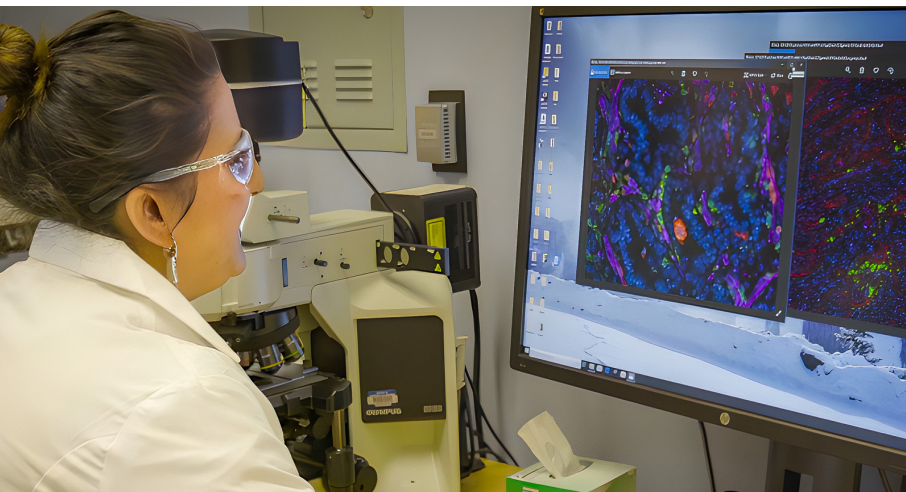


TRANSFORMING PANCREATIC CANCER RESEARCH THROUGH COLLABORATION



Pancreatic cancer kills nearly 50,000 Americans every year, making it the third leading cause of cancer-related deaths despite being only the 11th-most commonly diagnosed. The research team at the University of Michigan's Rogel and Blondy Center for Pancreatic Cancer wants to change that.

Researchers, clinicians, surgeons and specialists from all backgrounds and disciplines are working to better understand why pancreatic cancer is so much more destructive than its counterparts.

Today, more than 100 people are working in this area of research at U-M, supported over the last decade by significant contributions from federal funding agencies. According to Dr. Costas Lyssiotis, co-director of the center, both the National Institutes of Health and the Department of Defense have made big pushes to increase pancreatic cancer research spending over the last decade.

These investments gained momentum thanks to nonprofits and advocacy groups raising awareness about the devastating disease.

"Individually, no one lab could do this research at the scale we are able to," said Lyssiotis. "It is a collaborative effort that includes dozens of people all working together in ways that aren't happening anywhere else."

Co-led by Lyssiotis, Dr. Marina Pasca di Magliano and Dr. Timothy Frankel, the center's team have built a comprehensive research program where discoveries move from laboratory to patient care and back again.

Some of the center's recent accomplishments include discoveries that precursor pancreatic lesions are detected at a much higher rate than the incidence of actual cancer, which could lead to earlier detection and that genetic testing in

pancreatic cancer patients could help family members identify their own risk. The researchers have also learned more about how utilizing a comprehensive approach – a combination of surgery, immunotherapy and medicine – is the most effective way to treat this deadly disease.

"What makes our work so effective is the team environment we've developed," said Pasca di Magliano. "Surgeons work directly alongside basic scientists, oncologists, radiologists and computational biologists, tackling problems from multiple angles."

Future initiatives at the center include an early detection program combining biomarkers with imaging, an immunotherapy testing platform for pancreatic tumors and studies integrating tumor metabolism with the immune microenvironment. The efforts all share the same goal – continue improving pancreatic cancer survival rates. In 2011, the five-year survival rate moved to 10% - the first double digit rate for the lethal cancer type, and a major win for the field.

"Federal funding enables us to sustain these cross-disciplinary teams, which is essential for understanding a complex disease like pancreatic cancer," Frankel said. "Our collaborative approach ensures we keep patient needs at the forefront of our efforts while also pushing the boundaries of science and discovery."