Massachusetts Life Sciences Center grant expands Dana-Farber's cancer imaging research program

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BOSTON—The Massachusetts Life Sciences Center has awarded Dana-Farber Cancer Institute a $10 million grant to support the expansion of its pioneering cancer imaging research program.

The MLSC grant will help fund the establishment of the Molecular Cancer Imaging Facility, a $20 million research initiative to develop new molecular imaging probes. The facility will ultimately allow physicians to better diagnose and characterize cancer, choose targeted therapies, monitor treatment efficacy, and improve the outcomes of adult and pediatric patients with cancer. The expansion is projected to create more than 100 construction jobs, and 15 jobs to operate the facility. Funding for the grant comes from the state's 10-year, $1 billion Life Sciences Initiative, proposed by Governor Deval Patrick in 2007 and approved by the Legislature in 2008.

"Molecular imaging holds tremendous promise for accelerating drug discovery by allowing more rapid assessment of drug efficacy in preclinical and clinical settings," says Barrett Rollins, MD, PhD, Dana-Farber's chief scientific officer. "Moreover, molecular imaging will play a key role in the delivery of personalized medicine, by allowing clinicians to determine whether specific drugs are effective in days instead of months."

"This grant will support Dana-Farber's vital and life-saving work, while creating jobs and advancing scientific knowledge in cancer treatment and personalized medicine," said Governor Deval Patrick. "Together we can strengthen our innovation economy and provide a substantial return on investment in both jobs and treatment."

Non-invasive imaging methods that can visualize, characterize and measure biological processes at the molecular and cellular levels in living systems ("molecular imaging") are a critical step to speeding the pace of new therapies, according to Andrew Kung, MD, PhD, director of preclinical imaging at Dana-Farber.

Dana-Farber made a commitment to developing a world-class cancer imaging research program when it opened the Lurie Family Imaging Center on its Harbor Campus in South Boston in 2009. The Center provides researchers with a wide array of technologies, including a magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scanner, a combined positron emission tomography/computed tomography (PET/CT) scanner, an advanced ultrasound imaging system, and multiple optical imagers for studies that use light-emitting proteins to track disease, with which to conduct pre-clinical studies.

The new Molecular Cancer Imaging Facility will complement and expand several of Dana-Farber's basic and clinical research enterprises that are focused on the development of targeted cancer therapies. This includes the Center for Biomedical Imaging in Oncology, which houses the Lurie Family Imaging Center, the Center for Novel Experimental Therapeutics (C-NExT), and Profile, one of the country's most extensive cancer genomics research projects, done in partnership with Brigham and Women's Hospital, which seeks to accelerate the development of personalized cancer treatments. Dana-Farber has committed to making the facility available for use by small businesses conducting related research in Massachusetts.

"I want to congratulate Dana-Farber for this amazing award and their continued efforts to accelerate the development of cancer treatments as well as thank them for selecting our Innovation District to expand their facilities and create more than 100 new jobs in the City of Boston," said Mayor Thomas M. Menino. "I also want to thank the Massachusetts Life Sciences Center for supporting Boston's life sciences cluster and enabling our institutions to continue to improve outcomes for patients."

"We are excited to support the construction of Dana-Farber's groundbreaking Molecular Cancer Imaging Facility in South Boston" said Susan Windham-Bannister, Ph.D., President & CEO of the Massachusetts Life Sciences Center. "This new facility will advance the development of personalized cancer therapies, improve patient care and enhance Massachusetts' global leadership in this important field of research. Our investment also will increase Dana-Farber's presence in Boston's Innovation District and create jobs."

"This project will contribute to Dana Farber's efforts to realize the promise of personalized medicine by systematically examining patient tumors for mutations with the intent to match targeted therapy to specific molecular changes in patients' cancer cells," said Lydia Villa-Komaroff, a member of the MLSC Board of Directors and Chief Scientific Officer of Cytonome/ST.

"As Senate chair in putting together the life sciences bill several years ago, it was our hope that the Life Sciences Initiative would provide research institutions throughout the Commonwealth the resources to explore fundamental questions about disease, improve methodologies needed for diagnoses, and design effective treatments," said State Senator Jack Hart. "The expansion of Dana-Farber's pioneering cancer imaging research program is exactly what we had envisioned. I am proud to be a part of this initiative and look forward to the successes of Dana-Farber."

"This grant will help Dana-Farber Cancer Institute to remain at the forefront of cancer research and discovery right here on the South Boston Waterfront," said State Representative Nick Collins. "Thanks to the leadership of the Governor and the legislature, the Commonwealth continues to lead the way in research, patient care, and job creation in the life sciences industry."

About the Massachusetts Life Sciences Center
The Massachusetts Life Sciences Center is a quasi-public agency of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts tasked with implementing the Massachusetts Life Sciences Act, a ten-year, $1 billion initiative that was signed into law in June of 2008. The Center's mission is to create jobs in the life sciences and support vital scientific research that will improve the human condition. This work includes making financial investments in public and private institutions that are advancing life sciences research, development and commercialization as well as building ties between sectors of the Massachusetts life sciences community. For more information, visit www.masslifesciences.com.

About Dana-Farber Cancer Institute
Dana-Farber Cancer Institute (www.dana-farber.org) is a principal teaching affiliate of the Harvard Medical School and is among the leading cancer research and care centers in the United States. It is a founding member of the Dana-Farber/Harvard Cancer Center (DF/HCC), designated a comprehensive cancer center by the National Cancer Institute. It provides adult cancer care with Brigham and Women's Hospital as Dana-Farber/Brigham and Women's Cancer Center and it provides pediatric care with Children's Hospital Boston as Dana-Farber/Children's Hospital Cancer Center. Dana-Farber is the top ranked cancer center in New England, according to *U.S. News & World Report,* and one of the largest recipients among independent hospitals of National Cancer Institute and National Institutes of Health grant funding. Follow Dana-Farber on Twitter: @danafarber and Facebook: www.facebook.com/danafarbercancerinstitute

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