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UC San Diego Health Joins Precision Medicine Initiative to Tackle Pancreatic Cancer

Precision Promise brings together researchers, clinicians and drug developers

Physician-scientists with Moores Cancer Center at UC San Diego Health have been leading the way in pancreatic cancer care by investigating new therapies as well as offering innovative clinical trials and the latest treatments with a personalized medicine approach. This expertise led to the selection of Moores Cancer Center as one of 12 clinical trial sites for the Pancreatic Cancer Action Network's newly created Precision Promise, the first large-scale precision medicine trial network designed to transform outcomes for patients with pancreatic cancer.



Andrew Lowy, MD

“Precision Promise is a clinical trials network that will provide patients with access to trials rooted in science that are tailored to each person,” said Andrew Lowy, MD, chief of the Division of Surgical Oncology at Moores Cancer Center at UC San Diego Health. “Every possible patient with pancreatic cancer should be enrolled in a clinical trial because standard treatments are not enough. Precision Promise will offer a trial for every patient.”

Nationally, only 4 percent of patients with pancreatic cancer enroll in clinical trials. To address this, Precision Promise is bringing together leaders in the field, including clinicians, researchers and drug developers, and is putting the patient at the center of every decision to advance the Pancreatic Cancer Action Network's goal of doubling survival by 2020.

“Precision Promise will dramatically accelerate the clinical trial process to bring promising therapies to patients faster,” said Julie Fleshman, JD, MBA, president and CEO of the Pancreatic Cancer Action Network. “Instead of looking for the right patient for a clinical trial, we

are designing the right clinical trial for each patient.”

In order to change the pancreatic cancer treatment paradigm, Precision Promise will investigate multiple treatment options, called sub-studies, under one clinical trial design that utilizes a personalized approach based on the molecular profile of a patient. A patient can shift quickly between clinical trials based on current research and treatment options.

The network will allow researchers at all 12 clinical trial sites to evaluate the success of each other’s patients as they progress through treatment. If a treatment is not effective in an individual, the team will have access to the latest tissue samples that can be studied to determine why that person did not respond to a therapy.

“In some trials, when the results are not what we expected from our initial hypothesis, there are no samples to inform research on why it was unsuccessful,” said Lowy. “Was the drug ineffective? Did it not reach its target? Was there a mutation we were unaware of? In order to improve upon therapies we must understand what is happening in each patient. Precision Promise offers a collaborative network in which researchers can help each other answer these questions leading to better, faster therapies in the clinic.”

Each patient enrolled in a Precision Promise trial will undergo advanced molecular profiling to inform which sub-study will best match their individual needs. Precision Promise will begin enrolling patients in spring 2017 at all locations, including Moores Cancer Center, the only NCI-designated comprehensive cancer center in San Diego.

Moores Cancer Center is a member of the National Comprehensive Cancer Network and was recently named an NPF Center by the National Pancreas Foundation — a designation reserved for premier health facilities that focus on high-quality, multidisciplinary approaches to pancreatic disease. In 2015, Lowy and Tannishta Reya, PhD, were selected as part of a Stand Up To Cancer dream team of investigators working on developing new treatments for pancreatic cancer patients. More patients with pancreatic cancer receive their care at UC San Diego Health than at any other medical center in the region and its surgeons perform the highest volume of complex procedures for this kind of cancer.

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