

Boost for research studies expected to reach clinic in two years

Phase One Foundation awards will move early stage clinical trials into the fast lane

by Shawn Le

Five City of Hope phase I translational clinical researchers are bringing a slate of promising investigative therapies to cancer patients, thanks to help from the Phase One Foundation.

The physicians recently were selected for Phase One Foundation funding to conduct early clinical trials into new therapies for metastatic disease that does not respond to other treatment. Each award provides as much as \$50,000 in the first year, with additional funding for a second year tied to the success of the first.

"I am pleased to award these first grants from the Phase One Award that support translational research conducted at City of Hope and enable the early stage clinical trials that are critical in the development of novel cancer therapies," said Robert Figlin, M.D., Arthur and Rosalie Kaplan Professor of Medical Oncology, chair of the Division of Medical Oncology & Therapeutics Research, and associate director for clinical research in the Comprehensive Cancer Center. Figlin is the award's principal investigator.

The Phase One Foundation supports early stage development of new therapies that otherwise might not be funded. It granted a \$500,000 award in April to City of Hope to support a phase I program. City of Hope investigators

Alicia Di Rado



Phase One award-winner Jana Portnow demonstrates a microdialysis catheter.

apply for funding for their projects under that program, and an advisory committee of faculty members select awardees on the proposals' quality and scientific merit. Five awardees were selected from the 13 applications submitted for this support.

The first grantees include these investigators:

Vincent Chung, M.D., assistant professor in the Division of Medical Oncology & Therapeutics Research

Chung will investigate the effects of a combination of vorinostat, which is currently approved for cutaneous T-cell lymphoma and is one of a new class of agents known as

Phase One: Five key researchers receive funding to offer high-impact clinical trials in cancer

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histone deacetylase inhibitors, and dasatinib, a drug approved for chronic myelogenous leukemia, against solid tumors.

Mark Kirschbaum, M.D., director of new drug development in hematologic malignancies and assistant professor in the Division of Hematology & Hematopoietic Cell Transplantation

Kirschbaum will investigate the effects of a combination of vorinostat and MK-0457, an investigational kinase inhibitor, against leukemia that has recurred or resists standard treatment.

Lily Lai, M.D., assistant professor in the Division of Surgery

Lai will investigate the effects of a new compound that interacts with farnesoid x

receptor, in combination with a standard chemotherapy regimen known as FOLFOX and Avastin, against metastatic colorectal cancer.

Jana Portnow, M.D., assistant professor in the Division of Medical Oncology & Therapeutics Research

Portnow will study how brain tumor patients tolerate increasing doses of the drug temsirolimus, currently approved for kidney cancer, with and without temozolomide, a drug used against certain brain tumors. She will use microdialysis — a technique employing a tiny catheter threaded into brain tissue — to assess the drugs.

Yun Yen, M.D., Ph.D., professor and co-leader of the Developmental Cancer

Therapeutics Program and director of the Department of Clinical and Molecular Pharmacology

Yen will study Triapine, an investigational drug currently in testing against breast cancer and solid tumors. This study will examine how an oral form of Triapine (rather than an intravenous solution) works against advanced solid tumors.

The program was open to submission from all City of Hope surgeons, radiation oncologists, pediatricians, medical oncologists and hematologists who are cancer center members and perform research within the cancer center programs. The Phase One Foundation, a nonprofit organization founded in 1999 based in Santa Monica, Calif., is committed to supporting phase I clinical trial research and treatment programs for patients with cancer.