



News Release

STANFORD UNIVERSITY MEDICAL CENTER

04/18/07

PRINT MEDIA CONTACTS: Amy Adams at (650) 723-3900 (amyadams@stanford.edu)

Ruthann Richter at (650) 725-8047 (richter1@stanford.edu)

BROADCAST MEDIA CONTACT: M.A. Malone at (650) 723-6912 (mamalone@stanford.edu)

STANFORD RECEIVES CANCER CENTER DESIGNATION FROM NCI

Northern California Cancer Center shares in designation

STANFORD, Calif. — The Stanford Comprehensive Cancer Center has been awarded “cancer center” designation from the National Cancer Institute—a distinction that reflects both high-quality patient treatment and excellent basic and clinical research. This new status is shared with the Fremont-based Northern California Cancer Center, which worked with Stanford to achieve the designation.

Philip Pizzo, MD, dean of the Stanford University School of Medicine, said the designation has already rallied faculty members around shared goals and programmatic efforts that started when the school applied for the award. “The new community that is formed by having an NCI cancer center is also invaluable in fostering more interdisciplinary education, research and patient care,” he said.

Stanford’s NCI designation also means that people in the local community will have more access to programs aimed at preventing cancer, thanks in part to the partnership with the Northern California Cancer Center. This collaboration, combined with increased access to NCI resources, will be a benefit especially for underserved minorities with limited access to cancer care and prevention, said Beverly Mitchell, deputy director of Stanford’s Comprehensive Cancer Center.

“The Northern California Cancer Center has expertise in studying cancer trends and outcomes, cancer prevention research and outreach that will make a real difference in preventing cancer and improving the quality of life for cancer survivors in the Bay Area,” said Donald Nielsen, the organization’s CEO.

The NCI made the announcement April 18. The NCI is part of the National Institutes of Health and is the primary source of funding for cancer research in the United States. It supports 61 cancer centers characterized by scientific excellence and diverse approaches to cancer research. Becoming one of these centers will increase support for both Stanford patients and faculty.

As a result, patients will have greater access to clinical trials, and those eligible for Medicare can receive coverage for their participation in NCI clinical trials. “We can expect to see a larger number of clinical trials, in a wider area of cancers, that patients coming to Stanford can participate in,” Pizzo said.

The designation will likely provide \$1 million per year for three years, although the exact details will be hammered out over the next few months. These funds can be used for clinical and scientific research infrastructure of the cancer center, including administrative costs and core facilities. Stanford will also gain

- more -

access to cancer education and prevention initiatives through the NCI. In addition, Stanford faculty will be able to apply for cooperative grants, which fund collaborations between researchers at NCI-designated schools.

In its review of Stanford's programs, the NCI specifically noted the excellence of the school's basic research and cancer care with a special nod to its molecular imaging, cancer biology and bone marrow transplant programs, each of which received an outstanding rating from the review committee. Pizzo said he hopes the NCI designation will help propel additional cancer programs to the same level of excellence.

In its review, the NCI said that although there is much left to be accomplished, "the future contributions of the Stanford Cancer Center are likely to be extraordinary."

Mitchell said the designation is the culmination of a three-year effort on the part of many clinicians and researchers at Stanford. The achievement is even more significant given the NCI's stagnant budget during a time when research costs are on the rise. "To be an NCI-designated cancer center in this time of decreased NCI funding is quite an achievement," she said.

This designation is the latest in a year filled with significant accomplishments for the cancer center. In September, the medical school received \$25 million to establish the Jill and John Freidenrich Center for Translational Research at Stanford University. This center, which will be run in partnership with Stanford Hospitals & Clinics and Lucile Packard Children's Hospital, will be a hub for translating basic research into clinical care at Stanford. When the gift was announced, Mitchell said the center would play an important role in the cancer center's ability to expand its clinical trials.

In November the school was awarded \$20 million to form the Ludwig Center for Cancer Stem Cell Research and Medicine. Stanford researchers have taken a leading role in the hunt for cancer stem cells at the heart of cancers. Irving Weissman, MD, director of the Stanford Comprehensive Cancer Center, has said he hopes the work will lead to new treatments for cancer, which will be tested first in clinical trials for Stanford patients.

###

Stanford University Medical Center integrates research, medical education and patient care at its three institutions — Stanford University School of Medicine, Stanford Hospital & Clinics and Lucile Packard Children's Hospital at Stanford. For more information, please visit the Web site of the medical center's Office of Communication & Public Affairs at <http://mednews.stanford.edu>.