

“Pancreatic Cancer Signature Center: Providing the Research Tools Necessary to Advance Pancreatic Cancer Patient Care”

Murray Korc, M.D., Crystal Munson and Mark R. Kelley, Ph.D.

Indiana University School of Medicine

Indiana University – Purdue University Indianapolis

Abstract

There were approximately 45,000 new cases of pancreatic ductal adenocarcinoma (PDAC) in the U.S. in 2013, and approximately 38,500 deaths. PDAC thus constitutes the fourth leading cause of cancer deaths in adults, and PDAC patients have a dismal 5-year survival rate of 6%. Moreover, approximately 75% of patients die within the first year after diagnosis. PDAC is notoriously resistant to chemotherapy and radiation and even with our best treatment options, a complete margin-negative surgical resection, few patients achieve long-term survival. Despite these statistics, surprisingly only a small number of NCI-designated cancer centers have a specialized pancreatic cancer program. The creation of the IUPUI Signature Center for Pancreatic Cancer Research has been the foundation for putting IUPUI, the IU School of Medicine, Purdue University and the IU Simon Cancer Center at the forefront of pancreatic cancer treatment and research across the nation. The Signature Center, comprised of basic, translational and clinical researchers, represents the continuum of the disease from biological / molecular investigation to clinical trials. Funding from the Signature Center Initiative is being utilized to develop genetically engineered mouse models, generate orthotopic pancreatic cancer mouse models, develop cancer associated fibroblast lines to be used as a shared resource as well as provide funding for peer reviewed pilot projects led by young investigators. Establishment and characterization of these cell lines and *in vivo* models provides the groundwork for these resources to be used by all members in their translational research projects. Support of pilot projects provides preliminary data and identification of projects to be ultimately used in a SPORE application. Additionally, work has begun on a web portal to promote and educate both patients and clinicians about the IUSCC Pancreas Cancer Clinic which became operational in 2010. Taken together, these activities provide the infrastructure to support pancreas cancer research at IU across the continuum of bench to bedside to practice. The availability of these resources to all members promotes inter-disciplinary collaborations aimed at increasing our understanding of pancreatic cancer so that advancements can be made in early diagnosis, prevention and multi-modality targeted treatment of this malignancy.