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Researchers Hunt For New Treatments For Rare Cancer
The Cancer Institute of New Jersey Awarded \$740,000 For Mantle Cell Lymphoma

New York—January 27, 2004—Today, the Lymphoma Research Foundation (LRF) announced funding to help hunt for clues to cure and better treat a rare form of blood cancer, mantle cell lymphoma. The nine institutions named today are part of an overall \$12.8 million funding initiative the foundation announced in December. A total of eighteen research grants will be provided. The Cancer Institute of New Jersey (CINJ), in New Brunswick, N.J., will receive \$740,000. Lymphoma is the most common blood cancer and the third most common cancer of childhood.

“Our goal is to develop new and improved, less toxic therapies to enhance survival rates and ultimately find a cure,” said Joseph R. Bertino, M.D. Chair of the LRF Scientific Advisory Board. “Mantle cell lymphoma is a very aggressive cancer and less than ten percent of patients with the disease are alive after ten years. We hope to change that,” he added.

The project at The Cancer Institute of New Jersey, the state’s first and only National Cancer Institute-designated Comprehensive Cancer Center, will be conducted under the leadership of Roger Strair, M.D., Ph.D., Associate Professor in the Department of Medicine, UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School and Daniel Medina, Ph.D., Assistant Professor in the Department of Medicine, UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School. Both investigators will be developing new therapies for testing in mantle cell lymphoma clinical trials. One of these therapies uses a virus that has been modified to kill the cancerous cells, but not the healthy ones. Another therapy involves modifying the patient’s mantle cell lymphoma cells in a way that tricks the immune system into rejecting them.

“We are extremely grateful to the Lymphoma Research Foundation for their support of our work with mantle cell lymphoma,” commented Dr. Strair. “It is our hope that through research and clinical trials, we can solve some of the mysteries behind this very rare, yet devastating form of cancer.”

Mantle cell lymphoma is a relatively uncommon B-cell lymphoma that accounts for 5% to 7% of all adult non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma cases in the U.S. It is a malignancy of cells located

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in the mantle zone of the lymph node, a thin area surrounding individual follicles. Mantle cell lymphoma predominantly affects older males.

More than 500,000 Americans are affected by some form of lymphoma, either non-Hodgkin's lymphoma (NHL) or Hodgkin's lymphoma (HL). Each year another 61,000 new cases are diagnosed and nearly 25,000 people die from the disease. NHL is the most common cancer of the lymphatic system. The overall five-year survival rate is only 55%. Hodgkin's lymphoma (HL), also known as Hodgkin's disease, is a less common form of lymphoma. The overall five-year survival rate is 84%. Hodgkin's lymphoma occurs mainly in young adults, with a peak occurrence between ages 16 and 34. Older patients, especially those over age 55, may also develop HL.

Funding for the \$12.8 million initiative was made possible through an anonymous donation to the foundation by a New York-based family. For a full listing of all the institutions which received funding, please visit the 'news' section of the LRF website at www.lymphoma.org

The mission of the Lymphoma Research Foundation (LRF) is to eradicate lymphoma and serve those touched by the disease. The Foundation is the nation's largest lymphoma-focused voluntary health organization devoted exclusively to funding research to cure all lymphomas and providing patients and healthcare professionals with critical information on the disease. To date, LRF has funded over \$9 million in lymphoma research. People affected by lymphoma can receive free personalized information tailored to their diagnosis, help with finding a clinical trial, and easy-to-understand information on lymphoma, current treatments, and promising research. Please call 800-500-9976, email helpline@lymphoma.org, or visit the website www.lymphoma.org

The Cancer Institute of New Jersey is the state's first and only National Cancer Institute-designated Comprehensive Cancer Center. CINJ is dedicated to improving the prevention, detection, treatment and care of patients with cancer, through the transformation of laboratory discoveries into clinical practice. CINJ's Providers' Network is comprised of twenty-one Partner and Affiliate institutions throughout the state and provides a mechanism to rapidly disseminate important, valid discoveries into the community. The Cancer Institute of New Jersey is part of UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School.

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