American Cancer Society Awards 78 New Research and Career Development Grants Totaling $43.9 Million

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:
American Cancer Society, Anne.Doerr@cancer.org

ATLANTA, May 24, 2022- The American Cancer Society (ACS), the largest non-government, non-profit funding source of cancer research in the United States, has approved funding for 78 new research and career development grants totaling $43.9 million. The grants will fund investigators at 57 institutions across the United States starting in 2022.

"We are proud to announce these new grant awardees and their research projects, which aim to not only uncover drivers of cancer but to discover better ways to find, treat, and overcome the disease," said Dr. William Dahut, chief scientific officer at the American Cancer Society. "It's very exciting, as these studies will also focus on equity and optimizing quality of life for cancer survivors."

The American Cancer Society seeks to improve the lives of cancer patients, families and caregivers through research, patient services, and advocacy. To maximize our impact, ACS has established six priority research areas to advance our mission: etiology or causes of cancer, obesity/healthy eating and active living, diagnosis and screening, treatment, survivorship, and health equity across the continuum. These topics will require fundamental, preclinical, clinical and implementation research as well as multidisciplinary research teams to tackle the complexities of cancers and cancer care.

Requiring that Extramural Discovery Science grant applications align with identified high-potential areas for significantly reducing cancer burden in the U.S. is critical. The number of research priority areas is relatively few, yet these topics cast a wide net and span the full cancer research continuum.

Highlights from each of the focus areas of funding in the current grant cycle include:

CAUSE & ETIOLOGY
Fange Liu, PhD
University of Pennsylvania
Sex Specific Stress Granules in Leukemogenesis
Research Scholar Grant

Sex-related differences in the development and progression of human cancers are poorly understood. Dr. Liu's work examines mechanisms through which sex chromosome encoded proteins contribute to the sex specificity of leukemia development. This work will provide innovative resources and a more comprehensive understanding of sex-related differences in the causes of leukemia.

OBESITY/HEALTHY EATING & ACTIVE LIVING
Masahiro Morita, PhD
University of Texas Health Science Center, San Antonio
Mitochondria, Ribosomes, and ER Communication Promotes Obesity-associated Liver Cancer
Research Scholar Grant

Obesity and non-alcoholic fatty liver disease impact many patients with liver cancer. However, the mechanisms remain poorly understood due to the lack of appropriate models. Dr. Morita will use a unique mouse model to understand the molecular mechanism by which a high-fat diet increases the risk of liver cancer. Understanding the mechanism that links overeating leading to obesity with tumorigenesis will lead to new preventive and therapeutic strategies for obesity-associated liver cancer.

SCREENING & DIAGNOSIS
Swati G. Patel, MD
University of Colorado

Improving Identification & Management of Patients with Hereditary Cancer Syndromes: Clicks Can Prevent Cancer
Clinician Scientist Development Grant

Hereditary cancer syndromes are under-diagnosed, leading to missed opportunities for cancer prevention. Dr. Patel's objective is to develop a mobile health intervention for patients with advanced polyps, the immediate precursor to colorectal cancer. Patient and key stakeholder perspectives will be gathered to inform development of the intervention, followed by evaluation of effects on patient outcomes, including empowerment, social support, family communication, and cancer-related outcomes. This study will help develop strategies to expand cancer prevention services to those with hereditary cancer syndromes.

TREATMENT
Kristina Drizyte-Miller, PhD
University of North Carolina Chapel Hill
Targeting Mitochondrial Function as a Therapeutic Strategy for Pancreatic Cancer
Postdoctoral Fellow

Effective treatments are urgently needed for pancreatic cancer, one of the deadliest cancers in the U.S. Dr. Drizyte-Miller's work investigates metabolism and energy production in pancreatic cancer cells as potential treatment targets for blocking pancreatic cancer cell growth. This research will advance knowledge about mechanisms of pancreatic cancer progression and provide important insights into new treatment approaches.

SURVIVORSHIP
Kristen R. Hoskinson, PhD
The Research Institute at Nationwide Children's Hospital
Neuroimaging of Cognitive and Psychosocial Outcomes in Young Cancer Survivors
Research Scholar Grant

Many survivors of pediatric cancer have long-term health problems, learning challenges, and social and emotional difficulties. Identifying the root causes of these long-term problems will improve survivorship care. Dr. Hoskinson's research combines novel magnetic resonance imaging approaches with cognitive, social, and emotional information from young survivors and healthy classmates to understand changes in brain structure and brain processes. Understanding these changes will help develop new approaches to monitor survivors and improve their well-being.

HEALTH EQUITY ACROSS THE CANCER CONTINUUM
Arden Morris, MD, MPH
Stanford University
Understanding the Effect of Out-of-Pocket Costs in Cancer Care
Research Scholar Grant

High out-of-pocket costs can impact the care decisions that patients with cancer make. Dr. Morris' project examines how out-of-pocket costs influence treatment adherence and clinical outcomes in patients with multiple types of cancer across different racial and socioeconomic groups. This work will increase understanding of how out-of-pocket costs disparately impact patient decisions, providing critical information to inform policies aimed at removing financial barriers to cancer care.

The American Cancer Society Extramural Discovery Science program currently supports research and training in a wide range of cancer-related disciplines at 183 institutions. With an investment of more than $5 billion since 1946, the ACS has funded 49 researchers who have gone on to be awarded the Nobel Prize. The program primarily funds early career investigators, giving the best and the brightest a chance to explore cutting-edge ideas at a time when they might not find funding elsewhere.

The Extramural Discovery Advisory Council also recommended an additional 33 grant applications totaling more than $19 million that could not be funded due to budgetary constraints. These "Pay-If" applications represent work

that passed the Society's multidisciplinary review process but are beyond the Society's current funding resources. They can be and often are subsidized by donors who wish to support research that would not otherwise be funded.

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About the American Cancer Society
The American Cancer Society is on a mission to free the world from cancer. We invest in lifesaving research, provide 24/7 information and support, and work to ensure that individuals in every community have access to cancer prevention, detection, and treatment. For more information, visit cancer.org.