IN THE PAST YEAR, the UF Health Cancer Center has made numerous advancements in its leadership, programs and partnerships while expanding faculty recruitment, collaborative research, and basic and clinical research space — thereby gaining significant momentum toward the goal of achieving National Cancer Institute designation, a prestigious award that will take our innovative research and patient care to the next level.

Our greater mission, however, is unchanged: to develop the tools that help prevent, detect and ultimately treat cancer. In this pursuit, we leverage all the resources of the University of Florida Health campus — its faculty, students, health professionals and administrators — dedicated to understanding key processes that cause cancer and developing new modalities of cancer therapy and prevention.

In April 2016, our center received a highly encouraging report wherein leaders of NCI-designated cancer centers across the U.S. offered specific suggestions for shaping our research programs. Thus, following a comprehensive analysis, our center launched three new research programs and appointed five program leaders. Over the summer, the faculty in these programs began regular meetings to encourage collaboration and coordination of research in these areas.

At the same time, recruitment occurred at a brisk pace and 10,000 square feet of new space was recently completed on the ground floor of the Basic Science building to accommodate these and future recruits. Eight new laboratories launched in the past year, representing collaborative recruitments between the UFHCC and the departments of medicine, chemistry, oral biology, medicinal chemistry, biochemistry and molecular biology, pharmacology and therapeutics, and anatomy and cell biology. In addition, several new population sciences researchers were recruited in the UF College of Public Health and Health Professions and the UF College of Journalism and Communications.

In the past year, the UF Health Cancer Center leadership team also experienced changes in an effort to align our center with the leadership structure required for NCI designation. Associate directors were appointed in the areas of clinical investigation, medical affairs, basic sciences, population sciences, core technologies, and cancer education and research career enhancement. These roles will prove essential in guiding and developing key areas in coming years. Dr. John Wingard was named deputy director and Dr. Robert Houlihan came on board as our new associate director for administration.

In 2016, National Cancer Institute funding for the center was close to $10 million and all cancer-related funding totaled around $31 million. There were several notable awards, including an investment from the Department of Defense Advanced Regenerative Manufacturing Institute to support biofabrication research efforts in the Southeast, led by engineering professor W. Greg Sawyer, Ph.D. Neuro-oncologist David Tran, M.D., Ph.D., was also awarded a grant from the Florida Department of Health’s Bankhead-Coley Cancer Research Program to develop new strategies to target disseminated tumor cells in triple-negative breast cancer, and neurosurgery researcher Dr. Duane Mitchell received a Hyundai Hope on Wheels award to further his research on immunotherapies for brain cancer. Additionally, Diana Wilkie, Ph.D., R.N., an internationally recognized cancer pain researcher, received a five-year grant from the NCI and the National Institute of Nursing Research that will fund a study focusing on dignity therapy and palliative care taking place at six sites across the country. Radiation oncologist Dietmar Siemann, Ph.D., received a five-year grant to study when, how and why prostate cancer sometimes spreads and Paul Okunieff, M.D.,
chair of the UF department of radiation oncology, was awarded a three-year contract with the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases through the radiation nuclear countermeasures program; his work holds promise for healing burns, diabetic ulcers and wounds.

The UF Health Cancer Center Clinical Trials Office also underwent reorganization in 2016 in cooperation with the Clinical and Translational Science Institute, leading to an increased number of clinical trials. We have continued to work with our partners at the UF Health Proton Therapy Institute, installing additional clinical research staff at that center to facilitate the development of prospective clinical trials. Additionally, a collaborative agreement was signed with Orlando Health to enable investigator-initiated clinical trials to be opened there under the University of Florida umbrella. Lastly, as encouraged by the state of Florida cancer preeminence effort, the center has a number of robust collaborative projects with our colleagues at the University of Miami Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center and Moffitt Cancer Center.

Our center’s education and mentoring program continued to develop with an ongoing minority training program under Folakemi Odedina, Ph.D., funded by a P20 grant and a soon-to-be-awarded R25 grant. Moreover, the cancer biology curriculum for the interdisciplinary graduate program in biomedical sciences also continues to develop under the leadership of Dr. Siemann and Dr. Maria Zajac-Kaye. At UFHCC Research Day 2016, five highly competitive $10,000 prizes were awarded to Ph.D. students who had passed their qualifying exams to help fund their research.

Given the achievements of the past year, the University of Florida Health Cancer Center is well on its way to reaching the benchmarks needed to achieve NCI designation.
The University of Florida Health Cancer Center stands alone in the state of Florida in its unique ability to blend comprehensive patient care and innovative research in a collaborative, multidisciplinary environment. It boasts a membership of more than 140 researchers and clinicians from across the University of Florida and UF Health, the Southeast’s most comprehensive academic health center. The UFHCC and its members are dedicated to providing leading-edge cancer care and conducting original research for the prevention, early diagnosis and treatment of cancer.
HIGHLIGHTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

The UF Health Cancer Center is consistently finding new and better treatments through research to provide exceptional patient outcomes. Some highlights from the center include:

- Development of new types of brain immunotherapy
- North Florida’s most successful bone marrow transplant program
- Several firsts in human trials, including cooperative group, industry-sponsored and national studies
- Collaboration with the Herbert Wertheim College of Engineering to develop new methods of using 3-D printed cells of soft matter
- Individualized leukemia treatments based on patients’ genes and gene mutations

10,665 unique patient cases in 2016
2 Florida’s rank among 50 states in the number of cancer deaths
$31.7 million total cancer grants
146 clinical and research faculty members
At the Intersection of Collaborative Care and Research

UF Colleges
- UF College of Dentistry
- UF College of Medicine
- UF College of Nursing
- UF College of Pharmacy
- UF College of Public Health and Health Professions
- UF College of Veterinary Medicine
- UF Herbert Wertheim College of Engineering
- UF College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
- UF College of Journalism and Communications

Research
- UFHCC Clinical Trials Office
- UFHCC Cancer Population Sciences (CPS)
- UFHCC Mechanisms of Oncogenesis (MOO)
- UFHCC Cancer Therapeutics & Host Response (CTHR)
- UF Interdisciplinary Center for Biotechnology Research
- Orlando Health UF Health Cancer Center
- Florida Academic Cancer Center Alliance

