Although the diagnosis and treatment of cancer has improved dramatically over the last several decades, millions of patients’ lives continue to be cut short because the right medicines are not being created rapidly enough. A pioneering new field—precision medicine—promises to change that through harnessing technological prowess, scientific acumen and medical records to better understand the root of disease and develop targeted therapies.

At the forefront of this charge is the Developmental Therapeutics Program at the UCSF Helen Diller Family Comprehensive Cancer Center. Led by oncologist and director of the Early Phase Clinical Trials Program Pamela Munster, MD, the program comprises 32 members from 13 different departments and brings together basic cancer biologists and physician-scientists who share a common goal: discovering and testing novel compounds and treatment strategies for cancer. The wide range of expertise of the team mutually enriches and complements the discoveries of individual investigators with the overall goal of accelerating the transition from drug discovery to the approval of more effective and less toxic drugs for patients with cancer.

Years ago, if one patient out of hundreds went into remission during a cancer clinical trial, that patient would have been considered lucky and the therapy deemed a failure. Through precision medicine, however, one patient’s “good luck” can now be leveraged into a precise and effective therapy for others whose tumors have a similar genetic profile.

Research in the program spans from drug discovery, cell signaling, molecular pathology and bio-imaging to pharmacogenomics, as well as clinical and population science—with the focus of bringing discoveries to the patient’s bedside as quickly as possible.

The Developmental Therapeutics team also facilitates partnerships with colleagues at other academic institutions, as well as with device, pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies. The program allows investigators to develop new areas of basic cancer research, capitalizing on new technologies and the unique strengths of UCSF. In addition, the program plays a role in advancing translational work related to cancer and other diseases that share therapeutic targets with cancer, particularly through the leadership of early-phase clinical studies.

“One of the most inspiring features of what I do every day is that I can follow scientific studies from the lab to the patient’s bedside,” said Dr. Munster. “Often I can share the successes of my patients with my lab investigators, which brings the entire team together.”

For Dr. Munster, this direct link between research and patient care is what it’s all about.

“Even small groups of researchers and clinicians can take a discovery from the lab to the patient’s bedside and sometimes this is the breakthrough that patients need—where we try the drug in a patient where we didn’t predict a response and miraculously, the patient does have a response.”

“For me as a scientist, that is always a fantastic experience.”

For more information on the Developmental Therapeutics Program, visit http://cancer.ucsf.edu/developmental-therapeutics.

An Unexpected Result Can Be the Answer

Development Therapeutics Program harnesses the power of precision medicine to move promising therapies from the bench to the bedside more quickly than ever before.

Many of our patients are discouraged because there are few options left for them,” said Dr. Munster, a breast cancer survivor herself. “However with about 300 novel agents in testing, very often we will find something that matches their tumor and may work for them.”

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In this Issue

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The Developmental Therapeutics Program fosters cancer-focused, interdisciplinary research among basic scientists and clinical investigators who are dedicated to the discovery, development and delivery of new anti-cancer therapies. The program promotes interaction and collaboration among members, to stimulate breakthroughs in the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of cancer.

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Website: http://cancer.ucsf.edu/developmental-therapeutics

FEATURED PROGRAM
Developmental Therapeutics Program

Resources for Physicians

Physician Liaison Service
Phone: (800) 444-2559
Fax: (415) 353-4395
Email: referral.center@ucsfmedctr.org
Contact the Physician Liaison Service for help in making a referral, assistance in obtaining follow-up information or to address other questions or concerns.

Transfer Center
Phone: (415) 353-9166
Fax: (415) 353-9172
The Transfer Center is staffed 24 hours daily to coordinate the transfer of patients to UCSF Medical Center. The center provides quick access to our doctors and other members of our team. We evaluate the needs of each patient to ensure that appropriate care is provided. The center can also facilitate your patient’s return transfer.

Ida & Joseph Friend Cancer Resource Center
Phone: (415) 885-3693
Website: cancer.ucsf.edu/crc
The Cancer Resource Center (CRC) provides patients and their loved ones with information, classes, support groups and referrals to community resources. Most CRC programs are free.

Continuing Medical Education
Phone: (415) 476-4251
Fax: (415) 476-0318
Website: www.cme.ucsf.edu
UC San Francisco’s Office of Continuing Medical Education offers more than 200 courses each year for physicians and allied health care professionals to improve their abilities as practitioners.

Information for Health Professionals
Website: www.ucsfhealth.org/healthprofessionals
Our website for health professionals provides information regarding referrals, transfers, billing, consultations, insurance issues and more.

Clinical Trials
Phone: (877) 827-3222
Email: communications@cc.ucsf.edu
Clinical trials database: cancer.ucsf.edu/trials
As home to one of the nation’s largest cancer clinical trials programs, we offer trials focusing on treatment, prevention, survivorship and quality of life. Review our database to find studies for which your patients may be eligible. To subscribe to a monthly email listing of open trials, send your name and email address to clinicaltrialists@ucsfmedctr.org.