



**ROBERT WOOD JOHNSON
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**UMDNJ-ROBERT WOOD JOHNSON MEDICAL SCHOOL
THE CANCER INSTITUTE OF NEW JERSEY
PHYSICIAN GRANTED TOP HONOR BY
DAMON RUNYON CANCER RESEARCH FOUNDATION**

*Peter D. Cole, M.D. Receives
Damon Runyon-Lilly Clinical Investigator Award*

NEW BRUNSWICK, N.J., JUNE 5, 2003 – UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School (RWJMS) and The Cancer Institute of New Jersey (CINJ) are pleased to announce that Peter D. Cole, M.D., Assistant Professor in the Department of Pediatrics, RWJMS, has been selected as a recipient of the 2003 Damon Runyon-Lilly Clinical Investigator Award, by the Damon Runyon Cancer Research Foundation. The grant, awarded over a five-year period, funds Dr. Cole’s clinical research to increase the cure rate and decrease the toxicity of chemotherapy in children with acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL), the most common childhood cancer.

Founded by Walter Winchell in 1946, The Damon Runyon Cancer Research Foundation, and specifically The Damon Runyon-Lilly Clinical Investigator Award supports young physician-scientists conducting patient-oriented cancer research. The goal is to increase the number of physicians capable of moving seamlessly between the laboratory and the patient’s bedside in search of breakthrough treatments.

“Dr. Cole’s clinical research offers tremendous promise to children with leukemia,” said Harold L. Paz, M.D., Dean, Robert Wood Johnson Medical School. “We are extraordinarily grateful to the Damon Runyon Cancer Research Foundation for this award and the prestige they bring to UMDNJ—Robert Wood Johnson Medical School and our constituents of New Jersey through their selection of Dr. Cole, a distinguished member of our faculty” he added.

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“We are thrilled that Dr. Cole is being honored for his work by such a prestigious and respected foundation,” said William Hait, M.D., Ph.D., Professor of Medicine and Pharmacology and Associate Dean for Oncology Programs at Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, Director, The Cancer Institute of New Jersey (CINJ). “I am confident that Dr. Cole’s research will support our commitment to providing exceptional and progressive treatment to our patients,” Hait said.

Dr. Cole’s submission, *Improving the Therapeutic Index for Children with Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia Through Studies of Folate Physiology and Antifolate Pharmacodynamic*, is one of only five honorees in the entire country. Along with mentor, Barton Kamen, M.D., Ph.D., Professor of Pediatrics and Pharmacology, Chief of Pediatric Hematology/Oncology, RWJMS and CINJ’s Chief of Pediatric Oncology, Dr. Cole’s study will link the clinic and the laboratory, studying the interactions among patients, their disease and the trial therapies, to improve treatment and reduce toxicity.

Dr. Cole’s research includes testing the ability of dextromethorphan, a common component in many cough syrups, to prevent the short-term (seizures, headaches, malaise) and long-term (learning disabilities, neurological damage) side effects of chemotherapy treatment for young patients with leukemia. His team also hopes to reduce the side effects of chemotherapy by replacing methotrexate with its ancestor, aminopterin (both are chemotherapy agents that work by antagonizing the effects of the vitamin folic acid).

“We are the first to use aminopterin, in place of methotrexate, as part of a multiagent therapy for children with leukemia,” explained Dr. Peter Cole. “Our hope is that with lower doses, this therapy will be easier and produce fewer side effects,” he continued.

About the Damon Runyon Cancer Research Foundation

Since its founding in 1946, the Damon Runyon Cancer Research Foundation has been singularly focused on identifying and encouraging extraordinary young scientists to commit themselves to arresting cancer’s devastating legacy. The Foundation is dedicated to identifying generations of truly innovative investigators in cancer research; scientists that approach questions from totally new directions, challenge existing dogma and think “outside the box.” To date, the Damon Runyon Cancer Research Foundation has invested more than \$147 million in cancer research, supporting approximately 3,000 of the most gifted scientists in the nation.

About UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School

As one of the nation’s leading comprehensive medical schools, UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School is dedicated to the pursuit of excellence in education, research, health care delivery and the promotion of community health for the residents of New Jersey. The school maintains educational programs at the undergraduate, graduate

and postgraduate levels, as well as continuing education courses for health care professionals and community education programs. The medical school encompasses 21 basic science and clinical departments and also integrates diverse clinical programs conducted at its 34 hospital affiliates and numerous ambulatory care sites in the region. The major institutes affiliated with UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School are the Cancer Institute of New Jersey, the Cardiovascular Institute, the Child Health Institute of New Jersey, the Center for Advanced Biotechnology and Medicine, and the Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences Institute.

About The Cancer Institute of New Jersey

Leading the war against cancer is The Cancer Institute of New Jersey, 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 Partner and Affiliate institutions throughout the state and provides a mechanism to rapidly disseminate important, valid discoveries into the community.

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