Patient Care
- UF Health Davis Cancer Pavilion
- UF Health Medical Plaza
- UF Health Medical Oncology/Adult Infusion Site
- UF Health Radiation Oncology Clinic
- UF Health Proton Therapy Institute
- UF Health Shands Hospital
- UF Health Shands Cancer Hospital
- UF Health Shands Children's Hospital
- UF Health Springhill
- UF Health Jacksonville

UF Centers & Institutes
- Evelyn F. & William L. McKnight Brain Institute of UF
- UF Center for Inflammation and Mucosal Immunology
- UF Center for Natural Products, Drug Discovery and Development
- UF Clinical and Translational Science Institute
- UF Genetics Institute
- UF Informatics Institute
- UF Interdisciplinary Center for Biotechnology Research
- Orlando Health UF Health Cancer Center
- Florida Academic Cancer Center Alliance
- UF Powell Gene Therapy Center
- UF Preston A. Wells Jr. Center for Brain Tumor Therapy

The UF Health Cancer Center and its members
are part of the UF Health system, which encompasses six health colleges, nine research centers/institutes, two teaching hospitals, two specialty hospitals and a host of physician medical practices and outpatient services throughout north central and northeast Florida. Additionally, more than 90 percent of the center’s members also serve as faculty members in a UF college. Members may also hold affiliations with other institutes and centers across the university or serve as physicians for the UF Health Shands family of hospitals and clinical programs.
This unique intersection of innovation, education and treatment is where the UF Health Cancer Center is redefining expertise.

Accolades
Located on the University of Florida campus, the Cancer and Genetics Research Complex is the base of operations for the UF Health Cancer Center in Gainesville. The center has a membership of more than 140 researchers and clinicians who provide cancer care and conduct research for the prevention, early diagnosis and treatment of cancer. The UF Health Cancer Center delivers multidisciplinary cancer care using the most advanced drugs and treatment technologies, many of which are available only through clinical trials.

The UF Health Davis Cancer Pavilion at the UF Health Medical Plaza house several outpatient cancer services such as radiation oncology, adult hematology and oncology, adult outpatient infusion (chemotherapy) and dermatology. Health professionals caring for patients can easily...
collaborate with scientists exploring cancer at the cellular, molecular and genetics levels, as they are located across the street at the Cancer and Genetics Research Complex.

**UF Health Shands Hospital**

UF Health Shands Hospital is a private, not-for-profit hospital that specializes in tertiary care for critically ill patients. UF Health Shands Hospital is one of the most comprehensive hospitals and one of the leading referral medical centers in the Southeast. It is also home to several specialties with a cancer focus, including urology, radiology, colorectal cancer surgery, breast cancer surgery and bone marrow transplant.

**UF Health Shands Cancer Hospital**

Located across the street from UF Health Shands Hospital, this 500,000-square-foot facility houses 192 private inpatient beds for a variety of patients, including those receiving diagnostic and therapeutic oncology services. The UF Health Shands Cancer Hospital also includes a critical care center for emergency- and trauma-related services.

**UF Health Shands Children’s Hospital**

UF Health Shands Children’s Hospital is dedicated to pediatric services, including those related to pediatric cancer, and is located within UF Health Shands Hospital. The hospital’s pediatric hematology and cancer unit is one of the largest of its kind in the Southeast, offering the full spectrum of services and delivering the highest level of care for cancer and blood problems in infants, children and adolescents — including leukemia, lymphoma, brain tumors, solid tumors, nonmalignant hematology and stem cell/marrow transplant.

**UF Health Springhill**

UF Health Springhill is a four-story, 108,000-square-foot multispecialty medical facility serving northwest Gainesville. Its specialties include dermatology as well as women’s health and diagnostic imaging.

**JACKSONVILLE, FL**

**UF Health Proton Therapy Institute**

The UF Health Proton Therapy Institute, staffed by UF department of radiation oncology physicians, is the only proton facility located in the state of Florida that has achieved accreditation by the American College of Radiology. Since opening 11 years ago, approximately 6,500 patients have been treated with proton therapy at the institute. The UF Proton Therapy Institute includes clinics for the pre- and post-therapy and on-treatment evaluation of cancer patients, planning suites, an infusion and anesthesia suite, psychosocial services, a research office and faculty offices.

**ORLANDO, FL**

**Orlando Health UF Health Cancer Center**

In 2013, UF Health and Orlando Health joined programs to form the Orlando Health UF Health Cancer Center, establishing one of the state’s largest, most comprehensive cancer collaborations. This joint venture allows for better-coordinated patient care and expanded research and educational opportunities. The home of the Orlando Health UF Health Cancer Center is the state-of-the-art Charles Lewis Pavilion, a 220,000-square-foot structure completed in 2003.
One of the great benefits of receiving cancer care at an academic health center like UF Health is unique patient access to the most advanced medical research, treatments and technologies. Our clinician-scientists participate in research that has a direct impact on improved patient outcomes, and allows patients access to the very latest cancer-fighting technologies and drugs. Activities and programs are acutely focused on early-stage translational research that applies findings to clinical trials, resulting in improved patient care. Our leadership works with lab-based faculty to develop new ideas to collaborate to collaborate on innovative cancer treatments and therapies.
FINDING TOMORROW’S ANSWERS FOR TODAY’S PATIENTS.

The overarching goal of the UF Health Cancer Center is to improve cancer outcomes. We will accomplish this, in part, by promoting research in cancer mechanisms, developing and conducting interventional clinical trials addressing the most prevalent cancers that affect our patients and improving our understanding of the determinants of cancer outcomes in rural, underserved and elderly patients. We are committed to interdisciplinary basic discovery and translational research, and the pursuit of scientific endeavors that have near-term clinical applications. Three research priorities cut across the entire Cancer Center and align with our research programs:

- CANCER THERAPEUTICS & HOST RESPONSE (CTHR)
- MECHANISMS OF ONCOGENESIS (MOO)
- CANCER POPULATION SCIENCES (CPS)

84,000 square feet of research space

5 U.S. patents issued relating to cancer

162 active cancer projects

360 scientific publications

Numbers represent calendar year 2016 unless otherwise noted.
Research Programs

Cancer Population Sciences (CPS)
Program Co-Leaders:
Janice Krieger, Ph.D.
Diana Wilkie, Ph.D., R.N.

