

Local Ties to National Cancer Institute Grant of \$11M, Earmarked for Research Funding

Sept. 30, 2019 (JESUP) - After a successful first five years, a statewide cancer research consortium has been awarded a six-year grant expected to result in more than \$11 million in funding from the National Cancer Institute (NCI) to enroll even more Georgians in important clinical trials.

Jesup's St. Joseph's/Candler's Nancy N. & J.C. Lewis Cancer & Research Pavilion at Wayne Memorial Hospital will be included in those trials, says Wayne Memorial's CEO Joe Ierardi. "Our patients will benefit from this research with state-of-the-art cancer care delivered right here in our rural community. The local cancer center will provide access to the trials through the physician."

Dr. Asit Jha serves as the Oncologist at the Jesup location of the Lewis Pavilion, which opened April 1, 2019. He also takes office visits at his Waycross practice.

The Georgia NCI Community Oncology Research Program (NCORP) is a collaboration between the two largest community oncology clinical trial programs in Georgia: Northside Hospital Cancer Institute in Atlanta and the Nancy N. and J.C. Lewis Cancer & Research Pavilion at St. Joseph's/Candler in Savannah, and the Georgia Center for Oncology Research and Education (Georgia CORE) in Atlanta.

NCORP began in 2014 to conduct multi-site cancer clinical trials and cancer delivery studies in their communities. From 2014-2018, approximately 30,000 patients nationwide were enrolled in NCI clinical trials through the NCORP sites.

The Georgia NCORP partnership is one of only 32 Community Sites selected to receive cancer research funding from the NCI for the next six years. Since 2014, Georgia NCORP has enrolled 2,530 cancer patients in clinical trials. It is one of only 10 NCORP networks to receive 'High Performance' status from the NCI.

"The National Cancer Institute created NCORP as a comprehensive community and academic initiative to provide access to cancer trials, including cutting edge treatment trials, precision medicine, symptom control, cancer prevention, as well as cancer care delivery research, to individuals in their own local communities," said Northside Hospital Cancer Institute's Dr. Guilherme Cantuaria, who has served as the principal investigator for this partnership since its inception in 2014. "These studies will have great potential for improving cancer outcomes and reducing disparities in care. We are especially proud that the NCI selection team evaluated the Georgia NCORP capabilities as outstanding."

"The Georgia NCORP team was one of the most effective groups in the nation at enrolling patients into national clinical trials," said H.A. Zaren, co-principal investigator for the partnership and medical director at the Nancy N. and J.C. Lewis Cancer & Research Pavilion at St. Joseph's/Candler. "It demonstrates the dedication that the entire team has toward improving cancer outcomes and the optimism that people in Georgia and the nation will have even better treatments to fight cancer. This second grant will help many people, especially minority patients and the medically underserved."

Georgia NCORP provides Georgians with access to state-of-the-art cancer prevention, screening, control, treatment and post-treatment trials within their own communities. There

are more than 100 oncology clinical providers in 41 different locations throughout the state, as well as the clinical trial leadership and research services of Georgia CORE.

“GA NCORP is a unique collaboration that has enhanced the quality of cancer care in Georgia by expanding access to clinical trials,” said Nancy M. Paris, president and CEO of Georgia CORE, which is a non-profit leader in improving the quality of cancer care through clinical research and education. “With new NCI funding we will build on the strengths of committed doctors and cancer centers to deliver research and personalized treatments to those most vulnerable -- rural, racial, and ethnic minorities; children and the elderly. Georgia CORE is honored to be a partner in this exemplary statewide effort.”

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Georgia Department of Public Health, Georgia is ranked 25th in cancer incidence and 23rd in cancer deaths in U.S. – and cancer remains the second leading cause of death in Georgia. Among the state’s males, prostate cancer accounts for 30 percent of new cancer cases, with the highest concentration in southwest Georgia. Among the state’s females, breast cancer represents 30 percent of all new cancer cases, with the highest concentration in metro Atlanta. Lung cancer is the second most common among both males and females and is diagnosed most frequently in rural Georgia. Clinical trials are research studies that involve people. These studies test new ways to prevent, detect, diagnose, or treat diseases. People who take part in cancer clinical trials have an opportunity to contribute to scientists’ knowledge about cancer and to help in the development of improved cancer treatments. They also receive state-of-the-art care from cancer experts.

Five additional key cancer programs and Georgia CORE research network affiliates were selected to participate in the Georgia NCORP partnership based on their leadership and track record in community-based oncology research: John B. Amos Cancer Center in Columbus; Harbin Clinic in Rome; Peyton Anderson Cancer Center, Navicent Health in Macon; Cancer Services at Northeast Georgia Medical Center in Gainesville; and Pearlman Cancer Center at South Georgia Medical Center in Valdosta.

Patients with cancer or increased risks of cancer in Georgia will have access to NCI-funded clinical trials through their cancer physicians at a participating NCORP network site. Through the NCORP network, community physicians will be able to collaborate with the NCI Clinical Trials Network Research Bases (NCTN) and Lead Academic Participating Sites (LAPS) on the development of research studies that impact patients in their communities. For more information about Georgia NCORP, visit: gancorp.org.

Wayne Memorial Hospital, whose mission is to provide high quality health care services to all patients, built a state-of-the-art facility in 2007. It is the third largest employer in Wayne County with 500 employees, 84 beds and is a two-time winner of the Georgia Alliance of Community Hospitals Small Hospital of the Year Award.

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About Northside Hospital

The Northside Hospital health care system is one of Georgia’s leading health care providers with five acute-care hospitals in Atlanta, Canton, Cumming, Duluth and Lawrenceville and more than 250 outpatient locations across the state. Northside Hospital leads the U.S. in newborn

deliveries and is among the state's top providers of cancer care, sports medicine, cardiovascular and surgical services. For more information, visit: northside.com.

About St. Joseph's/Candler Health System

St. Joseph's/Candler is a 714-bed, Magnet-designated health system in Savannah, Ga. with a focus on the latest technologies and research. It is anchored by St. Joseph's Hospital and Candler Hospital, covering 33 counties in southeast Georgia and South Carolina. SJ/C's Nancy N. and J.C. Lewis Cancer & Research Pavilion is home to a team of highly trained cancer specialists that use high-impact technological screening and treatment options for optimal results. The center focuses on a patient-centered approach to advanced cancer care, enhanced by clinical partnerships and multidisciplinary cancer teams. More information is at: sjchs.org

About Georgia CORE

Georgia CORE is a public-private partnership that connects cancer care providers, leaders, organizations, and advocates throughout the state. Led by a board of directors of cancer experts from academic institutions, hospitals and cancer centers, collaboration orchestrated by Georgia CORE improves access to clinical trials, as well as personalized cancer care and support for patients, survivors, and caregivers. Its website, GeorgiaCancerInfo.org, is the only statewide online information center of its kind, where details can be found on oncologists, clinical trials, treatment centers and survivorship resources throughout the state.