

## **SIU Offers Free Head and Neck Cancer Program, Screenings**

A program on head and neck cancer and a free screening are being presented at a kick-off event for National Oral Head and Neck Cancer Awareness Week. The program is 5 p.m. Monday, April 11, at Simmons Cancer Institute (SCI) at Southern Illinois University School of Medicine, 315 W. Carpenter Street, Springfield.

Dr. K. Thomas Robbins, SCI director and professor of otolaryngology head and neck surgery, says the educational event combined with an opportunity for a free head and neck cancer screening is to raise awareness about these cancers during national awareness efforts. Robbins will discuss the early stages and treatment as well as conduct a screening of a patient for the audience. A head and neck cancer survivor also will speak. Free screenings will follow. Light refreshments will be served.

Free screenings also will be held 3 - 6 p.m. Monday, May 2, and 9 a.m. - noon Saturday, May 7, at SIU Head and Neck Surgery Clinic at SCI, 315 W. Carpenter Street, Springfield. Dr. James Malone, associate professor of otolaryngology head and neck surgery and member of the Simmons Cancer Institute, will join Robbins in conducting the screenings.

The exam is simple and painless. It includes checking the patient's face, neck, lips and mouth. The insides of the lips and cheeks are checked for possible signs of cancer, such as red and/or white patches. The tongue is checked for swelling or other abnormalities as is the throat. The area under the jaw and the side of the neck is inspected for suspicious lumps. The exam takes very little time and may catch a very treatable cancer in its earliest stages.

Call Annette at 217-545-7133 weekdays to register for the free educational event on April 11. Call Pam at 217-545-6150 weekdays to register for the free screening events in May. Parking for Simmons Cancer Institute is available next to the building.

Warning signs of head and neck cancer include a lump in the neck, persistent hoarseness, sore throat or pain, ear pain or difficulty swallowing, with any of these lasting longer than three weeks. Individuals who smoke or chew tobacco, consume alcohol regularly or have a family history of head and neck cancer may also be at risk.

“Any type of tobacco use increases the risk for head and neck cancers – it is the most important risk factor,” Robbins explains. “This includes chewing tobacco, smoking cigarettes, cigars or a pipe.” Other factors include consuming alcohol on a regular basis and a family history of head and neck cancer.