Mission:
The mission of the Cancer Population Sciences (CPS) program is to reduce the cancer-related burden within the UFHCC catchment area by conducting person-centered, family-focused, clinician-engaged and population-based research to improve cancer prevention, treatment, symptom management and palliative care — with particular emphasis on those who face unique disadvantages due to race/ethnicity, poverty, rurality, older age and poor health literacy.

Aims:
• Advance cancer communication and shared decision-making
• Advance symptom science and palliative care research
• Support the development and implementation of multilevel interventions across the cancer care continuum
• Leverage diverse methodological approaches and tools via inter- and intraprogrammatic interactions

Cancer Therapeutics and Host Response (CTHR)
Program Co-Leaders:
Duane A. Mitchell, M.D., Ph.D.
Christian Jobin, Ph.D.

Mission:
The mission of the Cancer Therapeutics and Host Response (CTHR) program is to define mechanisms regulating host responses to tumor progression and advance novel therapeutic treatments for patients with cancer.

Aims:
• Interrogate the interplay between microorganisms and host immune cells in tumor response and resistance to standard and experimental therapies
• Conduct first-in-human therapeutic clinical trials for refractory malignancies
• Advance novel therapeutics targeting host or microbiota activities through a preclinical to clinical development pathway
• Promote interactive research

Mechanisms of Oncogenesis (MOO)
Program Leader:
Robert Hromas, M.D., FACP

Mission:
The mission of the Mechanisms of Oncogenesis (MOO) program is to define the molecular pathways by which normal cells transform to neoplasia in order to identify new methods of cancer prevention and treatment.

Aims:
• Elucidate the origins of neoplastic genomic and epigenomic instability
• Define the role of regulatory RNAs in oncogenesis
• Illuminate the aberrant cell signaling pathways leading to neoplastic transformation
total cancer grants

$31.7M

$17.6M
NIH/NCI DIRECT COST FUNDING
Research Headlines

**UF Health researchers win national award for identifying brain tumor intervention**

A study identifying a possible new intervention to treat the deadliest of brain tumors garnered a Top 10 Clinical Research Achievement Award for 2015 from the Clinical Research Forum for UF Health brain cancer researcher Duane Mitchell, M.D., Ph.D., and his research team, who were honored for an outstanding accomplishment in clinical research. Their early clinical results are now the subject of a large and randomized Phase II clinical trial.

**Grant to support research of deadliest form of prostate cancer**

A UF researcher has received a five-year, $1.7 million grant to study when, how and why prostate cancer, which physicians consider highly curable, sometimes spreads, and to develop treatment options for this uncommon but life-threatening occurrence. The NCI-supported study is focused on bone metastasis, which occurs when cancer cells spread from the original site to other places in the body and is linked to high mortality in prostate cancer patients.

**Targeting wayward tumor cells in triple-negative breast cancer**

A UF Health neuro-oncologist has been awarded a $1.78 million grant from the Florida Department of Health’s Bankhead-Coley Cancer Research Program to develop new strategies to target disseminated tumor cells in triple-negative breast cancer. Researchers are developing a treatment technology in the lab to activate these slowly dividing cells to render them sensitive to chemotherapy. If the cells can be made to divide faster by forcing them out of quiescence, it’s possible they will be more sensitive to treatment.

**In the hunt for cancer treatments, dogs are man’s best friend yet again**

A UF College of Veterinary Medicine researcher is immersed in two clinical trials that could ultimately improve the survival time for bone cancer and melanoma, a form of skin cancer. Rowan Milner, Ph.D., is also about halfway through a two-year study that uses a vaccine to induce an immune system response that slows the spread of osteosarcoma, a type of bone cancer. Hundreds of dogs with naturally occurring osteosarcoma have been enrolled by their owners to participate in the studies.

**In collaboration** with the Blood and Marrow Transplant and Leukemia Program, UF Health cardiologists have, for the first time, implanted stem cells into the heart of a breast cancer survivor with heart failure in a phase I clinical trial that will examine the feasibility and safety of treating these kinds of patients with stem cells. In subsequent clinical trials, researchers will study whether stem cells from healthy subjects can improve heart function in patients who have been treated with a group of drugs called anthracyclines, chemotherapy drugs that are still used today.

Patient with chemotherapy-induced heart failure first to receive stem cells

Carl J Pepine, M.D.
Researchers identify new strategy for discovering colorectal cancer drugs

UF Pharmacy researchers have identified novel drug targets and a new screening method for drugs affecting the signaling pathways in colorectal cancer. Many of the proteins currently under investigation as possible targets for cancer therapy are found in these pathways, so the researchers have devised a strategy whereby multiple cancer pathways may be targeted simultaneously for drug discovery. “Our multiplex screen has potential to target multiple pathways at once. If you do a relatively smart screen early on, you can focus on the more promising drug candidates, and that could translate into a shorter discovery and development timeline,” said Hendrik Luesch, Ph.D., a professor and chair of the department of medicinal chemistry. For this study, Luesch’s team screened a subset of marine natural product compounds that were previously isolated in his lab from cyanobacteria, a rich source of bioactive molecules found in marine environments. UF scientists found two of the compounds, which were identified by Luesch’s lab team, to be novel inhibitors of the KRAS and HIF pathways. One of the compounds, largazole, was discovered in cyanobacteria collected by Luesch’s team off the coast of the Florida Keys, and it has shown characteristics of being highly effective at reprogramming cancer cells and inhibiting cancer growth.

A UF Health researcher is studying a natural therapy for treating liver cancer and identifying novel treatments and new ways to deliver those therapies by restoring microRNA in the hopes of finding options for people with the disease. Liver cancers can form when certain microRNA molecules disappear from healthy cells. In a $3.2 million NIH-funded study, researchers are attempting to restore the microRNA within cells to healthy levels.
UF Health research shows a tiny laser could help diagnose kidney tumors

UF Health researchers are working to determine whether a tiny laser imaging probe can help detect whether a kidney tumor is cancerous or benign prior to subjecting a patient to an invasive needle biopsy or surgery. Twenty percent of tumors that are surgically removed end up being benign; the researchers’ goal is to save those 20 percent of patients an unnecessary surgery.

Lower-carb diet slows growth of aggressive brain tumor in mouse models

UF Health researchers have slowed a notoriously aggressive type of brain tumor in mouse models by using a low-carbohydrate diet. Glioblastoma, the most common brain tumor in adults, has no effective long-term treatment, but researchers found a high-fat, low-carbohydrate diet that included a coconut oil derivative helped reduce the growth of glioblastoma tumor cells and extended lifespan in mouse models by 50 percent.

