UC San Diego Health Sciences Receives Gift for Translational Research Building

$10 million from San Diego residents Steve and Lisa Altman will support the Clinical and Translational Research Institute

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UC San Diego Health Sciences today announced that San Diego philanthropists and long-time residents Steve and Lisa Altman have pledged $10 million to the planned Clinical and Translational Research Institute (CTRI) building, to be constructed on UC San Diego's medical campus in La Jolla. Steve Altman is president of Qualcomm, Inc.; he and his wife, Lisa, have been generous patrons of many local and national charities. Their annual charity event, "Rock the Cure" has raised money in support of research to find a cure for type 1 diabetes.

"We are thrilled that the Altmans have stepped forward to accelerate a project that has been our dream for many years - to have a special building dedicated to having researchers and clinicians working side by side with patients to address major diseases," said David A. Brenner, MD, Vice Chancellor for Health Sciences. "Their gift will help us provide personalized care that focuses on using the most advanced technologies to care for San Diegans and people from around the globe."

The Altmans know personally the impact that disease can have on a family. "Type 1diabetes has afflicted many generations of our family," said Lisa Altman. "Our son, who is now 21, was found to have type 1 diabetes when he was 13; Steve's father, now 78, was diagnosed at age four; Steve's brother Jeff at age 12, and Steve's niece - who is now 16 - at age 6. Our teenage daughter tested positive for certain anti-bodies, so we have also been living for years with the realization that she is likely to contract the disease. It is of critical importance to us and so many other families that a cure for type 1 diabetes be found."

Type 1 diabetes, also called juvenile diabetes or insulin-dependent diabetes, is a disorder of the body's immune system that is generally diagnosed in children, teenagers or young adults. The disease occurs when the body's immune system attacks and destroys certain cells that produce insulin - a hormone that helps the body convert food into energy. People with type 1 diabetes must frequently test their blood sugar and take insulin to stay alive, sometimes requiring multiple injections daily or delivering insulin through a pump.

"When my brother contracted the disease more than 30 years ago, we were led to believe then that a cure was just around the corner," said Steve Altman. "Tremendous progress has been made, but there is still a lot of work to be done."

The Altmans made a promise to their son to always get him the latest and greatest treatments. But when they had to travel to San Francisco for an experimental therapy, they asked themselves why such care wasn't available in San Diego.

"This institute will provide a single place in San Diego to find the latest in clinical research and discoveries, plus follow-up treatment," said Steve Altman. "We know how difficult it is to see a disease change the life of one's

own child, and we are pleased that we can play a small role in helping UC San Diego bring together the resources needed to help cure type 1 diabetes and so many other diseases that impact our community and the world."

Gabriel Haddad, MD, chair of the UCSD Department of Pediatrics, explained that the Altmans' gift has the power to transform health care in San Diego.

"While UCSD's Pediatric Diabetes Research Center will ultimately benefit from their wonderful generosity, the Altman CTRI building will not only allow us to focus on new treatments for diabetes, but for many other devastating illnesses where concerted research efforts can really make a difference in patients' lives," said Haddad.

The Altman Clinical and Translational Research Institute building, slated for completion in late 2016, will be in close proximity to UC San Diego Thornton Hospital, Moores Cancer Center, the soon-to-open Sulpizio Cardiovascular Center and the recently announced Jacobs Medical Center.

"The CTRI building will create a unique, multidisciplinary environment that brings together laboratory scientists and clinical investigators to understand disease, develop new methods of treatment and translate clinical research results into clinical practice," said Gary S. Firestein, MD, professor of medicine, dean and associate vice chancellor of Translational Medicine and director of the institute. The CTRI recently received a five-year, $37.2 million Clinical and Translational Science Award from the National Center for Research Resources (NCRR), part of the National Institutes of Health, allowing UC San Diego to join an elite consortium of institutions in a national network dedicated to improving biomedical research.

The new building will comprise approximately 311,000 gsf and 189,000 asf (assignable square feet) including research laboratories and clinical research space to support UCSD medical and bioengineering investigators, as well as collaborators in San Diego's biotech community.

The Altman CTRI building will build on UC San Diego's intensely collaborative research environment to create a facility that enables laboratory and clinical researchers to share resources and ideas, and work together on joint projects, Firestein explained. Its location adjacent to UC San Diego Health System's clinical complex in La Jolla will make it one of only a handful of such centers in the country, a place where the strengths of academic medicine - excellent patient care, cutting-edge research and teaching - come together in one location to best serve patients.

Occupants of the new building will represent a range of disciplines including biomedical informatics specialists working with the San Diego Supercomputer Center and the California Institute of Telecommunications and Information Technology (Calit2); specialists in telemedicine and electronic health record technology; imaging specialists using powerful new technologies to diagnose disease at its early stages; biomedical engineers creating new technologies such as wireless sensors and miniaturized robotic devices; clinical researchers and staff who will design and conduct studies to test the safety and effectiveness of experimental therapies; population researchers developing educational programs and interventions to improve public health; and core services such as and biomarker analysis.

The total projected cost of the project is $269 million, which will be primarily paid for with external funding sources rather than state dollars. Architectural firm Zimmer Gunsul Frasca Architects LLP (ZGF), who also designed the Moores Cancer Center, has been chosen for this project, tentatively scheduled to break ground in 2012.

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