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NCCN Foundation Announces Awards for Rising Cancer Research Leaders

NCCN and the NCCN Foundation recently announced 7 new recipients for the 2021 NCCN Foundation Young Investigator Awards (YIA) Program. The honorees will receive up to \$150,000 in funding, over 2 years, to advance important research on important issues in oncology. These early-career investigators from NCCN Member Institutions represent tomorrow's leaders for advancing cancer care. The NCCN Oncology Research Program (ORP) managed the selection process and will provide guidance and oversight for the projects over the grant duration.

"NCCN is committed to improving the lives of people with cancer by supporting research that is novel, transparent, and meaningful," said Wui-Jin Koh, MD, Chief Medical Officer, NCCN. "The NCCN Foundation Young Investigator Awards Program exemplifies this objective by fostering emerging talent and exploring promising areas for study. Congratulations to all of the impressive investigators selected for these awards."

The 2021 NCCN Foundation YIA recipients are:

- Esra Akbay, PhD, UT Southwestern Simmons Comprehensive Cancer Center
 - Activating Anti-Tumor Innate Immunity to Overcome Checkpoint Blockade Resistance in NSCLC
- William C. Jackson, MD, University of Michigan Rogel Cancer Center;
 - A Phase II Randomized Trial of Moderate versus Ultra-Hypofractionated Post-Prostatectomy Radiation Therapy
- Everett Moding, MD, PhD, Stanford Cancer Institute
 - Resolving Sarcoma Evolution During Tumor Development and Radiation Therapy
- Neelima Navuluri, MD, MPH, Duke Cancer Institute
 - Intervention Mapping to Improve Lung Cancer Screening Among Black Veterans
- Ravi Parikh, MD, MPP, The Abramson Cancer Center at the University of Pennsylvania
 - Machine Learning and Behavioral Nudges to Improve Palliative Care Utilization in Advanced Cancer
- Deborah Stephens, DO, Huntsman Cancer Institute at the University of Utah
 - Non-melanoma Skin Cancer (NMSC) in Patients with Chronic Lymphocytic Leukemia (CLL): Biology and Prevention
- Caitlin Zebley, MD, PhD, St. Jude Children's Research Hospital
 - Epigenetic Reprogramming of CAR T-Cell Therapy

"The NCCN Foundation Young Investigator Award recipients over the years have contributed an impactful body of work to improve quality, equity, effectiveness, and efficiency in cancer care, and we're happy to continue that this year," said Patrick Delaney, Executive Director, NCCN Foundation. "We're eager to see how these leading young researchers improve outcomes for future cancer patients."

The research from these 7 recipients will be presented during the NCCN 2023 Annual Conference. Recipients of the 2018 NCCN Young Investigator Awards recently presented their research during the NCCN 2021 Virtual Annual Conference; those abstracts are now available on JNCCN.org. The NCCN

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Foundation has awarded \$8.3 million since 2011 through the YIA program, to a total of 58 researchers.

The NCCN ORP fosters innovation and knowledge discovery that improves the lives of people with cancer and supports preclinical, translational, and clinical research and quality improvement projects in oncology at NCCN Member Institutions. In an effort to improve collaboration in cancer research, the NCCN ORP also maintains a shared resources website and an informed consent database. For more information on these and other collaborative cancer research projects, see NCCN.org/orp.

The 2021 NCCN Foundation Young Investigator Awards were made possible through support from AbbVie; Amgen Inc.; AstraZeneca; Pfizer Inc.; Pharmacyclics, An AbbVie Company; and Sanofi Genzyme. The 2021 NCCN Foundation YIA Program is also supported by a grant from Genentech, a member of the Roche Group. Visit NCCN.org/patients to learn more or to make a donation to the NCCN Foundation.

NCCN Announces Projects to Study Oral Decitabine and Cedazuridine in Collaboration With Taiho Oncology

The NCCN Oncology Research Program (ORP) has announced that 3 projects have been selected to study oral decitabine (35 mg) and cedazuridine (100 mg). The NCCN ORP convened a Scientific Review Committee to review, evaluate, and select awardees and will provide oversight for the two-year studies—which will commence later in 2021. Research funding will be provided by a grant from Taiho Oncology, who will also supply the decitabine and cedazuridine tablet.

The selected projects are:

- Michael Byrne, DO, Vanderbilt-Ingram Cancer Center, Moffitt Cancer Center
 - Phase 2 Study of Decitabine and Cedazuridine in Combination with Venetoclax for AML Relapse after Allogeneic Hematopoietic Cell Transplantation
- Gurkamal Chatta, MD, Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center
 - A Phase 1b Clinical Trial: Improving Outcomes with Androgen Pathway inhibitors by Targeting DNA Methyltransferase Activity
- Martin McCarter, MD, University of Colorado Cancer Center
 - Oral Decitabine/Cedazuridine in Combination with Nivolumab as a Strategy to Enhance the Efficacy of Immune Checkpoint Blockade in Unresectable or Metastatic Mucosal Melanoma.

