

## **National Cancer Institute: Integrating Aging and Cancer Research at NCI-Designated Cancer Centers**

*The goal of this program is to expand the capacity of the NCI-designated Cancer Centers to carry out research that concentrates on aging and age-related aspects of human cancer through support of new investigators, pilot projects, and shared resources focused on aging and cancer. Grantees are expected to develop a formal research program that would become a stable component of the cancer center dedicated to collaborative research in aging and cancer and translation of findings into the clinical and population settings.*

### **Lead Agency:**

National Cancer Institute (NCI) /National Institutes of Health (NIH)

### **Agency Mission:**

The National Cancer Institute coordinates the National Cancer Program, which conducts and supports research, training, health information dissemination, and other programs with respect to the cause, diagnosis, prevention, and treatment of cancer, rehabilitation from cancer, and the continuing care of cancer patients and the families of cancer patients.

### **Principal Investigator:**

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### **Partner Agency:**

National Institute on Aging (NIA)/National Institutes of Health (NIH)

### **General Description:**

**Planning and Development Grants Integrating Aging and Cancer Research at NCI-Designated Cancer Centers.** The goal of this program is to expand the capacity of Cancer Centers to engage in pioneering research that concentrates on aging- and age-related aspects of human cancer through support of new investigators, pilot projects, and shared resources focused on aging and cancer. Grantees are expected to design and coordinate a research effort in a five-year project period that will result in a formal aging/cancer “Program” or an equally effective integrated research activity that becomes a component of the NCI-funded Cancer Center. A solid, focused infrastructure for the conduct and continued development of an aging/cancer research program, allowing for

incorporation of multiple disciplines and creative exploration of new approaches to cancer, is also expected.

A broad range of cancer research falls under this scientific initiative, based on seven thematic areas defined in a 2001 NIA/NCI Workshop Report: Treatment Efficacy and Tolerance; Effects of Comorbidity; The Biology of Aging and Cancer; Patterns of Care; Prevention, Risk Assessment, and Screening; Psychosocial and Medical Effects; and Palliative Care, End-of-Life Care, and Pain Relief.

***Excellence:*** What makes this project exceptional?

It was specifically designed to build research capability in aging-and age-related aspects of human cancer through the NCI-designated Cancer Centers, building upon their abilities to work across organizational boundaries, foster transdisciplinary research, create long-term stability for scientists and research programs, provide extensive core resources to investigators, and link to their communities.

***Significance:*** How is this research relevant to older persons, populations and/or an aging society?

There is a clear need to encourage research which draws from expertise in many disciplines to focus on the problems of cancer in older persons. This initiative is an effort to mobilize expertise through a planning and implementation effort that accelerates research at the aging/cancer interface. The research initiative provides the initial resources to develop and create an integrated, interactive research capability with a significant base of externally funded, peer reviewed research projects in NCI-designated Cancer Centers that focuses on problems of cancer in the elderly. The unique cancer center infrastructure and its critical mass of multidisciplinary expertise provide an ideal research setting for meeting the challenges inherent in integrating aging and cancer research. Cancer Centers have well-established interactive research environments, and they have the leadership, space, equipment, structure and resources available to take advantage of new research directions as opportunities arise.

***Effectiveness:*** What is the impact and/or application of this research to older persons?

Persons 65 and older are at highest risk for cancer and have a higher mortality rate than younger persons. This initiative is still underway and it will be some time before the true and long-term impact can be assessed. However, it should accelerate research specifically focused on in cancer and aging research.

***Innovativeness:*** Why is this research exciting or newsworthy?

This program is the culmination of several years of effort by NIA and NCI and extramural scientists with expertise in many areas relevant to cancer and aging. It should stimulate research capability in this area in the funded institutions and visibility for aging/cancer issues, build a cadre of future investigators at the cancer/aging research interface, and identify important focal areas for further research and infrastructure support, thus serving as a platform for additional efforts in the future.