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Cancer Prevention and Research Institute of Texas awards \$36.7 million to UT Southwestern investigators for cancer studies

DALLAS – March 28, 2011 – The Cancer Prevention and Research Institute of Texas (CPRIT) has awarded more than \$36.7 million in new grants to investigators at UT Southwestern Medical Center to support cancer-related projects and to recruit pre-eminent cancer investigators. CPRIT was established in 2007 after Texas voters approved a constitutional amendment that authorized the state to fund cancer research and prevention programs.

These awards, made after a rigorous peer-review process, resulted in UT Southwestern receiving the most funding of any individual Texas institution in CPRIT's latest round of grants. Awards to UT Southwestern researchers were part of \$116 million allocated for 22 projects at 16 Texas-based academic institutions and private firms. This round of grants is part of \$216 million expected to be awarded by the institute this year.

Funding for UT Southwestern announced March 24 included more than \$30 million to support projects involving 20 pre-eminent researchers. Among these are new imaging technology and techniques for identifying and tracking cancers; repairing damaged DNA strands; developing new drugs and drug-delivery systems; and establishing a Texas Cancer Cell Repository for storing cancer cells and tumors for future study. The awards also include \$6 million to recruit pre-eminent researchers.

"CPRIT funds are providing a powerful engine to attract the best and brightest minds to UT Southwestern and to Texas," said Dr. Daniel K. Podolsky, president of UT Southwestern. "These awards will accelerate dramatically the impact of UT Southwestern research on cancer care and illustrate the importance of teams of physicians and investigators working together to defeat cancer."

Dr. James Willson, director of the Harold C. Simmons Comprehensive Cancer Center at UT Southwestern, said, "The grant awards range from investigating the molecular mechanisms of cancer to developing novel therapies and ways to detect cancers. The funded projects highlight the forefront of translating basic science and laboratory findings into practical treatments and technologies."

The breakdown of grants involving investigators at UT Southwestern is:

- \$10,996,946 to Drs. Steven McKnight, Bruce Posner, Noelle Williams, John Minna, Michael

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White and Joseph Ready to develop anti-cancer drugs by identifying targets and lead compounds for the treatment of non small cell lung cancer (NSCLC) by joining chemical, biological, genetic and informatics disciplines.

- \$4,569,454 to Drs. Elizabeth Ward Ober, Ralph Mason, and Philip Thorpe to develop a new class of therapeutics to treat cancers involving the brain and nervous systems, breast, liver, interhepatic bile duct, lung, bronchs and prostate.
- \$4,200,000 to Dr. Xiankai Sun to develop a new type of cyclotron to develop novel radiotracers that probe specific biological or metabolic pathways of cancer allowing better positron emission tomography (PET) imaging.
- \$3,291,783 to Drs. David Chen and Hongtao Yu to identify molecular events that underlie the choice between pathways for repairing DNA, one of the major unresolved questions in understanding how to carry out its repair.
- \$3,540,725 to Drs. Hak Choy, Chul Ahn, Robert Timmerman and Timothy Solberg to improve and create new technologies for radiation therapies for lung cancer while reducing toxicity. It includes clinical trials to evaluate current technologies, new technologies for tracking tumors and the effectiveness of treatments, and improving imaging techniques.
- \$3,390,840 to Drs. Jay Schneider, Eric Olson and Joseph Hill to discover how chemotherapy injures the heart, including regulatory molecules that lead to damage in heart muscle cells; how chemotherapy damages stem cells and blood vessel cells in the heart; and developing new therapies to prevent, alleviate or reverse cardiac damage.
- \$750,514 to Dr. Adi Gazdar to establish the Texas Cancer Cell Repository, to develop and house cancer cell lines grown in test tubes and human tumors grown in mice with a focus on ovarian and lung cancers.
- \$6,000,000 for recruitment of three new faculty members.

Visit <http://www.utsouthwestern.org/cancercenter> to learn more about clinical services at UT Southwestern for cancers.

CPRIT awardees

Dr. Chul Ahn, professor of clinic sciences.

Dr. David Chen, professor of radiation oncology.

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Dr. Hak Choy, chairman of radiation oncology.

Dr. Adi Gazdar, professor of pathology and in the Nancy B. and Jake L. Hamon Center for Therapeutic Oncology Research.

Dr. Joseph Hill, chief of cardiology.

Dr. Ralph Mason, professor of radiology and director of the UT Southwestern Cancer Imaging Center.

Dr. Steven McKnight, chairman of biochemistry.

Dr. John Minna, director of the W.A. "Tex" and Deborah Moncrief Jr. Center for Cancer Genetics and the Nancy B. and Jake L. Hamon Center for Therapeutic Oncology Research.

Dr. Elizabeth Ward Ober, professor of immunology and in the Cancer Immunobiology Center.

Dr. Eric Olson, chairman of molecular biology and director of the Nancy B. and Jake L. Hamon Center for Basic Research in Cancer and the Nearburg Family Center for Basic Research in Pediatric Oncology.

Dr. Bruce Posner, associate professor of biochemistry.

Dr. Joseph Ready, associate professor of biochemistry.

Dr. Jay Schneider, assistant professor of internal medicine.

Dr. Timothy Solberg, professor of radiation oncology.

Dr. Xiankai Sun, assistant professor of radiology in the Advanced Imaging Research Center.

Dr. Philip Thorpe, professor of pharmacology in the Harold C. Simmons Comprehensive Cancer Center.

Dr. Robert Timmerman, vice chairman of radiation oncology.

Dr. Michael White, professor of cell biology.

Dr. Noelle Williams, associate professor of biochemistry.

Dr. Hongtao Yu, professor of pharmacology.

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