are 29.15 per 100,000, Hispanics 4.2

FROM PAGE 3

uptakes.

While many cancer cells use a lot of glucose, "not all [cancer cells] use glucose as a direct energy source," Miao said. "Moreover, the existing approach does not reliably detect very small metastases." Miao's radio-labeled proteins, or peptides, have a "high affinity" for melanoma cells, and hold the promise to accurately image even early metastases, he added.

While New Mexico has one of the lowest overall melanoma rates in the U.S., those figures can be deceiving, said Chuck Wiggins, director of the New Mexico Tumor Registry. New Mexico had 14.4 melanoma cases per 100,000 residents in 2007, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control. That put the state in 43rd place, behind Vermont, New Hampshire, Oregon and Washington state.

Hispanics and Native Americans have much lower skin cancer rates than Anglos, Wiggins explained.

Skin cancer rates by state

Melanomas of the skin per 100,000 population, 2007

1. Utah	28.1
2. Vermont	27.7
3. New Hampshire	24.8
4. Oregon	24.4
5. Kentucky	23.9
43. New Mexico	14.4
44. Arizona	14.4
45. Arkansas	14.2
46. Texas	13.9
47. South Dakota	13.8
48. Louisiana	12.9
49. District of Columbia	9.3
50. Alaska	8.6
National average	18.7

Source: U.S. Centers for Disease Control

In New Mexico, Anglos have a melanoma rate of 29.15 per 100,000 people. Hispanics have a 4.2 rate, while Native Americans have a 1.9 rate, Wiggins said. It is generally believed that the lighter one's skin, the more susceptible one is to skin cancer, he added.

Although researchers don't fully understand how and why melanoma develops, exposure to sun is a major factor, said Marianne Berwick, co-leader of the Cancer Population Sciences Program at the UNM Cancer Center.

"Especially the 'blasts of sunshine' that people who work indoors receive on the weekend or on vacation. This is a major factor," Berwick said. "Sun exposure will help you get melanoma, that's for sure. But there are genetic, immune function and other factors at play that determine how susceptible you are and how aggressive your melanoma is. This is a complex disease."

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Lowering your risk of melanoma

One of the best ways to reduce your risk of contracting melanoma is to be 'sun smart,' said Marianne Berwick of the University of New Mexico Cancer Center.

Never tan indoors. A recent study by UNM Cancer Center researchers found that young adults who use tanning beds have an almost threefold risk of getting melanoma.

Avoid the sun between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.

Slather on the sunscreen [with an SPF of 15 or higher] and use much more than you think you will need, Berwick said, advising sun-avoiders to wear long, loose clothing, wide-brimmed hats and UV-blocking sunglasses. — D.D.