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Cancer Center's Collaboration Accelerates Research to Aid in the Development of Blood-based Biomarkers

PHILADELPHIA—(Feb. 18, 2016)—The Wistar Institute, the nation's first independent biomedical research institute and a National Cancer Institute (NCI)-designated cancer center, and Christiana Care Health System's [Helen F. Graham Cancer Center & Research Institute](#) are working together to make significant advancements in the early detection and treatment of cancer through a unique community cancer center-academic science collaboration that started just five years ago.

Stemming from this collaboration came a recent announcement by OncoCyte, a developer of novel, non-invasive liquid biopsy products for the early detection of cancer, about its global licensing agreement to acquire exclusive commercial rights to a revolutionary non-invasive blood test that can be used to detect lung cancer at its earliest stages. This test could not have been developed at The Wistar Institute without access to essential patient samples that were provided by its academic collaborators, including this unique partnership with a Community Cancer Center such as the Graham Cancer Center.

Led by **Louise C. Showe, Ph.D.**, professor in the Molecular and Cellular Oncogenesis Program at Wistar, researchers identified a panel of biomarkers circulating in the blood that could detect lung cancer in high-risk patients. Showe's research into a potential lung cancer diagnostic began in 2004, with funding support provided by The Pennsylvania Department of Health Tobacco Settlement CURE funds. A second grant from the PA DOH, to help bring the technology closer to commercialization, awarded in 2012, supported further research by Wistar investigators and a new productive collaboration with the Graham Cancer Center. These studies also led to a sponsored research agreement for further development from OncoCyte and a presentation of early results at the 2015 American Thoracic Society (ATS) meeting in Denver. Most recently these collaborative efforts resulted in additional advances that led to a licensing agreement with OncoCyte early this year.

“It is truly remarkable when a community cancer center like the Graham Cancer Center and a leading biomedical research institute like Wistar can combine each's strengths and come together to advance important scientific discoveries,” said [Dario C. Altieri, M.D.](#), Wistar president and CEO, and director of The Wistar Institute Cancer Center. “The Graham Cancer Center has been an ideal partner in our mission, and we are very appreciative to them and our other collaborators to have access to clinically annotated patient specimens of the highest quality so our scientists can move the field forward.”

The Graham Cancer Center's Tissue Procurement Center has banked tissue specimens for Wistar researchers to use, which will ultimately aid the pace of discovery in cancer medicine from their lab to clinical trials with the goal of benefiting patients in the community. The collaboration was the first of its kind and brings together the Graham Cancer Center located in Newark Del., with

the Wistar Institute, located in Philadelphia. Wistar is one of the first National Cancer Institute (NCI)-designated cancer research centers and the first in the nation solely devoted to researching the biology of cancer. The Graham Cancer Center was one of the original National Cancer Institute's Community Cancer Centers Program and is presently a National Cancer Institute Community Oncology Research Program (NCORP).

"The Partnership with Wistar and the Graham Cancer Center allows a basic science research discovery to move rapidly through the development stages to reach its clinical potential. This is possible due to our access to a large patient population and the commitment our clinicians show to translational cancer research," said Gregory Masters, M.D., one of the investigators for this project at the Graham Cancer Center and Principal Investigator of the NCORP grant.

With this new assay in its final development stages, the hope is that this test can confirm a patient's diagnosis and address the high false positive rate obtained via low-dose computed tomography (LDCT), currently the gold standard for early lung cancer diagnosis. If successful scientific results are achieved, Oncocyte will work with Wistar to fully validate the test in 2016 and set up its commercial launch.

The need for an effective early diagnostic tool is especially dire in lung cancer, where patients have an 80% chance of five year survival after diagnosis in the earliest stages, but only a 1% chance if found in stage IV when it is commonly diagnosed and difficult to treat.

In addition, researchers and health care professionals at both the Graham Cancer Center and The Wistar Institute are working on additional collaborative opportunities that focus not only on advancing Wistar's existing pipeline of biomarker technologies, but also identifying novel non-invasive biomarkers that can be used to detect cancer early, identify patients that may be eligible for new treatment regimens, and monitor treatment responses in patients receiving therapy.

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Media Contacts:

The Wistar Institute

Tara Yates
tyates@wistar.org
215.898.3826

Christiana Care Health System

Bill Schmitt
wschmitt@christianacare.org
302.327.3318

About The Wistar Institute

The Wistar Institute is an international leader in biomedical research with special expertise in cancer research and vaccine development. Founded in 1892 as the first independent nonprofit biomedical research institute in the country, Wistar has held the prestigious Cancer Center designation from the National Cancer Institute since 1972. The Institute works actively to ensure that research advances move from the laboratory to the clinic as quickly as possible. Wistar's Business Development team is dedicated to advancing Wistar Science and Technology Development through creative partnerships. www.wistar.org.

About Christiana Care Health System

Christiana Care Health System is one of the country's largest health care systems, ranking as the 22nd leading hospital in the nation and 12th on the East Coast in terms of admissions. The health system includes The Christiana Care Medical Group, a network of primary care physicians, medical and surgical specialists as well as home health care, preventive medicine, rehabilitation services and patient/family advisors for core health care services. A not-for-profit teaching hospital affiliated with Sidney Kimmel Medical College at Thomas Jefferson University, Christiana Care is recognized as a regional center for excellence in cardiology, cancer and women's health services. Christiana Care has an extensive range of outpatient services, and through Christiana Care Quality Partners, Christiana Care works closely with its medical staff to achieve better health, better access to care and lower cost. Christiana Care is home to Delaware's only Level I trauma center, the highest capability center and the only one of its kind between Philadelphia and Baltimore. Christiana Care also features a Level III neonatal intensive care unit, the only delivering hospital in Delaware that offers this highest level of care to the most critically ill newborns. Christiana Care includes two hospitals with 1,100 patient beds. For more information about Christiana Care, visit www.christianacare.org/whoweare.