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## UNH RESEARCH HELPS FIGHT OVARIAN CANCER AND LYME DISEASE

### Graduate research projects that focus on Lyme disease, HRT therapy & more, presented June 22

**WEST HAVEN, CT** — Several graduate research projects in the Cellular and Molecular Biology program will be the focus of a morning-long presentation on the UNH campus, Wednesday, June 22, 2005, from 9-noon in Bartels Hall, Meeting Room A&B. The projects were undertaken in the graduate program of the Cellular and Molecular Biology program, part of the College of Arts & Sciences.

“At UNH, students undertake important, applied research,” says Daniel Nelson, Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences. “Our Cellular & Molecular Biology graduate program is a marvelous example of cutting-edge research with biomedical relevance. Ovarian cancer, hormonal replacement therapy and Lyme disease are issues that concern women’s health and the well-being of all Connecticut citizens. Our students are out in front, doing analyses on these important topics that will inform physicians, pharmaceutical firms and policy-makers. We’re proud of our *real-life* emphasis and the research engagement of our students.”

The projects being presented include:

**New Concerns for Lyme Disease: Co-infections Found in Ticks:** is based on the recent animal and human studies that suggest that Lyme disease may be more severe and resistant to therapy in patients who are co-infected with several Lyme bacteria. In this project, ticks collected in Connecticut were tested to identify co-infections that can be transmitted to humans. The research can lead to a better, more reliable diagnostic test for Lyme disease. Presenters: Michelle Hessberger M. Montagna and J. Bober.

**Soy Products for Ovarian Cancer?**, studies the potential therapeutic effect of certain isoflavones derived from soy products on ovarian cancer cells. Ovarian cancer is the

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most common cause of cancer death from gynecologic tumors in the US, and chemotherapeutic agents for this type of cancer have serious side effects. There is an urgent need to locate a better tolerated therapeutic agent. Presenters: Priya Desai, S. Najafzadeh and Lin Su-Jiun.

**Novel Hormonal Therapy for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century** investigates the safety of the hormonal agent Tibolone on ovarian cells. Tibolone has been used for hormonal replacement therapy in Europe for almost 20 years, but is still under investigation in the US. Recent warnings on HRT have raised questions about its safety, because clinical trials have shown increased risk for breast and ovarian cancer as well as heart disease and stroke among women who used HRT. This project studies whether Tibolone can affect the risk of ovarian cancer and be safely used for HRT. Presenters: Mary L. Porfido, S. Khan and D. Sivaraman.

**Natural and synthetic progesterone in HRT: Are they the same?** This project examines the differences between the potential effect of the natural and synthetic progesterone in the uterus. In most HRT, a synthetic progesterone is added to estrogen to prevent uterine cancer, one of the unwanted side effects of the therapy. Recent controversy about HRT prompted further investigation of the effect of different hormones used in these therapies, and it was suggested that the failure of the HRT trials might be due to doctors prescribing synthetic progesterone instead of natural. Is there a difference? Presenters: Katherine Ivers, C. Sullivan, M. Reddy, M. Gang.

For more information on these projects or the presentation, please call Katherine Hinds, Director of Communications, 203.932.7246.

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