

UC San Diego Brain Tumor Treatment Program Launches Personalized Biomarker Clinical Study

June 19 Moores UCSD Cancer Center Brain Tumor Unit Open House Offers Insight into Advancing Cancer Research

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The Brain Tumor Unit at the Moores UCSD Cancer Center at the University of California, San Diego in La Jolla, is launching a clinical trial that will examine the use of biomarkers to advance the treatment of malignant gliomas, brain tumors that start in the brain or spinal cord tissue. Annually, about 17,000 Americans are diagnosed with gliomas, which are difficult to treat and often fatal.

The Brain Tumor Unit comprises physicians and researchers from neurosciences, neurosurgery, neuropathology, neuroimaging, radiation oncology, neuropsychology in one team-engaging everyone to advance the patient's care, according to Bob Carter, MD, PhD, chief of the division of neurosurgery at UC San Diego Medical Center and the Moores UCSD Cancer Center.

This unique group is focused on conducting research using personalized medicine - for example, use of biomarkers - and clinical trials to improve the treatment of brain tumors. Biomarkers are molecules or other substances in the blood or tissue that can be used to diagnose or monitor a particular disorder, among other functions. As cells become cancerous, they can release unique proteins and other molecules into the body, which scientists can then detect and use to speed diagnosis and treatment.

One such molecular target is platelet-derived growth factor receptor (PDGFR). It is involved in cell signaling, and is over expressed in 15% of primary gliomas and 60% of secondary gliomas. The study at Moores UCSD Cancer Center will identify those patients with an over expression of PDGFR, in order to identify those patients most likely to respond to a drug called Nilotinib.

The Phase II study will be led by Santosh Kesari, MD, PhD, chief of the division of neuro-oncology in the UCSD Department of Neurosciences and director of neuro-oncology at the Moores UCSD Cancer Center.

"We intend to accelerate personalized therapies for each patient based on an in-depth understanding of each patient's individual tumor," said Kesari. "By looking at the underlying genetics of the tumor combined with clinical data, we hope to optimally tailor treatment and doses." He added that if the study results are positive, it will underscore the need for more biomarker-based studies and open up novel approaches to treat cancer.

For more information on the study, or to enroll contact Alexander Hu at 858-822-5377 or alhu@ucsd.edu.

For those interested in learning more about brain cancer, treatments, research and the center's unique team approach, the Brain Tumor Unit will hold an Open House on Saturday, June 19, from 10 a.m. to noon. Attendees will tour a brain tumor research lab and hear UC San Diego Neuro-oncologist Santosh Kesari speak on "Accelerating Novel Treatment Strategies for Brain Tumors." The event is free, but registration is required. Contact the San Diego Brain Tumor Foundation by June 15 at 619-515-9908 or info@sdbtf.org to register.

The Moores UCSD Cancer Center is located at 3855 Health Sciences Drive, La Jolla, CA 92023.

For more information on the Brain Tumor Treatment Program at Moores UCSD Cancer Center, please visit <http://health.ucsd.edu/cancer>

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