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News Release

NWTC leading the way in virus research in Wisconsin

Northeast Wisconsin Technical College is the first two-college in Wisconsin to conduct HIV research

(June 16, 2017) GREEN BAY – Research students at Northeast Wisconsin Technical College (NWTC) hope their work will make a difference in the fight against HIV (*human immunodeficiency virus*).

This is first time ever in Wisconsin, students from a technical college are conducting scientific research.

Four NWTC research students are spending the summer in the most high-tech lab in northeast Wisconsin, looking at how retroviruses, such as MuLV (Murine Leukemia Virus) and HIV, activate endogenous retroviruses (viruses already in the DNA) and cause rare diseases.

The group is working under the direction of NWTC instructor Dr. Angelo Kolokithas. Dr. Kolokithas has done extensive retrovirus research at the National Institute of Health.

“This is a great opportunity for our students. Performing research at this level is a once in a lifetime opportunity,” said Dr. Angelo Kolokithas.

HIV is a retrovirus that is spread through certain body fluids that attacks the body’s immune system. Over time, HIV can destroy so many of immune cells leaving the body defenseless to fight off infections and causes diseases like AIDS. Interestingly, infections with retroviruses activate internal retrovirus that may lead to different disease outcomes

“Once we know how HIV and MuLV gets into the cells and activates internal viruses, we can look at ways to stop the virus in its tracks. This work may one day help find better treatment options,” said Dr. Kolokithas.

Right now, research students are working with MuLV. Dr. Kolokithas hopes to transition the group to working with human HIV over the next few months.

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Note to the media: Interviews with Dr. Kolokithas and two students will be available starting Friday, June 16, 2017 from 9:00 a.m. to 2 p.m. Due to the biohazard, video and photos must be taken through a glass window. Cameras will not be allowed in the lab.
