Molecular Science is a Game-Changer for Rare Cancers

On April 26, the Rare Cancers: Unmet Medical Needs conference brought attention to the scarce resources and treatment options available to the more than 400,000 Americans diagnosed with a rare cancer each year – and to the major advancements in medical science stemming from the ability to study the genomics of every molecule in tumor tissues. This transformative research is moving from an anatomic (organ based) to molecular understanding of tumors across rare cancers. When the molecular level mechanisms that drive rare cancers are understood, there’s no stopping us. Molecular science can revolutionize the whole field of cancer medicine and bring new hope to rare cancer patients.

Opening video of the conference shared the urgency (4:36)

"We're going to do this together. We're going to win. We have to win."

Gary Schwartz, MD
Conference Co-Chair Dr. Schwartz introduced conference objectives and suggested outcomes that can accelerate discovery and move rare cancer progress forward, emphasizing "this is something we cannot lose on."

- Better understanding of rare cancers
- Increase awareness that rare cancers are not "rare"
- Best ways to identify and treat rare cancers
- Opportunities for new drug development
- New paradigms that allow better treatment and cures
- Determine investments to advance the field and engage pharmaceutical and investment communities to promote new drug discovery

"There needs to be a revolution in government health agencies"

Catherine Young and Greg Simon are public policy leaders and advocates for solutions to advance rare cancer research at the federal government level. They share insights into the forces within government agencies that can impede or accelerate rare cancer research. These include sustaining an entrepreneurial, accelerator-like mission at ARPA-H and increasing coverage for the evolution of cancer diagnostics and treatments from the anatomic level to the molecular so that patients can access better treatments more quickly. "Imagine the same people doing the same thing without much results ... for decades," says Dr. Simon. "It's important for advocates like the Taxel Foundation to help others realize that they can be part of the legacy."
Important research and patient advocate constituencies gathered ...

Foundation kicks off rare cancer conference
The night before the conference, our foundation dinner gathered important constituencies to move rare cancer research forward: experts from medical science, government, the National Cancer Institute, private philanthropies, and aligned foundations. Speakers included Mark Laab, Founder and Chairman of The Rare Cancer Research Foundation and Founder and Executive Director Norman Scherzer of The Life Raft Group who represent the type of collaborative effort we are committed to help reshape the rare cancer landscape.

Through collaboration and partnership among communities like those represented here, we can demonstrate that innovation in molecular science can and will change the outlook for rare cancers. We’re committed to help this leap into the future, for Jed’s memory and for the good of mankind.

Cutting-edge science on the horizon:

Ben Izar MD
Principal Investigator, Herbert Irving Comprehensive Cancer Center and the Columbia Center for Translational Immunology

At the foundation dinner, Dr. Ben Izar described REACT (rare tumors ecosystems single-cell analysis project), a plan to reshape the future of rare cancer treatments through collaboration with comprehensive cancer centers nationwide for a study of 1000 rare tumor tissues using cutting edge single-cell genomic analysis. This molecular-level research has the potential to inform new treatment pathways for translational and personalized medicine that will deliver life saving treatments to rare cancer patients.

Meet the speakers – we’ll be sharing more presentations soon.
Adam Bass, MD
Professor of Medicine, Columbia University
Vagelos College of Physicians and Surgeons

Richard Carvajal, MD
Associate Professor of Medicine at CUMC;
Director, Melanoma Service, Columbia University
Vagelos College of Physicians and Surgeon

Wendy Chung, MD, PhD
Kennedy Family Professor of Pediatrics and
Medicine, Chief of the Division of Clinical
Genetics, Columbia University Vagelos College of
Physicians and Surgeons

Julia Glade Bender, MD
Vice Chair for Clinical Research, Memorial Sloan-
Kettering Cancer Center

Mark Heaney, MD
Associate Professor of Medicine at CUMC,
Columbia University Vagelos College of
Physicians and Surgeons

Alan Ho, MD, PhD
Geoffrey Beene Junior Faculty Chair, Memorial
Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center

Andrew B. Lassman, MD
John Harris Associate Professor of Neurology;
Chief, Division of Neuro-Oncology, Columbia
University Vagelos College of Physicians and
Surgeons

Suzanne Lentzsch, MD
Professor of Medicine, Columbia University
Vagelos College of Physicians and Surgeons

Jason Luke, MD
Associate Professor of Medicine in the Division of
Hematology/Oncology UPMC

Nita L. Seibel, MD
Head of the Pediatric Solid Tumor Therapeutics in the
Clinical Investigations Branch of the Cancer T,

Michael A. Weiner, MD.
Professor of Pediatrics at CUMC, Columbia University
Vagelos College of Physicians and Surgeons
SAVE THE DATE
October 16, 2022
Annual Foundation Dinner in Support of Rare Cancer Research

Your Voice Matters
Comment, Like, Share & Follow Us on Social Media.
Together, we can take action against rare cancers and help save lives.

The Jed Ian Taxel Foundation for Rare Cancer Research, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) Nonprofit Organization, accepting Tax Deductible Donations from individuals, corporations, family-advised funds, and foundations. Federal Tax ID 86-261081