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PSL medical research group promotes breakthroughs

■ VGTI scientists tackling cancer, infectious disease therapies

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PORT ST. LUCIE — When it comes to scientific breakthroughs, people often don't think about them happening in their own backyard.

The Vaccine and Gene Therapy Institute Florida wanted to dispel that notion Tuesday in a talk updating residents on emerging cancer

treatments.

"This is really part of the effort to educate the local population of our new institute, the mission of the institute, which is to take our research and develop it into new therapies for cancer and infectious disease and more broadly to, I guess, extol the work that we're doing not just locally but on the international scene as well," VGTI Principal Investigator Dr. John Hiscott said.

Hiscott and independent oncologist Dr. Guillermo Abesada-Terk spoke to about 50 people at VGTI's elaborate \$47 million, 100,000-square foot facility in Port St. Lucie's Tradition Center for Innovation. The building opened a year ago Wednesday.

Abesada-Terk, who also works part time as the Medical Research Director for



FILE PHOTO

Andrew Smith works on a gene array experiment for the Vaccine and Gene Therapy Institute Florida.

See VGTI, 11A

VGTI from 1A

the Martin Health System Center for Clinical Research, said it's key for people to know the progress scientists have achieved.

"It's steady, and sometimes people are not aware of these amazing breakthroughs that are happening," Abesada-Terk said. "I think it's important that they have faith that the scientific community is working toward the betterment of humanity."

He said important research happens at VGTI. "The real work of taking care of cancer patients begins with the people inside."

Hiscott and Abesada-Terk separately discussed how new techniques and understandings are helping scientists find solutions more efficiently. For example, using computers to do drug design helps researchers speed through the trial and error process.

"Breakthroughs are happening all the time," Hiscott said.