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Maine Cancer Foundation Provides Funding for Innovative Breast Cancer Detection Test
Support of UNE Professor's Project Offers Hope for Early Intervention

Falmouth, Maine - Maine Cancer Foundation (MCF) has announced a funding award of \$375,000 to foster the development of a commercially available early test for estrogen-negative breast cancer.

Srinidi Mohan, Ph.D., an assistant professor in the University of New England College of Pharmacy, has received a provisional patent for his early detection and disease monitoring method, which uses a marker in the blood to detect the presence of highly aggressive tumors and to help track cancer growth.

The two-year award from Maine Cancer Foundation will focus on developing the test, called NOHA, as a less-invasive, blood-based indicator for sensitive estrogen-negative breast tumors in racially distinctive populations. The breast cancer test will be used for early prognosis, screening and pre-operative tumor management. The project aligns with the MCF mission of reducing the incidence and mortality of cancer throughout Maine. MCF is in the midst of a 5-year statewide campaign, called Challenge Cancer 2020, that aims to reduce cancer impact 20% by the year 2020.

"We are thrilled to play an integral part of Dr. Mohan's groundbreaking work," says Tara Hill, Executive Director of Maine Cancer Foundation. "The development of a less invasive means of detecting estrogen-negative breast cancer at its earliest stages has the potential to vastly increase treatment options for women in Maine and beyond. We believe our support will help move this game-changing diagnostic out of the lab and into clinics, where it will save lives."

According to the American Breast Cancer Foundation, estrogen-negative breast cancer is diagnosed in approximately 60,000 individuals each year in the United States, with young women and African Americans most at risk. As an aggressive tumor, estrogen-negative breast cancer can grow between scheduled screenings, provides no noticeable symptoms prior to tumor cyst development, and has no readily available effective targeted therapy. Both early and advanced stage estrogen-negative breast tumors are treated predominantly by chemotherapy.



Apart from poor prognosis and modest treatment options, patients with such aggressive breast cancer face twice the risk of mortality as compared to other tumor subtypes. Currently, no reliable blood-based marker exists for estrogen-negative breast tumor prognosis and/or disease monitoring.

As principal investigator, Mohan will be conducting the project aims of this grant in collaboration with Maine Medical Center Research Institute researchers Drs. Susan Miesfeldt, Ivette Emery, Christine Duarte, and Peter Brooks; and Maine-based company Maine Biotechnology Services. Discussing the impact of the work, UNE Director of Research Administration Nicholas Gere noted, “This research project has the potential to be one of the first at UNE to achieve successful commercialization.”

Adds Hill, “We are proud to shepherd Dr. Mohan’s work so that women and their providers can detect this potentially lethal form of breast cancer early enough to stop it in its tracks. Early detection in this case can literally save lives, which is the goal of Maine Cancer Foundation.”

About Maine Cancer Foundation:

Maine Cancer Foundation is dedicated to reducing cancer incidence and mortality rates in Maine. 100% of funds raised by the Foundation are used to benefit the people of Maine. We lead a state-wide effort to advance the most promising and effective cancer-fighting efforts available to the people of Maine through a combination of grant-based financial support and coalition building. MCF is in the middle of a 5-year campaign, the Challenge Cancer 2020 initiative, to reduce cancer incidence and mortality in Maine 20% by 2020. Learn more at <https://mainecancer.org>

About the University of New England:

The University of New England is Maine’s largest private university, an innovative educational community with two distinctive coastal Maine campuses, a vibrant new campus in Tangier, Morocco, and a robust offering of degree and certificate programs online. UNE is home to Maine's only medical and dental schools—part of a comprehensive health education mission built on a pioneering interprofessional approach that includes pharmacy, nursing and an array of allied health professions. Visit <http://www.une.edu>

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