

Press Release March 20, 2017

JAX's Maine Cancer Genomics Initiative Achieves Key Milestones in Bringing Precision Cancer Care to Maine

By Sarah Laskowski



Representatives from The Harold Alfond Foundation, MaineGeneral Health and The Jackson Laboratory at the official opening of the new MCGI office at the Harold Alfond Center for Cancer Care. From left to right: Charles Hewett, LuAnn Ballesteros, Gregory Powell, Jens Rueter, Andrey Antov, Chuck Hays, David and Kaye Flanagan, Richard Albert.

MCGI Hosts Forum, Opens Fully Staffed Office in Augusta

The Jackson Laboratory (JAX), an independent, nonprofit biomedical research institution, today announced that its [Maine Cancer Genomics Initiative](#) (MCGI) has accomplished key milestones toward its mission of partnering with clinical institutions and oncology practices in Maine to help cancer patients across the state.

Supported by [a grant from the Harold Alfond® Foundation](#), JAX's MCGI is working with clinicians from every cancer care provider in Maine to enhance oncology providers' knowledge of cancer genomic technology and provide access to advanced genomic tests and educational programs to the Maine oncology community. These tests identify mutations that can be targeted by precision medicine treatments.

We're dedicated to enhancing cancer care in Maine.

“Maine has one of the highest incidences of cancer in the country, and with approximately 9,000 new cancer cases each year in our state, addressing treatment in Maine is of the utmost importance,” said The Jackson Laboratory MCGI Medical Director Jens Rueter, M.D. “We're dedicated to enhancing cancer care here, and ensuring that health care providers have both the knowledge about and access to the latest diagnostic methods and clinical guidelines so they can select the most promising treatments for each type of tumor, and improve patient outcomes.”

Earlier this year, JAX convened the first annual MCGI Forum, hosting 60 Maine-based oncologists, pathologists, clinicians and other health care providers and cancer researchers. The forum provided an overview of next generation sequencing technology and reporting, identified physician educational program needs focused on genomic cancer education – including genomic testing and genomic tumor boards, and began the work of building a collaborative network of oncology providers to encourage continued growth of genomic medicine research initiatives.

MCGI also recently opened an office in Augusta, Maine at MaineGeneral Medical Center's Harold Alfond Center for Cancer Care. The team, including Medical Director Jens Rueter, M.D. and Program Director Andrey Antov, Ph.D., will use this as a home base to coordinate the initiative and all MCGI activities.

“We're excited to be working with a world-renowned biomedical research institution like The Jackson Laboratory,” said Chuck Hays, President & CEO of MaineGeneral Health. “Thanks to the Harold Alfond Foundation, we are able to bring cutting-edge genomic testing to our community.”

"Harold Alfond believed in Maine and chose to have his own cancer care in our state," said Greg Powell, Chairman of the Foundation's Board of Trustees. “It's wonderful to see Maine's oncology community working closely with one of our state's greatest assets, The Jackson Laboratory. Together, they will deploy cutting-edge approaches to cancer diagnosis and treatment, and the Foundation is honored to support this important work.”

In the coming months, MCGI aims to open an innovative study protocol at interested clinical oncology sites in Maine. In contrast to other protocols in the field, this one will be clinician-centric and focused on how the study can help health care professionals apply clinical genomics in cancer care. In addition, the protocol will allow progress measurements from feedback to the study, and improve the initiative's outcomes and impact while the MCGI program is running.