

## UC San Diego Names Thomas J. Kipps To Endowed Chair In Cancer Research

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Nancy Stringer

The University of California, San Diego has announced that Thomas J. Kipps, M.D., Ph.D., has been appointed as the holder of the Evelyn and Edwin Tasch Chair in Cancer Research in the UCSD School of Medicine. An endowed chair is a highly honored academic position that acknowledges a professor's excellence and provides invaluable research support.

Kipps is a professor of medicine in the UCSD School of Medicine, deputy director for research at the Rebecca and John Moores UCSD Cancer Center, and associate director of the UCSD Human Gene Therapy Program. He is also director of a federally funded national research consortium for chronic lymphocytic leukemia.

"Tom Kipps is a distinguished physician-scientist who has made significant contributions to our understanding of one of the body's most complex entities, the immune system, and its role in cancer," said Edward W. Holmes, M.D., Dean of the UCSD School of Medicine and Vice Chancellor for Health Sciences. "He is one of our best and brightest, and he richly deserves this honor."

Kipps is internationally recognized for his contributions to the understanding of the immunobiology, cell biology and molecular genetics of human B cell malignancies, with emphasis on chronic lymphocytic leukemia (CLL). He conducted the first FDA-approved Phase I gene therapy trial for cancer in San Diego. He also discovered a new type of cell that protects leukemia cells, prompting him to name them "nurselike" cells (NLCs). He found that when the NLCs are removed, the leukemia cells die quickly. The interaction between leukemia cells and NLCs may represent a new target for therapy, a hypothesis now being tested in a clinical trial at the Moores UCSD Cancer Center.

"Tom has discovered ways to stimulate the immune system against leukemia cells and now is applying those techniques to solid tumors such as lung cancer," said Dennis Carson, M.D., director of the Moores UCSD Cancer Center. "These approaches may lead to the development of new strategies, for example, for patients with inoperable lung cancer."

In this current work, Kipps is developing a method to deliver a specially modified gene directly into tumor cells in the patient. Once embedded, the gene would produce molecules designed to convert the tumor into a microscopic vaccine-manufacturing plant. In this way, cancer-killing vaccine would be produced internally over a period of time and would access lung cancer cells that are not accessible to the surgeon.

Kipps earned his M.D. and Ph.D. degrees from Harvard Medical School in 1979, and completed residency training in internal medicine and fellowship training in hematology at Stanford University from 1979 to 1985. He completed research training in genetics at Stanford, was appointed associate professor at UCSD in 1990 and promoted to the rank of professor in 1994.

Academic chairs that attract and support distinguished faculty have been endowed in the great universities of the world for close to 500 years. The Tasch Chair was established in 1990 through an endowment by Evelyn Tasch in memory of her husband, Edwin, who died of lung cancer. Kipps is the second holder of the chair.

Media Contact: Nancy Stringer (619) 543-6163

