



News Release

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National Cancer Institute Awards UNM Cancer Center with Nanotechnology Training Grant for UNM Students

*The Cancer Nanotechnology Training Center will Educate Students in Cancer
Prevention, Diagnosis, and Treatment through Nanotechnology*

Albuquerque – February 1, 2011 – The University of New Mexico Cancer Center is one of the few institutions in the nation to receive a \$1.8 million grant by the National Cancer Institute (NCI) for a new Cancer Nanotechnology Training Center. One of only six grants awarded throughout the country, it will fund a training program for students in health and chemical related sciences at the University of New Mexico to develop the next generation of cancer researchers in the area of nanotechnology. The grant has been awarded as part of NCI's Alliance for Nanotechnology in Cancer, a program that seeks to leverage the specific advantages of nanotechnology to improve the way physicians diagnose, treat, and prevent cancer.

“As nanotechnology has proven to be a vital part in cancer prevention, diagnosis, and treatment, we are thrilled to receive the Cancer Nanotechnology Training Center grant,” said Dr. Cheryl Willman, director and CEO of the UNM Cancer Center. “The use of

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Nanotechnology Training Center
Page 2

nanotechnology will ultimately provide physicians with a more customized and targeted approach to treating various types cancers, yielding a much higher survival rate for New Mexicans and cancer patients throughout the country.”

Dr. Janet Oliver, regent’s professor of pathology at UNM and associate director for research at the UNM Cancer Center, and Dr. Abhaya Datye, distinguished regent’s professor of chemical and nuclear engineering at UNM and member of the UNM Cancer Center, will act as co-principal investigators (PI) for the Cancer Nanotechnology Training Center. The program will integrate graduate and post doctorate researchers with backgrounds in health and chemical-related sciences. The grant is designed to provide students with an interdisciplinary education to bridge the gap between physical and chemical sciences to extend the understanding of cancer biology and create methods to more effectively prevent, diagnose, and treat cancer through nanotechnology.

“The UNM Cancer Center is one of only six institutions throughout the country to receive the Cancer Nanotechnology Training Center grant,” said Dr. Janet Oliver, regent’s professor of pathology at UNM and associate director for research at the UNM Cancer Center. “It is imperative that we educate young scientists on the value of using nanotechnology in cancer treatment as this method has shown great promise in treating each unique cancer case and can greatly impact cancer prevention screening methods to drastically reduce cancer casualty rates.”

–more–

Nanotechnology Training Center
Page 3

“We are very excited to receive this grant not only to train our students in this top-of-the-line technology, but to also have this program available for students studying health and chemical related sciences at UNM,” said Dr. Abhaya Datye, distinguished regent’s professor of chemical and nuclear engineering at UNM and member of the UNM Cancer Center. “Bringing the two studies together will create a new way to treat cancer, and it is very exciting that the UNM Cancer Center will be one of the first institutions in the country to have this type of technology readily available for cancer patients right here in New Mexico.”

Nanotechnology is the development of particles that are measured on a molecular level. Through use of nanotechnology, physicians can more effectively target cancerous cells through imaging and screening methods. For example, nanoparticles can be covered with antibodies that bind selectively to cancer cells allowing them to be visible in Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) and Computed Tomography (CT) scans. This method of screening allows the detection of specific types and stages of cancers, and allows physicians to view cells and molecules that are undetectable by conventional imaging methods.

Nanotechnology also provides a means for a more targeted delivery of cancer treatment drugs to cancerous cells allowing non-cancerous cells to remain healthier and less affected

Nanotechnology Training Center
Page 4

by the cancer treatment drugs. This technology delivers the medicine directly to the cancerous cells which increases the drug's effectiveness while reducing negative side effects.

In addition to the Cancer Nanotechnology Training Center grant, the UNM Cancer Center also received a \$1.95 million grant to create a joint Cancer Nanotechnology Platform Partnership with Sandia National Laboratories. The UNM Cancer Center is the only institution in the nation to be recognized with two of the nanotechnology awards from NCI.

The UNM Cancer Center is the Official Cancer Center of the State of New Mexico, and one of only 66 National Cancer Institute designated cancer centers in the nation. It is home to 85 board-certified oncology physicians representing every cancer specialty and more than 120 research scientists hailing from such prestigious institutions as M.D. Anderson, Johns Hopkins and the Mayo Clinic.

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