“Congratulations to all of the selected investigators,” said Wui-Jin Koh, MD, Chief Medical Officer, NCCN. “We look forward to their work advancing our understanding of this medication combination. The potential for oral medication in place of intravenous delivery is particularly worthy of exploration, as this may provide better options for outpatient therapy with reduced office visits, which in turn improves access to care and helps underserved patient populations.”

“Taiho Oncology is pleased to continue our collaboration with the National Comprehensive Cancer Network to help broaden the understanding of oral decitabine and cedazuridine for patients with solid tumors

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These grants represent a step forward in exploring the full potential of oral decitabine and cedazuridine to help improve outcomes.

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New free resource helps patients and caregivers recognize and understand blood cell production deficiencies, to better participate in their care planning.

and hematologic malignancies,” said Terri L. Washington, DNP, RN, Vice President, Scientific Partnerships and Medical Affairs Operations, Taiho Oncology, Inc. “These grants will help advance critical research and represent a step forward in exploring the full potential of oral decitabine and cedazuridine for patients to help improve outcomes.”

The NCCN ORP fosters innovation and knowledge discovery that improves the lives of people with cancer and supports preclinical, translational, clinical research and quality improvement projects in oncology at NCCN Member Institutions. In an effort to improve collaboration in cancer research, the NCCN ORP also maintains a shared resources website and an informed consent database. For more information, visit NCCN.org/orp.

NCCN Releases New Patient Guidelines on Anemia and Neutropenia

NCCN has published new NCCN Guidelines for Patients: Anemia and Neutropenia, Low Red and White Blood Cell Counts funded by the NCCN Foundation and endorsed by The Leukemia and Lymphoma Society (LLS). The free information source is designed to help people living with cancer and caregivers recognize symptoms of blood cell deficiencies caused by cancer or chemotherapy—and increase engagement with their oncology care team about management and support.

Chemotherapy and certain cancers can slow the body’s production of red blood cells (which carry oxygen), platelets (which help stop bleeding by forming blood clots), and white blood cells (which help protect against infection). Anemia, a deficiency of red blood cells, can cause tiredness and headaches, while neutropenia and thrombocytopenia—a shortage of white blood cells and platelets, respectively—often go unnoticed before reaching severely low levels. Yet all 3 conditions can cause dangerous complications or require delays in cancer treatment.

“Anemia made me tired and unmotivated, although I’m normally a high energy person,” said “Linda,” a 74-year-old survivor of chronic lymphocytic leukemia/small lymphocytic lymphoma from Seminole, Florida. “Frequent rests helped me meet my daily goals to get things done.”

Elizabeth Griffiths, MD, Associate Professor, Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center, chairs the NCCN Clinical Practice Guidelines (NCCN Guidelines) Panel for Hematopoietic Growth Factors responsible for maintaining and updating the clinical guidelines from which the patient guidelines are derived.

“It’s important for patients getting chemotherapy to be aware that there are supportive treatments, to learn about what they offer, and to know what to expect,” Dr. Griffiths said. “Depending on the patient’s situation, there are pluses and minuses for treatments like medications or growth factors, and the patient guidelines aim to present balanced information on these options in a patient-friendly manner.”

There are several options available to help patients with anemia and neutropenia. Treatments can range from simple rest and careful monitoring, to medications or infusions of biological agents (growth factors) that help the body produce more blood cells.

The new NCCN Guidelines for Patients outline the causes of anemia and neutropenia as well as warning signs and potential management options that patients and caregivers can discuss with physicians. The publication offers important information in accessible, easy-to-understand language to help patients play an active role in their cancer care decisions. The patient

guidelines are based on the renowned clinical NCCN Guidelines which are created by multidisciplinary teams of experts from across NCCN Member Institutions and used by health care professionals all over the world.

"These patient guidelines are designed to help educate patients so they can look out for potential problems and seek early intervention," said Vivek Roy, MD, Mayo Clinic Cancer Center, Vice Chair of the NCCN Guidelines Panel for Hematopoietic Growth Factors. "While nurses and physicians do check for any potential issues, the patient can also be their own best advocate if they have the information."

"Anemia can have a profound impact on your daily life, but listening to your body and communicating your symptoms to your treatment team can be pivotal," says Nikki Yuill, LCSW, Director of The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society's Information Resource Center. "We are grateful that NCCN has developed a lay-friendly guide for patients."

NCCN also recently published new NCCN Guidelines for Patients: Primary Cutaneous Lymphomas, which are a group of cancers where lymphocytes (a type of white blood cell) grow unchecked in the skin causing lesions. The new book provides information on treatment options that were previously addressed in a now-separate book for Mycosis Fungoides and Sézary Syndrome. Those two guides are part of the growing library that include 55 books for patients and caregivers from NCCN covering most major types of cancer, along with topics like managing cancer-related distress, nausea and vomiting, survivorship, and special considerations for adolescents and young adults across all cancer types.

Free digital versions are available at [NCCN.org/patientguidelines](https://www.nccn.org/patientguidelines). Printed versions are available for a nominal fee at [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com).

Learn more and help support these and other resources for people with cancer and their caregivers at [NCCN.org/patients](https://www.nccn.org/patients).