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### UNC earns cancer grant

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Staff Writer

0 comments

UNC researchers are already scheming ways to win the war against cancer with the help of a \$13 to \$20 million grant received Wednesday.

The UNC Lineberger Comprehensive Cancer Center is one of 12 centers across the nation chosen to receive federal funding for the next five years through the Cancer Genome Atlas Grant.

The 12 centers, including UNC, will conduct research that could potentially pave the way for a breakthrough in the mapping of the cancer genome. The project aims to put the University at the forefront of scientific advances throughout the nation.

"This is the defining project of our generation," said Dr. Neil Hayes, an assistant professor of clinical research and project co-director at the Lineberger Center.

"It puts us right in the center of one of the most important medical questions being asked at the end of the first decade of the 21st century."

Hayes said the research on the cancer genome will rival that of the Human Genome Project conducted in the 1990s.

The grant is part of a national initiative to research genomic changes that occur in cancer and how they affect the rapid and uncontrolled spread of the disease throughout the body.

Hayes said he hopes that the initiative will revolutionize scientists' ability to understand why cancer patients have cancer, what treatments patients will respond to and why some patients respond to the disease better than others.

The Lineberger Center was chosen because it is a comprehensive cancer center, a designation provided by the National Cancer Institute to only 40 institutions in the country. It is also the only public center of this type in the state.

Other hospitals have departments that specialize in cancer research, but the Lineberger Center focuses on both research and patient care.

The facility has the ability to bring together scientists from the entire University.

The center provides clinicians and clinical services to patients in an effort to give the most comprehensive care possible.

"Who's really going to win from this funding in the end is cancer patients," said Ellen de Graffenreid, the director of communications and marketing at the Lineberger Center.

Researchers said that they hope that the grant will allow the center to draw donations from independent sources and reduce its financial dependence on the University.

This should provide the hospital with more autonomy and allow UNC to direct its funds elsewhere.

De Graffenreid said she hopes the grant will enable the center to hire more scientists and produce more research related to genetics and cancer, with the ultimate goal of improving health care for North Carolina and the rest of the nation.

"This has extraordinary potential to help us better understand and treat this disease," Obama said in a press release Wednesday.

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