

Leaders' update

A message from Director Gordon Ginder

One of VCU Massey Cancer Center's many strengths is the diversity of its research members. At Massey, investigators from a variety of scientific backgrounds in over 25 university departments collaborate to tackle the most challenging issues in cancer research. As we look ahead to another exciting year, I'd like to take the opportunity to point out some of the benefits of Massey research membership and encourage our members to continue to think about how novel transdisciplinary collaborations can lead to exciting new discoveries.

All research members are highly valued and critical to the success of the Center, and collaboration is encouraged across all membership levels and programs. Massey's shared resource core lab infrastructure is designed to enable the science of our members. Another benefit to full and associate members is access to [pilot project](#) and [multi-investigator award program](#) funding. Pilot projects allow collaborative research teams the ability to gather preliminary data required to prepare a successful grant application for extramural grant funding needed to carry out a larger study, and applicants are eligible for up to \$50,000 for a one-year project. Multi-investigator awards provide up to \$100,000 per year for up to two years of funding in order to support collaborative research teams of two or more investigators whose work could lead to a multi-PI external peer-reviewed grant submission. Affiliate members contribute a wide variety of skills and expertise to our research, particularly in the clinical research arena. In return, these members have access to established investigators for collaborative research, and the opportunity to further their careers through affiliation with one of the top cancer research centers in the nation.

I would like to thank everyone who played a part in the Center's external advisory board (EAB) site visit on January 24. Our EAB consists of scientific leaders from some of the most distinguished NCI-designated cancer centers in the nation. While we will not receive our formal review from the EAB for several months, initial feedback from the group was very encouraging. We received a great deal of praise for our ongoing recruitment efforts, interdisciplinary collaborations, high impact publications and our strong investigator-initiated translational and prevention and control research. As always, we also gained insight into ways for improvement. If we continue on our path, I believe we will be strongly positioned to compete for Comprehensive Cancer Center designation at our NCI Cancer Center Support Grant (CCSG) review in 2016.

As you may know, our Clinical Trials Office is completing a significant reorganization in order to strengthen our clinical research efforts both at VCU Health System and through our growing statewide clinical research network. Over the holidays, Massey submitted an application for a Minority-Based NCI Community Oncology Research Program (NCORP) center. The NCORP replaces and expands upon the Community Clinical Oncology Program (CCOP) under which we have been funded. NCORP has an overarching goal of expanding the scope of the CCOP program to bring state-of-the-art cancer treatment, prevention, control and imaging trials to individuals in their own communities. Due to our high level of involvement in communities throughout Virginia, I am confident that our application will be highly competitive.

On a somber note, I'm sad to announce that we lost one of our longest-serving clinical research nurses, Connie Honeycutt, who recently passed away after a very hard-fought battle. Connie had been with Massey since 1989 and was an extremely valuable member of our hematologic malignancy team. Her personal concern for and dedication to our patients as well as our clinical research mission continue to serve as an inspiration to us all.

Finally, I would like to encourage all of Massey's research program members to attend the 2014 Massey Cancer Center Research Retreat on May 23. Once again, presentations will take place in the Molecular Medicine Research Building, with a poster session in the Goodwin Research Laboratory following lunch. This year's keynote speakers are Deborah Schrag, M.D., M.P.H., and William Hahn, M.D., Ph.D., both from the Dana-Farber/Harvard Cancer Center, bringing together what should be very stimulating discussions spanning basic, translational, and prevention and control science.

Respectfully,

Gordon D. Ginder, M.D.

Director of VCU Massey Cancer Center