

New Cancer Council Combines Local Centers' Strengths

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C San Diego Moores Cancer Center, Salk Institute for Biological Studies and Sanford-Burnham Medical Research Institute come together in novel collaboration

San Diego is a powerhouse for cancer research, home to the University of California, San Diego Moores Cancer Center – the region’s only National Cancer Institute (NCI)-designated comprehensive cancer center – and two NCI-designated centers for basic research: the Salk Institute Cancer Center and the Cancer Center at Sanford-Burnham Medical Research Institute.

These singular enterprises have now formed a novel collaboration – the San Diego National Cancer Institute Cancer Centers Council, or C3 – to leverage their distinct and combined resources and talents.

The NCI designation means these three cancer centers are already among the best in the nation. They are moving forward with a formalized structure to facilitate collaborations in key areas. This new partnership will allow San Diego’s cancer researchers to accelerate the understanding of and innovative treatments for cancer, the nation’s second leading cause of death.

“San Diego’s cancer centers are rapidly unlocking the genetic and molecular mechanisms involved in cancer and are in the vanguard of a new era in cancer science,” said Tony Hunter, PhD, director of the Salk Institute Cancer Center and American Cancer Society Professor. “The C3 partnership will allow us to build on the city’s foundation of groundbreaking cancer research and harness our collective strengths to produce the next generation of therapies.”

“The mission of C3 is to both exploit and create collaborative opportunities that can only happen in a place like San Diego, with so many exceptional cancer scientists and physicians,” said Scott Lippman, MD, director of UC San Diego Moores Cancer Center and Chugai Pharmaceutical Chair in Cancer Research. “Our goal is to build a structure for increased interaction among the cancer center faculties, leading to a deeper understanding of cancer and, ultimately, more and better treatments.”

“We are in the midst of a transformative decade in cancer research – one in which we have tools like whole-genome sequencing, high-throughput drug screening and nanotechnology to personalize cancer treatments, delivering medicines where they’ll do the most good and the least

harm. This new partnership will better position all San Diego cancer researchers to get there faster,” said Kristiina Vuori, MD, PhD, Sanford-Burnham’s president, interim CEO and Cancer Center director.

Among C3’s goals:

- → Greater interaction between the cancer centers—clinical, translational, basic science and educational—with increased joint faculty appointments.
- → Enhanced collaborative research efforts, with members sharing resources in such areas as bioinformatics, genomics, clinical trials (at UC San Diego Moores Cancer Center) and data storage.
- → Organized initiatives, such as symposia, conferences and forums, that expand and deepen scientific and public understanding of cancer and advance the field.

Voting members of C3 are:

- → Scott Lippman, MD, director and Chugai Pharmaceutical Chair, UC San Diego Moores Cancer Center; senior associate dean and assistant vice chancellor for Cancer Research and Care, UC San Diego
- → Tony Hunter, PhD, director, Salk Institute Cancer Center, American Cancer Society professor, Renato Dulbecco Chair
Kristiina Vuori, MD, PhD, president and interim Chief Executive Officer, Sanford-Burnham Medical Research Institute; professor and director, NCI-designated Cancer Center
- → Barbara Parker, MD, professor of clinical medicine, UCSD School of Medicine; deputy director for Clinical Affairs, UCSD Moores Cancer Center
- → David Cheresch, PhD, Distinguished Professor of Pathology, UCSD School of Medicine; associate director for Innovation and Industry Relations, UCSD Moores Cancer Center
- → Geoffrey Wahl, PhD, professor and Daniel and Martina Lewis Chair, Salk Institute for Biological Studies
- → Ze’ev Ronai, PhD, professor and associate director, NCI-designated Cancer Center, Scientific Director at La Jolla, Sanford-Burnham Medical Research Institute

C3 will host regular meetings, with council chairmanship rotating every two years among the three cancer centers. Two previously established symposia—the Mahajani Symposium and the Preuss Foundation Seminar —will be sponsored by C3, as well as an annual retreat and an awards program to honor the best in local cancer science.

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What is an NCI-designated cancer center?

There are two types:

A “comprehensive cancer center” demonstrates depth and breadth of research in three major areas: laboratory, clinical and population-based research, plus substantial transdisciplinary research that bridges these scientific areas. In addition, it demonstrates professional and public education and outreach capabilities, including the dissemination of clinical and public health advances in the communities it serves.

A “cancer center” demonstrates scientific leadership, resources and capabilities in laboratory, clinical or population science, or some combination of these three components. It also demonstrates depth and breadth of research in the scientific areas it chooses and transdisciplinary research across these areas.

There are 41 NCI-designated comprehensive cancer centers and 7 NCI-designated basic science cancer centers in the nation.

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