Cancer cells’ transition can drive tumor growth

A team led by UF researchers has established how some tumors bolster their own blood supply, fueling their growth. Certain cancer cells can convert into blood vessel-supporting cells that drive tumor growth, according to the researchers’ findings. The study is the first to elucidate how that process sustains blood vessels.
Research Day 2016

The UF Health Cancer Center Research Day 2016 took place Nov. 3 at the UF George T. Harrell, M.D., Medical Education Building with approximately 350 attendees. More than 120 posters were displayed and prizes were awarded to graduate students, postdoctoral fellows and junior faculty. Presentations were given by the inaugural Predoctoral Award winners — five predoctoral candidates conducting innovative cancer research throughout the university. Jonathan Licht, M.D., director of the UF Health Cancer Center, presided over the event and encouraged attendees to seek out new potential collaborators throughout the evening, as collaborations lead to important findings that impact patient health.

Poster Winners – Early Career Faculty

**Elias Sayour, M.D., Ph.D.**
“Translatable RNA nanoparticles supplant dendritic cell vaccines in cellular immunotherapy”

**Marcus Muehlbauer, M.D., Ph.D.**
“The Hydrogen Sulphide Producer Atopobium Parvulum Worsens the Development of Colitis-associated Colorectal Cancer”

**Carla Fisher, Ph.D.**
“Experiences of ‘Openness’ Between Mothers & Daughters During Breast Cancer: Implications for Coping and Healthy Outcomes”

Poster Winners – Postdoctoral Trainees

**Kyungah Maeng, Ph.D.**
“Thymidylate Synthase Overexpression Accelerates MEN1-mediated Pancreatic Neuroendocrine Tumor Development and Progression”

**Zirong Chen, Ph.D.**
“cAMP/CREB-regulated IncRNA LINC00473 marks LKB1-inactivated lung cancer and mediates tumor growth”

Poster Winners – Predoctoral Trainees

**Rony Francois, B.S.**
“Targeting the Oncogenic Cooperation of Thymidylate Synthase and Mutant KRAS in Pancreatic Cancer”

**Elizabeth Kacel, M.S.**
“Yoga as a comprehensive program for managing Fear of Cancer Recurrence (FCR): a proof-of-concept study”

**Mam Mboge, B.S.**
“Role of Carbonic Anhydrase in Breast Cancer Metabolism and Growth”

**Varsha Sundaresan, M.S.**
“The Role of P53-binding Regulatory Regions in Tumorigenesis”

**Vindhya Vijay, M.S.**
“Identifying novel targets to eliminate refractory disease in acute myeloid leukemia”

**Jennifer Wiggins, M.S.**
“Structured Aerobic Exercise to Improve Radiotherapy Response in Breast Cancer”

**Sarah Tomkovich, B.S.**
“Human colorectal cancer-associated biofilms promote tumorigenesis in susceptible mice”

**Mir Hossain, M.S.**
“Activation of Fetal Globin by Direct Protein Delivery of Zinc-finger DNA-binding Domains Targeting a GATA-1 Binding Site Associated with the -567 HPFH”

**Dhruvitkumar Sutaria, M.S.**
“Gene knockouts reveal important roles for microRNA during the early development of pancreatic adenocarcinoma”

**Varsha Sundaresan, M.S.**
“The Role of P53-binding Regulatory Regions in Tumorigenesis”

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“Structured Aerobic Exercise to Improve Radiotherapy Response in Breast Cancer”

**Dhruvitkumar Sutaria, M.S.**
“Gene knockouts reveal important roles for microRNA during the early development of pancreatic adenocarcinoma”
New Recruits

In keeping with our commitment to multidisciplinary research and in pursuit of National Cancer Institute designation, the UF Health Cancer Center is investing in its faculty, as evidenced by the superb 2016 recruits highlighted here.

Zsolt Toth, Ph.D.
Joined: June 2016
Prior Institution: University of Southern California, Los Angeles
Position(s): Assistant Professor, Department of Oral Biology, UF College of Dentistry
Research: Dr. Toth’s laboratory investigates how Kaposi’s sarcoma-associated herpesvirus, or KSHV, can hijack components of the host epigenetic machinery and use them to establish persistent infection and cause cancers in humans. His team’s goal is to understand the key differences in the epigenetic regulation of the KSHV genome and host genes in different human cell types, which can determine the outcome of infection. Better understanding of what viral and host epigenetic factors control KSHV infection can lead to the development of novel strategies to block KSHV infection and pathogenesis.

Chengguo “Chris” Xing, Ph.D.
Joined: August 2016
Prior Institution: University of Minnesota
Position(s): Professor and Frank A. Duckworth Eminent Scholar, Department of Medicinal Chemistry, UF College of Pharmacy
Research: Dr. Xing’s research broadly covers the isolation, design and synthesis, and identification of biologically active small molecules, employing such candidates as probes to tackle fundamental health-related biological questions, and evaluating their clinical potential. Currently, Dr. Xing’s team is focused on translational development with several indications, including novel therapies selective against multidrug-resistant malignancies, chemopreventive agents against primary carcinogenesis and a natural dietary supplement for neurological disorders.

Chenglong Li, Ph.D.
Joined: August 2016
Prior Institution: The Ohio State University
Position(s): Professor and Nicholas Bodor Professor in Drug Discovery, Department of Medicinal Chemistry, UF College of Pharmacy; Graduate Coordinator for Medicinal Chemistry
Research: Dr. Li focuses his research on molecular recognition, with a strong application to structure-based computer-aided drug design. He combines molecular simulation, synthetic chemistry, X-ray protein crystallography, thermodynamic measurements, cellular techniques and in vivo animal models to explore molecular interactions, especially protein-ligand interactions, at molecular, cellular and organismal levels. His current working projects include both computational method development and drug design applications.
Olga A. Guryanova, M.D., Ph.D.
Joined: September 2016
Prior Institution: Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center
Position(s): Assistant Professor, Department of Pharmacology and Therapeutics, UF College of Medicine
Research: Dr. Guryanova’s research is focused on the blood system, with a specific interest in hematologic malignancies. The overarching goal of her laboratory is to delineate the mechanisms of the cross-talk between epigenetics and chromatin organization, and how these processes contribute to the development of acute myeloid leukemia resistance to therapies and clonal evolution. Ultimately, she would like to harness this mechanistic understanding to develop improved therapeutic approaches for leukemia.

