



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

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by
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INFORMATIONAL BRIEFING ON THE CANCER RESEARCH CENTER OF HAWAII

1. Introduction

This is a landmark year for the Center. Many developments that have long been planned are finally becoming reality.

This wouldn't be happening without your support. That's why I'd like to express our deep gratitude to you for representing the interests of the people of our state, and for understanding the importance of cancer care and research to the health of our residents.

2. Memorandum of Understanding

You have already heard of the many benefits associated with being a designated cancer center of the National Cancer Institute. As a designated center, we are evaluated periodically to assess whether we meet the stringent criteria for ongoing designation.

Four years ago, the NCI recommended that the Cancer Research Center of Hawai'i build a research facility to accommodate more physicians and researchers. The construction of the new building will address this requirement, and in a moment, you will be hearing more about our plans. However, the NCI also made two other important recommendations:

- First, that we develop a clinical component to our program to support conducting 'translational' research—that is bringing science from the lab to the bedside,
- And secondly, that we strengthen the Center by adding more faculty research positions and expertise to better serve the people of Hawai'i.

To address the first requirement, we are very pleased to announce that we have formed a consortium with the University's John A. Burns School of Medicine, The Queens Medical Center, Hawai'i Pacific Health, Kuakini Medical Center and other hospitals in Hawai'i. Through this partnership we will offer a clinical component that links center researchers, with hospital physicians, administration, staff and support services that will result in improved patient care. The consortium will create:

- Foremost, the opportunity to provide the cancer patients with the most advanced treatment therapies available. This is made possible through our clinical trial programs conducted in part through our association with the NCI.
- An opportunity to bring together expertise from complementary scientific disciplines to collaborate for the benefit of the patient.
- Increased efficiencies in the use of expertise, lab and facilities, financial resources.

I would like to recognize the tremendous and ongoing support of Art Ushijima from The Queens Medical Center, Chuck Sted from Hawai'i Pacific Health, Gary Kajiwara from Kuakini Medical Center, and Dr. Jerris Hedges, dean of JABSOM and many others for their contributions to creating this partnership.

3. Clinical Trials:

In cancer research, a clinical trial is a study conducted to evaluate new treatment or prevention methods. New clinical trials and therapeutic, screening, diagnostic or preventive options are offered prevalently and at times exclusively through NCI-designated Cancer Centers.

Currently, the Center is involved in more than 200 clinical trials, each with the tremendous lifesaving potential for citizens locally, nationally and globally. The continuation of our NCI designation, coupled with the formation of the consortium means that we will also expand our clinical trial program. Community benefits include:

- Access to the most innovative patient programs through NCI trials and experimental drug programs.
- Clinical trials conducted locally mean that cancer patients in Hawai'i can remain here for the best treatment rather than having to travel to the mainland to seek care.
- Increased use of state healthcare services and facilities, and more jobs for healthcare professionals and staff in our communities.
- Expansion of Cancer Center facilities and research will add expertise to the local healthcare network, and provide a significant boost of support to the state's young and promising biotech industry.

4. Recruitment:

Since becoming center director last fall, I have been working with university leadership and our faculty to address the NCI recommendation of expanding our research program through recruitment. In the coming year, we anticipate bringing up to ten new researchers on board which will greatly enhance our capacity and expertise.

Today, I am very happy to share with you the successful recruitment of the following three individuals:

- Dr. David Ward as our new scientific director. Dr. Ward has just joined the Center from his previous position as deputy director of the Nevada Cancer Institute in Las Vegas. He is the former chair of the Genetics Department at Yale

University, and is a member of the highly esteemed National Academy of Sciences. We are delighted to have him on board and expect to see immediate benefits from his experience and leadership.

- Dr. Clayton Chong will join our Center in mid-January. Dr. Chong is a highly regarded oncologist who has devoted much of his career to the study of Native Hawaiian cancer incidence and mortality. With a special emphasis on breast cancer, he will be an invaluable asset in helping us serve the community.
- Dr. Linda Wong will also be adding her expertise to our faculty. Dr. Wong is a specialist in liver cancer, and Hawai'i is the state with the highest incidence of liver cancer in the nation. She and her team have conducted more than 160 liver transplants, and her facility, Hawai'i Medical Center-East is the major referral site for liver disease in the Pacific.

We will be continuing recruiting efforts in the coming year, and expect to add an additional six to seven researchers by year's end.

5. Closing

With so much on the horizon, I'd like to express my deep gratitude to our state, community and university partners, donors, patients, and faculty and staff who have contributed to our progress thus far. With your continued support, we will usher in a new era for the Cancer Research Center of Hawai'i together. Mahalo.