With the creation of the Center for Malignant Blood Diseases in the Robert H. Lurie Comprehensive Cancer Center of Northwestern University, Northwestern Medicine is leveraging the groundbreaking science of Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine to revolutionize the treatment of blood cancer. The Center unites researchers and scientists within the Lurie Cancer Center, in a common mission to advance our understanding of the basis for blood cancer and to promote the development of new therapies.

Blood cancers, which include leukemia, lymphoma, myeloma, myeloproliferative neoplasms, and myelodysplastic syndrome, are devastating diseases that affect people of all ages. Although treatments are effective in some cases, such as childhood B-cell acute lymphoblastic leukemia, the cures often come with debilitating side effects including a substantial risk for secondary malignancies later in life. Moreover, for many of these malignancies there are no effective treatments apart from bone marrow transplant, which also comes with significant risk.

The new Center for Malignant Blood Diseases emphasizes collaborative basic and translational science research, with the ultimate goal to provide a framework for the development of new, more effective and less toxic therapies for blood cancer patients. Although there have been many recent advances in our understanding of the genetic basis for blood cancer, the way that genetic changes lead to excessive growth has yet to be fully explored. The results of the work performed in the Center for Malignant Blood Diseases will facilitate the development of novel trials by the clinical investigators of the Lurie Cancer Center.

“This new Center will facilitate important fundamental basic science discoveries that could ultimately lead in the development of innovative therapeutic approaches.”

Leonidas Platanias, MD, PhD, Director of the Robert H. Lurie Comprehensive Cancer Center of Northwestern University and Jesse, Sara, Andrew, Abigail, Benjamin and Elizabeth Lurie Professor of Oncology
“By emphasizing basic science and translational research, the Center for Malignant Blood Diseases will accelerate the development of new therapies that will improve the lives of cancer patients.”

John Crispino, PhD, Director of the Center for Malignant Blood Diseases, Associate Director for Education and Training in the Lurie Cancer Center, Vice Chief of Research in the Division of Hematology/Oncology, and Robert I. Lurie, MD, and Lora S. Lurie Professor

About the Directors

Center director Dr. John Crispino is a world leader in identifying the causes of leukemia in children with Down syndrome. In addition, he is recognized for his groundbreaking research in the myeloproliferative neoplasms and his current work to bring a novel therapy, aurora kinase inhibitors, to patients. This latter study includes a Phase 1 clinical trial of alisertib in the myeloproliferative neoplasms MPNs, under the leadership of Dr. Brady Stein.

The Center’s co-director, Dr. Elizabeth Eklund is a prominent physician-scientist and leukemia researcher who also serves as chief of Hematology/Oncology at the Jessie Brown VA Medical Center in Chicago. Her research is at the forefront of uncovering novel pathways that promote acute myeloid leukemia and identifying new targets for therapeutic intervention.

THROUGH NORTHWESTERN MEDICINE, WE ARE CREATING A NATIONAL EPICENTER FOR HEALTHCARE, EDUCATION, RESEARCH, COMMUNITY OUTREACH, AND ADVOCACY.

Northwestern Medicine

Northwestern Memorial HealthCare and Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine are seeking to impact the health of humankind through Northwestern Medicine. Our commitment to transform healthcare and to be among the nation’s top academic medical centers will be accomplished through innovation and excellence. At the Lurie Cancer Center and medical school, we recognize that every positive contribution we have made to cancer care, research, and education has been made possible by generous donors who have entrusted us with their philanthropic support.

We invite loyal donors and interested friends to join Dr. Crispino and his colleagues in advancing the Center for Malignant Blood Diseases. Your gifts of outright support and endowment will provide the resources we need to introduce breakthroughs that will improve the diagnosis and treatment of people living with cancer today and in the future.
About the Lurie Cancer Center

- The Robert H. Lurie Comprehensive Cancer Center of Northwestern University—one of 50 National Cancer Institute (NCI)-designated Comprehensive Cancer Centers in the nation—is committed to being a national leader in the battle to overcome cancer.

- The Lurie Cancer Center supports care for a broad range of cancer types through comprehensive research; distinguished and dedicated faculty and staff; a world-class teaching program; and ongoing advances in medical, surgical, radiation, and interventional oncology.

- We are a founding member of the National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN): an alliance of 27 of the nation’s leading cancer centers dedicated to improving the quality, effectiveness, and efficiency of cancer care so that patients can live better lives.

- Northwestern’s Lurie Cancer Center is a founding member of the Big Ten Cancer Research Consortium, which collaborates on oncology clinical trials that leverage the scientific and clinical expertise of the Big Ten universities.

- The Lurie Cancer Center has established major research strengths in breast, genitourinary, gastrointestinal, aero-digestive, neurologic, and gynecologic cancers; hematologic malignancies, sarcoma, melanoma, cutaneous lymphoma, and pediatric oncology.

- Our research programs in hormone action/signal transduction, angiogenesis, gene regulation, biologic therapies, mathematical modeling, and nanotechnology are nationally and internationally recognized.

- The Lurie Cancer Center OncoSET (Sequence, Evaluate, Treat) Program, launched in 2015, combines genomic sequencing and molecular diagnostics to identify new, individually tailored treatments and clinical trials. We recently initiated the Lurie Cancer Center OncoSET Clinic with the leadership of Massimo Cristofanilli, MD, associate director for Precision Medicine and Translational Research. The OncoSET Molecular Tumor Board, a multidisciplinary group of physicians and scientists, reviews the results and recommends a personalized treatment plan.

- The Translational Bridge Program is one example of how the Lurie Cancer Center is fostering collaboration to heighten the impact of translational research by providing funds for Postdoctoral Fellows to conduct research in an area of fundamental importance to cancer biology, with future potential for translation into a diagnostic or therapeutic setting. Lurie Cancer Center Bridge Fellows carry out their projects in a basic science lab headed by a seasoned investigator, and partnered with a clinician with expertise in a particular cancer or clinical research field. The Bridge Fellow is mentored by both of these faculty members, serving as a bridge to exceptional translational research.

- Our outstanding basic, translational, and clinical research complements a full range of prevention, early detection, treatment, rehabilitation, and palliative care programs for all types of cancer.

- Our nationally recognized supportive oncology programs and survivorship specialty clinics include fertility preservation services for young adult cancer survivors.

- A five-year grant from the NCI is supporting the creation of the Chicago Cancer Health Equity Collaborative (ChicagoCHEC) and helping Northwestern, the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC), and Northeastern Illinois University to work together with many of the city’s underserved communities to reduce cancer disparities and improve health.