Rene Opavsky, Ph.D.
Joined: November 2016
Prior Institution: University of Nebraska
Position(s): Associate Professor, Department of Anatomy and Cell Biology
Research: Dr. Opavsky’s lab is focused on the evaluation of functions performed by DNMTs in normal and malignant hematopoiesis utilizing mouse models, genome-wide approaches and in vivo functional studies of DNA target genes. Particularly, his team is interested in the role of promoter hypomethylation in cellular transformation in order to identify oncogenes for therapeutic targeting.

Zhongwu Guo, Ph.D.
Joined: August 2016
Prior Institution: Wayne State University
Position(s): Scott Professor, Department of Chemistry, UF College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
Research: Dr. Guo’s lab is focused on the interfaces of organic synthesis, carbohydrate chemistry, glycobiology, glycoimmunology and drug discovery. His team’s major research interests are centered on the development of novel therapeutics for cancer and other diseases, the investigation of molecules on the cell surface for the discovery of new molecular markers and the development of new synthetic methodologies for carbohydrates, glycopeptides and glycolipids — in addition to the chemical and chemoenzymatic synthesis of natural and unnatural glycans and glycoconjugates, as well as their applications in biology and medicine.

Mingyi Xie, Ph.D.
Joined: September 2016
Prior Institution: Yale University
Position(s): Assistant Professor, Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, UF College of Medicine
Research: Dr. Xie’s lab studies the biogenesis mechanism of microRNAs, a group of small noncoding RNAs that regulate the expression of other genes at the post-transcriptional level. MicroRNAs are important for controlling human developmental, differentiation and disease processes. His team specifically focuses on microRNAs generated by alternative mechanisms, which surprisingly incorporate fundamental cellular machineries involved in processing other classes of RNAs. This research, therefore, would expand the appreciation of these RNA processing machineries’ impact on small RNA populations and oncogenesis.
The Florida Academic Cancer Center Alliance

In 2014, the UF Health Cancer Center, along with Moffitt Cancer Center and the University of Miami Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center, joined to create the Florida Academic Cancer Center Alliance, or FACCA. FACCA was created to address the unique cancer burden of the state of Florida by expediting cancer research and maximizing the state investment in biotechnology. The alliance encourages and promotes collaborative research conducted by researchers at its partnering institutions and supports workshops and meetings to encourage the exchange of information and networking among researchers.

In 2016, there were 13 FACCA-affiliated retreats, seminars, conferences and courses that brought cancer researchers throughout Florida together to collaborate and learn. The alliance also accepts applications and awards grants for a wide variety of cancer-related research by researchers located at one of the three partnering institutions, and all alliance-funded research is conducted by Florida-based scientists and reflects the mission to attract and expand the state’s research capabilities to address the public health challenges of cancer.

Selected Publications

Authored by UF Health Cancer Center Members | 2016


The UF Health Cancer Center’s clinical enterprise uses a comprehensive care model, with multidisciplinary cancer programs offering advanced treatment options, such as minimally invasive and robotic surgery, proton and intensity-modulated radiotherapy, hematopoietic stem cell transplantation, chemotherapy, targeted therapy and immunotherapy in conjunction with the Precision Cancer Care Program, as well as access to clinical trials with limited availability elsewhere.
A TEAM APPROACH TO CANCER TREATMENT

The UF Health Cancer Center is a state-designated Cancer Center of Excellence. The designation by the Florida Legislature recognizes hospitals and treatment centers that demonstrate excellence in patient-centered coordinated care for people undergoing cancer treatment and chemotherapy.

UF Health is designated as a Center of Excellence for myeloma, myelodysplastic syndromes and pancreatic cancers.

The patient outcomes of the UF Health Blood and Marrow Transplantation Program are ranked among the top 2.5 percent nationwide. It is one of 20 core centers nationwide that comprise the NHLBI/NCI Blood and Marrow Transplant Clinical Trials Network.

The UF Health Proton Therapy Institute is one of the few proton facilities in the country that have achieved accreditation by the American College of Radiology. It is internationally recognized as a cancer care destination for pediatric radiation oncology patients.

The UF Health Breast Center is accredited by the National Accreditation Program for Breast Centers and is the first in the state to offer intraoperative radiation therapy using Intrabeam®.

PATIENT CASES

UF Health

UF Health Jacksonville

Orlando Health UF Health Cancer Center

TOTAL CASES

Analytic: 2,844
Non-Analytic: 750

Analytic: 1,974
Non-Analytic: 759

Analytic: 3,474
Non-Analytic: 864

Analytic: 8,292
Non-Analytic: 2,373
A Group Effort for Individualized Care

**The Multidisciplinary Teams** at the UF Health Cancer Center meet weekly to discuss the details of each patient’s case. This approach leads to a personalized plan created to guide each patient through diagnosis, treatment and recovery. This plan also includes guiding patients who need several different therapies to their ideal cancer treatment combination. The plan is customized for the specific type of cancer, its stage and a patient’s needs and overall health. When a patient begins their journey, a nurse navigator coordinates all aspects of the patient’s care, including ensuring the patient and family understand the care plan.
NEARLY 70 PERCENT of all patients in need of a stem cell transplant do not have an exact-match donor within their families and may have a difficult time finding a match among unrelated donors who volunteer to participate in national blood and marrow registries.

It’s for this reason that the UF Health Cancer Center has adopted first-in-the-state use of cord-blood transplantation and “half-match” transplantation programs from mismatched family members. This program has led to viable donor options for nearly all patients in need of a transplant.

The Center for International Blood & Marrow Transplant Research reports that the UF Health Cancer Center’s one-year, risk-adjusted survival rate is in the top 2.5 percent for all transplant centers nationwide.

The Blood and Marrow Transplant and Leukemia Program and hematologic malignancies services offer inpatient and outpatient services using a multidisciplinary care approach that optimizes patient outcomes.

**ST EM C ELL TREATMENT**

UF Health has successfully performed stem cell transplantation to treat a broad variety of malignant and benign hematologic disorders, including:

- Acute and chronic leukemia
- Myelodysplastic syndromes
- Multiple myeloma
- Non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma and Hodgkin’s disease
- Myeloproliferative syndrome
- Severe aplastic anemia
The UF Health Cancer Center’s one-year, risk-adjusted survival rate is in the **TOP 2.5%** for all transplant centers nationwide.
A Perfect Match

Five Years Ago, Chris Abeleda was a freshman at the University of Florida. He joined a multicultural fraternity and made a few new friends as well as plans for his future. What he didn’t plan on was a diagnosis of cancer.

