

Dana-Farber/Harvard Cancer Center Awarded \$12 Million NCI SPORE Grant to Advance Breast Cancer Research

The five-year award brings together leading scientists and clinicians to drive discovery and translate research into improved patient care.

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The [Dana-Farber/Harvard Cancer Center \(DF/HCC\)](#), a cancer research consortium comprised of five of Boston's academic medical centers, including Dana-Farber Cancer Institute and Massachusetts General Hospital has been awarded a highly competitive, federal grant from the National Cancer Institute, part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), to continue its Specialized Program of Research Excellence (SPORE) in Breast Cancer. The \$12 million, five-year award represents a renewal of the DF/HCC's SPORE in Breast Cancer grant, originally received in 2000, and underscores the investigators' leadership and innovation in breast cancer research.

"This renewal represents an extraordinary vote of confidence from the NIH in the talent and vision of our breast cancer research community," said Dr. Kornelia Polyak, Professor of Medicine at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, co-leader of the Dana-Farber Harvard Cancer Center Cancer Cell Biology Program and a SPORE co-Principal Investigator. "By fostering close collaboration between basic, translational, and clinical investigators, and by partnering with our patients, we are positioned to make real and lasting impact."

There are over 20 NIH SPOREs in the United States and their goal is to accelerate the translation of scientific discoveries into clinical advances by supporting collaborative, multidisciplinary research focused on a specific cancer type, a group of related cancers, or a common pathway or specific theme.

The DF/HCC SPORE in Breast Cancer, under the leadership of principal investigators [Kornelia Polyak, MD, PhD](#), Professor of Medicine at Dana-Farber; [Leif Ellisen, MD, PhD](#), Program Director of Breast Medical Oncology at Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH), [Nancy Lin, MD](#), Associate Chief, Division of Breast Oncology at Dana-Farber and [Geoffrey Shapiro, MD, PhD](#), Senior Vice President, Developmental Therapeutics at Dana-Farber, brings together leading scientists and clinicians across DF/HCC to drive discovery and rapidly translate research into improved patient

care.

“The SPORE mechanism is designed to move scientific discovery from bench to bedside as quickly as possible,” said Dr. Leif Ellisen, Program Director of Breast Medical Oncology at MGH, and SPORE co-Principal Investigator. “With this generous support from the NIH, we can accelerate progress toward new treatments, better patient outcomes, and ultimately, cures.”

The renewed grant will support four integrated translational research projects:

Project 1 addresses overcoming mechanisms of resistance to antibody-drug conjugates (Project Leads: Leif Ellisen, MD, PhD, of MGH; [Steven Isakoff, MD](#), Director of Breast Cancer Clinical Research at MGH)

Project 2 examines approaches to treatment and prevention of breast cancer brain metastases across different breast cancer subtypes (Project Leads: Nancy Lin, MD, and, [Jean Zhao, PhD](#), principal investigator in the Department of Cancer Biology at Dana-Farber)

Project 3 builds on prior preclinical work demonstrating that BET bromodomain inhibition is synergistic with chemo-immunotherapy in triple negative breast cancer promoting enhanced immunomodulation and efficacy. (Project Leads: Kornelia Polyak, MD, PhD; [Ana Garrido-Castro, MD](#), Director, Triple-Negative Breast Cancer Research at Dana-Farber; [Sara Tolaney, MD, MPH](#) Chief of Division of Breast Oncology at Dana-Farber)

Project 4 addresses the combined targeting of DNA repair and macrophage-mediated immunosuppression in BRCA-associated breast cancer. (Project Leads: Geoffrey Shapiro, MD, PhD; [Jennifer Guerriero, PhD](#), Breast Surgery at Brigham and Women’s Hospital; [Filipa Lynce, MD](#), Director, Inflammatory Breast Center at Dana-Farber, and co-investigator [Erica Mayer, MD, MPH](#), Director, Breast Cancer Clinical Research at Dana-Farber)

The funds will also be used to support the Developmental Research Program, which provides seed funding to support pilot experiments that address innovative scientific questions in breast cancer.

As well as the Career Enhancement Program, which provides funding and mentorship to early career investigators seeking to focus their careers in the area of translational breast cancer research.

A distinctive feature of the DF/HCC SPORE in Breast Cancer is its Patient Advocate Panel, a dedicated group of breast cancer advocates who provide critical perspectives on all aspects of the SPORE and help shape the research agenda to ensure it reflects patient priorities and needs.

Dr. Nancy Lin, SPORE co-Principal Investigator, explained that “What makes this program so meaningful is that it places patients at the center. Our Patient Advocate Panel is an essential voice at every stage of the process, helping ensure that our work addresses the most pressing challenges facing those living with breast cancer.”

Since its launch in 2000, the DF/HCC SPORE in Breast Cancer continues to be a national leader in breast cancer research and has had a profound impact on the field. SPORE investigators have

advanced new therapeutic strategies into clinical trials, uncovered key mechanisms of drug resistance, and developed innovative approaches to immunotherapy and precision medicine. The program has fostered collaborations across disciplines and institutions, trained the next generation of breast cancer researchers, and engaged patients and advocates as true partners in discovery. These efforts have already shaped national clinical practice and are laying the groundwork for future breakthroughs that will directly improve the lives of patients with breast cancer.

“The SPORC grant renewal will catalyze innovation and collaboration across DF/HCC and beyond,” said Dr. Geoffrey Shapiro SPORC co-Principal Investigator. “We are grateful for this opportunity to advance discoveries that will directly improve the lives of patients.”

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