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**Meredith P Casey\***, mcasey@math.gatech.edu. *Branched covers and contact structures*. Preliminary report.

We will discuss what is known about the construction of contact structures via branched covers, emphasizing the search for universal transversal knots. Recall that a topological knot is called universal if all 3-manifold can be obtained as a cover of the 3-sphere branched over that knot. Analogously one can ask if there is a transversal knot in the standard contact structure on  $S^3$  from which all contact 3-manifold can be obtained as a branched cover over this transverse knot. It is not known if such a transverse knot exists. (Received January 17, 2011)