In January 2013, he was told he had Ph1+ acute lymphoblastic leukemia, a diagnosis that put his plans on hold so he could face treatment. With the support of his family, his rounds of chemotherapy were successful and he was able to move forward with school in August of the same year.

Fast forward to December of 2014 and his plans took another turn. Chris discovered his cancer had returned. His physician at the UF Health Cancer Center, John Wingard, M.D., suggested that he was a candidate for bone marrow transplant.

Chris’ family rushed to his side again, eager to support the next steps in his treatment. Fortunately, both his sister, Mara, and his brother, CJ, were a perfect match.

“The first time I was diagnosed with leukemia, my brother and sister were there with me throughout my treatment,” said Chris. “When we knew I needed a bone marrow transplant, they both immediately volunteered, My brother even took a month off of his job to stay with me in the hospital, so I wouldn’t be alone. I knew that my family and friends were there with me for every step of the way.”

Chris was lucky to have not one, but two donors to choose from, said Wingard. “UF Health’s blood and bone marrow transplant program has been successfully performing BMTs since 1981. We’ve been able to perform more than 3,400 transplants for both adults and children since the program began.”

After a successful transplant at the UF Health Shands Cancer Hospital, Chris was in remission and was able to go home. He resumed classes in the fall of 2015. More importantly, he crossed the stage in December 2016 with a degree in psychology from the University of Florida.

When asked what he will remember from his time in college, Chris doesn’t focus on his cancer. Instead, he talks about fundraising for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society’s UF Light the Night Walk, playing basketball with his friends and participating in campus events with his fraternity, Pi Delta Psi.

“My favorite memories are from being the co-chair of the LLS walk the last two years. Our fraternity helped raise more than $60,000 for research to help stop cancer. That was truly worthwhile.”

Chris’ future plans include continuing his schooling, working toward an advanced degree in sports psychology. But with the support of his family, he’ll never stop promoting the benefits of being a bone marrow donor and supporting cancer research.
The Population We Serve

**THE UF HEALTH CANCER CENTER** is dedicated to serving the residents of Florida, which is the state with the second-highest cancer mortality rate in the nation. Cancer is already the leading cause of death for Floridians, and the age group that bears the greatest cancer incidence — those who are age 65 and older — is projected to grow by 25 percent over the next two decades. Therefore, our efforts to serve our state with innovative research and leading cancer care have never been more critical.

This map shows our catchment area, the counties that 85 percent of our patients call home. These counties face unique challenges of the cancer burden, and it’s our mission to address those challenges by developing creative prevention and treatment strategies that serve our rural, elderly and diverse population.

**BY THE NUMBERS**

- 21% live below the poverty threshold
- 28% live without insurance
- 21% are over 65 years old
- 44% higher age-adjusted death rate for black Floridians than in the rest of state
higher age-adjusted death rate for white Floridians than in the rest of state

Highest smoking rate in Florida

Top 10 New Cases

- 22% Digestive System
- 6% Female Genital
- 7% Oral Cavity
- 7% Male Genital
- 9% Blood and Bone Marrow
- 10% Urinary System
- 10% Brain and CNS
- 10% Breast
- 14% Respiratory System
Clinical Trials

The mission of the UF Health Cancer Center Clinical Trials Office (CTO) is to help deliver new and promising cancer treatments that improve the lives of our patients at the UF Health Cancer Center. The CTO provides support to our clinical investigators for the development and implementation of cancer clinical trials — facilitating the conduct of high-quality clinical research while adhering to the highest ethical standards and maintaining compliance with all governing bodies. This program will continue to undergo significant expansion over the next few years, as part of the initiative to become a National Cancer Institute-designated cancer center.

Currently, our clinical research program consists of the CTO and 11 disease-specific working groups (e.g., thoracic, GI, GU, neuro-oncology, hematologic malignancies). It also supports an Experimental Therapeutics Incubator for early-phase clinical trials that may have patient eligibility across several cancer types. Additionally, the Clinical Trials Office provides clinical trial support for outside institutions with affiliations through UF Health, the university’s academic health center.

Affiliate Clinical Research Sites Include:

- North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health System (Gainesville, FL)
- Tallahassee Memorial Cancer Center (Tallahassee, FL)
- UF Health Proton Therapy Institute (Jacksonville, FL)
- Broward Health Medical System (Fort Lauderdale, FL)

Clinical Trials Office Stats (2016)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
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<tr>
<td>New Studies</td>
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<tr>
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<td>active trials</td>
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<td>trials open to patient enrollment</td>
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<tr>
<td>new trials</td>
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</table>
THE UF HEALTH CANCER CENTER has been selected as one of 12 initial clinical trial sites participating in Precision Promise, the first large-scale precision medicine trial designed to transform outcomes for patients with pancreatic cancer.

An initiative of the national nonprofit organization Pancreatic Cancer Action Network, Precision Promise is intended to dramatically accelerate the clinical trial process to bring promising therapies to patients faster.

“Being an inaugural member of the Precision Promise clinical trial consortium ensures that our patients have access to some of the most cutting-edge and innovative therapies available in the world for pancreatic cancer,” said Thomas George, M.D., the study’s principal investigator at UF and medical director of the GI Oncology Program. “The tools to help our patients fight pancreatic cancer and advance the field are now at our ready.”

