THE UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS CANCER CENTER
2018 UPDATE

NATIONAL CANCER INSTITUTE DESIGNATION
Through world-class research and patient care, The University of Kansas Cancer Center is working toward a world without cancer. As one of only 70 National Cancer Institute (NCI) designated cancer centers in the country, KU Cancer Center is committed to providing the highest level of research, treatment, prevention and survivorship services available. The cancer center has 350 cancer researchers and clinicians, including 124 disease-specific oncologists.

Why NCI Designation is Important
NCI designation is only awarded to the nation’s premier cancer research and treatment centers. These centers are pioneers in cancer research — recognized for scientific leadership, resources and depth of research in basic, clinical and population science.

NCI Designation Transforms our Region
Each year, approximately 14,500 Kansans are diagnosed with cancer. KU Cancer Center’s NCI designation allows these patients to remain close to home while receiving the most advanced cancer care from a deep bench of specialists.

Patients treated at NCI-designated centers have a 25 percent greater chance of survival
After an exhaustive multiyear effort, the NCI renewed KU Cancer Center’s designation in 2017, increasing our score from “excellent” to “outstanding” and our NCI funding by 11 percent. In addition, Children’s Mercy joined the Stowers Institute for Medical Research as a formal NCI consortium partner.
OUR CHALLENGE
During the next 10 years, the incidence of cancer is projected to increase by 45 to 50 percent. Over our lifetime, one in two men and one in three women will be diagnosed with cancer. It is one of the leading causes of death in both Kansas and Missouri due to several factors:
- Aging population
- Obesity
- Tobacco use
- HPV (human papillomavirus)

Survival rates drop by 50 percent for individuals without health insurance at the time of cancer diagnosis.
Under the leadership of its director, Dr. Roy A. Jensen, KU Cancer Center has set forth a comprehensive vision to address the challenges of cancer in this region.

OUR VISION
Develop paradigm-changing therapeutic advances
Focus on cancer prevention and control strategies
Leverage multidisciplinary discovery and translational programs
Establish an institutional culture that trains the next generation of leaders in cancer research, clinical care and advocacy
Lead the efforts locally and nationally to reduce the burden of cancer

We are making an impact thanks to our public and private partnerships, our innovative collaborations and our thought leadership. Highlights of how we are defining the standard of cancer care include:

DRUG DISCOVERY AND DEVELOPMENT
We invest in high-potential research to translate innovative ideas into new medical treatments and technologies. Seed funding from philanthropy supports faculty projects selected based on an extensive screening process to identify ideas most likely to result in a product to improve patient care. For example, in February 2018, KU Cancer Center opened a clinical trial for Ciclopirox Prodrug — the first KU Cancer Center-invented, anti-cancer agent that advanced from the laboratory to clinical trials.

FUELING INNOVATION
This is an exciting time for cancer research. We are beginning to see breakthroughs for patients with advanced melanoma, leukemia, lung cancer and many other forms of cancer. Even so, cancer is projected to become the leading cause of death in America by 2030.

Eliminating this threat demands that we have the right expertise in place to maximize the discovery of new treatments and cures.

PHYSICIAN-SCIENTISTS ARE CRITICAL TO MULTIDISCIPLINARY TEAMWORK
One undeniable new reality is the need for teamwork. As the body of scientific knowledge continues to explode, it is nearly impossible for any single person — no matter how gifted — to command it all. Physician-scientists are doctors with clinical training and experience who also have a passion for discovery. Because of their clinical perspective and focus on meaningful life outcomes for their patients, physician-scientists are essential to translational and clinical research.
That’s why at KU Cancer Center we have put a strong priority on recruiting the top talent from across the country to fill key research positions aimed at elevating all aspects of translational research.
Thanks to the support from generous donors, we have established nine new professorships since 2012.

KU Cancer Center earned National Cancer Institute designation.
KU Clinical Research Center opened in Fairway, Kan.
Andrew Godwin, Ph.D., appointed as deputy director of KU Cancer Center.

2012

2013

2014

2015

2016

2017

2018

The Blood and Marrow Transplant (BMT) program performed a record 303 transplants.
The Cancer Control and Population Health program was awarded a $2.7 million NCI grant to prevent smoking addiction.

Dr. Priyanka Sharma received a grant to identify biomarkers that could improve the treatment of triple-negative breast cancer.
The “Kick it at Swope” research program finds that menthol is a key contributor to nicotine addiction in African-American smokers.

KU Cancer Center was central to affecting public policy change to prevent cancer with the adoption of Tobacco 21 in 27 municipalities and passage of the indoor tanning bill restricting minors’ use of tanning devices.

Dr. John A. Taylor III, a nationally recognized urologic oncologist, joined the faculty at KU Cancer Center.

Steven Soper, Ph.D., joined the University of Kansas as one of 12 Foundation Distinguished Professors, the highest academic rank at KU.

Dr. Weijing Sun joined as division director of medical oncology and associate director for clinical research and will hold the Sprint Professorship.

Christie Baftor, Ph.D., was awarded $10 million to evaluate approaches for treating obesity.

A repurposed drug used to treat ovarian cancer saw positive results for patients with advanced peritoneal cancers.

The Women’s Cancer Center at Indian Creek opens in Overland Park, Kan.

Dr. Weijing Sun received NCI designation renewal with an “Outstanding” rating, resulting in an 11 percent increase in federal funding.

Received FDA clearance to begin first-in-human clinical trials. 100 patients per year are now enrolled in early-phase clinical trials.

The NCI recognized Children’s Mercy as one of 12 Foundation Distinguished Professors, the highest academic rank at KU.

KU Cancer Center was central to a record 303 transplants.

A repurposed drug used to treat ovarian cancer saw positive results for patients with advanced peritoneal cancers.

Dr. Roy A. Jensen named chair of NCI Subcommittee A and President of Association of American Cancer Institutes.

Phase I clinical trials for Ciclopirox Prodrug start.

Received FDA clearance to begin first-in-human clinical trials for a new therapy for the treatment of Graft vs. Host disease.

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PREVENTION AND CONTROL STRATEGIES
According to the American Institute of Cancer Research, nearly 50 percent of all cancers are preventable. As the region’s only NCI-designated cancer center, KU Cancer Center has taken the lead on educating and promoting cancer prevention. The center advocated strongly in support of multiple issues, including:

- Effective advocacy in Washington for biomedical research funding
- Clean indoor air
- Clinical trials coverage mandate
- Kansas tobacco tax
- Indoor tanning bill
- Tobacco 21
- Kansas Radon Program
- HPV vaccinations
- Statewide melanoma screenings