

Neuro-Oncologist Santosh Kesari, MD, PhD, Joins UC San Diego

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Steve Benowitz

Santosh Kesari, MD, PhD, has been named Chief of the Division of Neuro-Oncology in the Department of Neurosciences and associate professor of neurosciences at the University of California, San Diego School of Medicine. Kesari, who is also the director of neuro-oncology at the Moores UCSD Cancer Center, specializes in the treatment of brain tumors and has special interests in drug development, biomarkers for cancer detection, and the behavior and potential therapeutic use of both normal and cancer stem cells. One of his major goals is to establish an interdisciplinary, translational neuro-oncology program at the Moores UCSD Cancer Center focused both on improving the understanding of the biology of brain tumors and on developing more personalized treatments for patients.

Kesari comes to UC San Diego from the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute and Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston, where he was assistant professor of neurology at Harvard Medical School since 2007.

"We're very excited to have Dr. Kesari join our Cancer Center faculty," said Moores UCSD Cancer Center director Dennis Carson, MD. "His expertise in both the molecular biology of brain tumors and in the development of targeted therapies will help to continue the growth of our brain tumor program."

"Santosh is an extraordinary physician and scientist and the program he is developing will allow us to engage as never before, and in a cohesive center, the skills of all those physicians that care for patients with brain tumors," said William Mobley, MD, professor and chair of the Department of Neurosciences at the UC San Diego School of Medicine. "Neurology, neurosurgery, radiation and medical oncology, and neuropathology will work hand-in-hand to discover how tumors are produced and how to treat them effectively."

At Dana-Farber, Kesari was involved in testing many of the latest therapies and drug combinations against a variety of brain tumor types. In the laboratory, Kesari and his team found that the same genetic regulator that triggers growth of stem cells during brain development also plays a critical role in the development of gliomas from cancer stem cells. His group also made strides in the development of personalized therapies for brain cancers, and identified a genetic marker that may someday enable doctors to predict responses to treatment. He will be leading efforts to open biomarker-based clinical trials in brain tumors at UC San Diego Medical Center.

Kesari earned a PhD degree in molecular biology from the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine in 1996, and his medical degree there in 1999. He is a member of the Society of Neuro-Oncology, American Society of Clinical Oncology, and American Academy of Neurology.

The Moores UCSD Cancer Center is one of the nation's 40 National Cancer Institute-designated Comprehensive Cancer Centers, combining research, clinical care and community outreach to advance the prevention, treatment and cure of cancer. For more information, visit <http://health.ucsd.edu/cancer>.

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