UFHCC CHOSEN FOR “UNPRECEDENTED” PANCREATIC CANCER CLINICAL TRIALS

1. Adult Blood & Marrow Transplant and Hematologic Malignancies
2. Adult Solid Tumors
3. Pediatric Hematology & Oncology

25 disease sites being studied
15 years in operation
3 main areas of focus:
## Selected Clinical Trials

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>NCT No.</th>
<th>Investigator</th>
<th>Study Title</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>BRAIN AND NERVOUS SYSTEM</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NCT02334722</td>
<td>Maryam Rahman, M.D.</td>
<td>A Shortened Antiepileptic Drug (AED) Course in Surgical Brain Tumor Patients: A Randomized Trial</td>
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<tr>
<td>I/II</td>
<td>NCT02311582</td>
<td>David Tran, M.D., Ph.D.</td>
<td>A Phase I and Open Label, Randomized, Controlled Phase II Study Testing the Safety, Toxicities, and Efficacy of MK-3475 in Combination with MRI-guided Laser Ablation in Recurrent Malignant Gliomas</td>
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<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>NCT01326104</td>
<td>Duane Mitchell, M.D., Ph.D.</td>
<td>Recurrent Medulloblastoma and Primitive Neuroectodermal Tumor Adoptive T Cell Therapy During Recovery from Myeloablative Chemotherapy and Hematopoietic Stem Cell Transplantation</td>
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<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>NCT02465268</td>
<td>Maryam Rahman, M.D.</td>
<td>A Phase II Randomized, Blinded, and Placebo-controlled Trial of CMV RNA-Pulsed Dendritic Cells with Tetanus-Diphtheria Toxoid Vaccine in Patients with Newly-Diagnosed Glioblastoma</td>
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<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>NCT02663271</td>
<td>David Tran, M.D., Ph.D.</td>
<td>A Phase 2, Multi-center, Single arm, Histologically Controlled Study Testing the Combination of TTFields and Pulsed Bevacizumab Treatment in Patients with Bevacizumab-refractory Recurrent Glioblastoma</td>
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<td><strong>BREAST</strong></td>
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<td>Pilot</td>
<td>NCT02199366</td>
<td>Julie Bradley, M.D.</td>
<td>Prospective Pilot Study of Early Markers of Radiation-Induced Cardiac Injury in Patients with Left-Sided Breast Cancer Receiving Photon or Proton Therapy</td>
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<td><strong>COLON</strong></td>
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<td>III</td>
<td>NCT02664077</td>
<td>Thomas George, M.D., FACP</td>
<td>A Phase III Randomized Placebo-Controlled Study Evaluating Regorafenib Following Completion of Standard Chemotherapy for Patients with Stage III Colon Cancer (ARGO)</td>
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<td>II</td>
<td>NCT02921256</td>
<td>Thomas George, M.D., FACP</td>
<td>A Phase II Clinical Trial Platform of Sensitization Utilizing Total Neoadjuvant Therapy (TNT) in Rectal Cancer</td>
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<td>II</td>
<td>NCT03077243</td>
<td>Robert Amdur, M.D.</td>
<td>P53 Mutational Status and Circulating Free HPV DNA for the Management of HPV-associated Oropharyngeal Squamous Cell Cancers</td>
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<td>II</td>
<td>NCT02281955</td>
<td>Robert Amdur, M.D.</td>
<td>De-intensification of Radiation and Chemotherapy for Low-Risk HPV-related Oropharyngeal Squamous Cell Carcinoma</td>
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<td>NA</td>
<td>NCT02435550</td>
<td>Christopher Cogle, M.D.</td>
<td>iCare for Cancer Patients</td>
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<tr>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NCT02927106</td>
<td>Christopher Cogle, M.D.</td>
<td>Beat AML: Personalized Medicine for Acute Myeloid Leukemia Based on Functional Genomics</td>
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<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>NCT02370888</td>
<td>Maxim Norkin, M.D., Ph.D.</td>
<td>A Phase I Clinical Trial to Evaluate the Maximally Tolerated Dose (MTD), Dose Limiting Toxicities (DLTs) and Safety Profiles of Increasing Doses of Lenalidomide After Allo-HCT in AML and MDS Subjects with Minimal Residual Disease (MRD) Detected by the CD34+ Mixed Chimerism Analysis</td>
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<td>I/II</td>
<td>NCT02773732</td>
<td>Randy Brown, M.D.</td>
<td>A Phase Ib/II Clinical Trial of Oral Ciprofloxacin and Etoposide in Subjects with Resistant Acute Myeloid Leukemia (AML)</td>
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<td>I/II</td>
<td>NCT02920450</td>
<td>Dennie Jones, M.D.</td>
<td>A Non-Randomized Phase Ib-II Protocol of Paclitaxel, Carboplatin and the Dual PI3K/mTOR Kinase Inhibitor, PF-05212384, for Patients with Advanced, or Metastatic Non-Small Cell Carcinoma of the Lung (UF-STO-LUNG-002)</td>
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<td>I/II</td>
<td>NCT01770418</td>
<td>Bradford Hoppe, M.D.</td>
<td>A Phase I/II Study of Hypofractionated Proton Therapy for Stage II-III Non-Small Cell Lung Cancer</td>
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<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>NCT00875901</td>
<td>Bradford Hoppe, M.D.</td>
<td>Hypofractionated, Image-Guided Radiation Therapy with Proton Therapy for Stage I Non-Small Cell Lung Cancer</td>
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<td>II</td>
<td>NCT02920476</td>
<td>Dennie Jones, M.D.</td>
<td>A Phase II Trial of TAS-102 (Lonsurf) in Previously Treated Unresectable or Metastatic Squamous Cell Carcinoma of the Lung</td>
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<td>II</td>
<td>NCT02146131</td>
<td>Hiren Mehta, M.D.</td>
<td>Multicenter, Prospective, Randomized Trial of Bronchoscopy with Ultrathin Bronchoscope and Radial Endobronchial Ultrasound (R-Ebus) with Fluoroscopy Versus Standard Fiberoptic Bronchoscopy (Fb) with Fluoroscopy for Biopsy of Pulmonary Lesions</td>
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<td>NCT02598349</td>
<td>Romaine Nichols, M.D.</td>
<td>A Phase II Trial of Escalated Dose Proton Radiotherapy with Elective Nodal Irradiation and Concomitant Chemotherapy for Patients with Unresectable, Borderline Resectable or Medically Inoperable Pancreatic Adenocarcinoma</td>
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<td>II</td>
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<td>Randal Henderson, M.D.</td>
<td>Postoperative or Salvage Radiotherapy for Node Negative Prostate Cancer Following Radical Prostatectomy</td>
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<td><strong>SARCOMA</strong></td>
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<td>II</td>
<td>NCT01871766</td>
<td>Daniel Indelicato, M.D.</td>
<td>Risk Adapted Focal Proton Beam Radiation and/or Surgery in Participants with Low, Intermediate and High Risk Rhabdomyosarcoma Receiving Standard or Intensified Chemotherapy</td>
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<td>II</td>
<td>NCT02945800</td>
<td>Joanne Lagmay, M.D.</td>
<td>Phase II Study of Nab-Paclitaxel in Combination with Gemcitabine for Treatment of Recurrent/Refractory Sarcoma in Teenagers and Young Adults</td>
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<td><strong>STEM CELL TRANSPLANT</strong></td>
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<td>Pilot</td>
<td>NCT02326675</td>
<td>Jamie Dees, R.N.</td>
<td>Randomized Controlled, Open-Label Study on the Use of Cryotherapy in the Prevention of Chemotherapy-Induced Mucositis in Stem Cell Transplant Patients</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Partners, family, friends. The UF Health Cancer Center is proud to be a part of a community that moves cancer care and research forward. It is this community that helps shape and guide our mission — to prevent, detect and treat cancer — and brings new therapies to patients through philanthropic investments. Together, we have unstoppable momentum.
For Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month, UF Health helped raise awareness of the disease with an event featuring a giant inflatable colon.
Leadership Council

THE UF HEALTH CANCER CENTER Leadership Council plays a critical role for the center by increasing public awareness of its mission. Made up of approximately 20 volunteers from the local community, as well as Sarasota and Orlando, in addition to foundations that support the UFHCC such as Climb for Cancer, Stop Children’s Cancer and the Ocala Royal Dames for Cancer Research, the members of UFHCC Leadership Council are advocates for the center, hosting events and providing opportunities for faculty to interact with the public. In raising awareness, the council’s mission dovetails with the UF Health Cancer Center Office of Development’s efforts to secure philanthropic support through excellent service and stewardship to donors, patients and the entire community.

To ensure patient- and family-centered care, the UF Health Cancer Center relies on the input of its Patient and Family Advisory Council, a volunteer group of individuals whose lives have all been touched by cancer. Partnering with physicians and staff, the council helps improve the patient experience at UF Health by providing feedback in a number of key areas.

Left to right: Chairman Ron Farb, Dianne Farb, David Arthurs, Connie Brown, Amber Saxon, Laura Press, Ivan Gonzalez, Anna Gonzalez, Stacey Hayes, Jim Islam, Chuck DiNatale, Sue DiNatale, Vice-Chair Sharon Jank, Mark Jank, M.D., Laurel Freeman, and Howard Freeman

Left to right: Parker Gibbs, M.D., Karen Miller, Lori Wojciechowski, Mary Sortino, Fellisha Butler and Christine Cassisi
WE’RE FIGHTING CANCER ON THE MOLECULAR LEVEL

EACH YEAR, UF Health specialists diagnose more than 3,000 new cancer cases and treat as many at 48,000 patients battling cancer. UF Health researchers are working to identify the genetic causes of cancer to understand how cancer cells function — and to identify new advanced treatments. Your financial support helps to move their work forward while bringing new treatments and diagnostic tools to the fight.

Your tax-deductible donation translates into proven findings that may be funded by federal sources, making each research dollar invested yield an average return of $13. Invest today and help UF Health researchers in our fight against cancer.

TO LEARN MORE:
Please contact Carré Mitchell in the UF Health Cancer Center Office of Development to make a gift to cancer research: 352.273.9080 | csaunders@ufl.edu

UF Health and Stop Children’s Cancer renew $1 million pledge to support pediatric cancer clinical trials. On April 11, Stop Children’s Cancer leaders and board members, along with Scott Rivkees, M.D., Parker Gibbs, M.D., and others from the UF department of pediatrics, met for a sponsors breakfast and tour of UF Health Shands Children’s Hospital. During the event, UF Health CEO Ed Jimenez and Stop Children’s Cancer president Chris Conner signed a $1 million pledge that will support pediatric clinical trials, including a novel clinical trial focused on improving the cure rates for children with osteosarcoma and Ewing sarcoma. UF Health is honored to receive support from Stop Children’s Cancer, a local nonprofit organization committed to the prevention, control and cure of cancer in children.
Photo Album

01 **Halloweener Derby**
In October, residents enjoyed a dachshund-only race, an all-breeds costume contest and trail dog walk in this second annual event at Westside Park. All proceeds went to the Climb for Cancer Foundation, a local nonprofit that supports cancer patients and their families at UF Health.

02 **Making Strides**
In 2016, more than 500 staff members, friends and family from UF Health participated in Making Strides Against Breast Cancer, a national awareness walk hosted by the American Cancer Society. Teams from UF Health raised more than $20,000.

03 **Pink Pumpkin Pedal-Off**
This annual charity bike ride in Gainesville raises money to support research at UF Health related to treatment-resistant breast cancers. The event was cofounded in 2010 by Barb Wills, who at age 7 lost her mother to breast cancer.

04 **Cops Against Cancer Trail Ride**
Community members saddled up for the sixth annual Cops Against Cancer Trail Ride, hosted by the Alachua County Sheriff’s Office at San Felasco Hammock State Park. Proceeds benefited the Climb for Cancer Foundation, supporting UF Health cancer patients and their families.

05 **Hogtown 5K Beer Run**
Runners burned calories for a cause in Haile Plantation in the spring. Afterward, they enjoyed refreshments and entertainment. All proceeds from the race benefits the Climb for Cancer Foundation, which supports cancer patients and their families at UF Health.

06 **Proceeds with Purpose**
Panera Bread employees presented a check raised by proceeds from the annual Panera Goes Pink fundraising event. A portion of October bagel sales from Gainesville, Ocala and The Villages went toward the UF Health Cancer Center Women’s Cancer Research Fund.

07 **Tea for a Cure**
In July, Survivors for Research, a local nonprofit, hosted Tea for a Cure, a fundraising event that benefits triple-negative breast cancer research. Guests enjoyed tea as well as a “best hat” competition.

08 **Origami Cranes**
In September, Joey’s Wings Foundation provided origami cranes to display in the UF Health Shands Children’s Hospital Sebastian Ferrero Atrium to commemorate Childhood Cancer Awareness Month. The cranes represent the approximately 2,000 children who pass away from childhood cancers in the U.S. each year.

09 **Tiara Ball**
Held in the spring, the Tiara Ball is the signature annual event of the Ocala Royal Dames for Cancer Research — a charitable organization comprising 200-plus women that is focused on supporting cancer research and education. A portion of the proceeds from the event went to support UF Health research in several areas, including pediatric hematology-oncology, breast cancer, prostate cancer and acute lymphoblastic leukemia. The theme of the 30th annual Tiara Ball was historic royal palaces.