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SUSAN G. KOMEN®'S 2015 BREAST CANCER RESEARCH FUNDING TARGETS EARLY-CAREER INVESTIGATORS, NEW THERAPIES, HEALTH INEQUITIES AND METASTATIC DISEASE

Triangle Area Researchers Receive $3,824,300 in Research Funding

RALEIGH – Sept. 22, 2015 – Susan G. Komen, the world's largest nonprofit funder of breast cancer research, announced new grants to 124 researchers in 25 states and eight countries, with about half of the grants targeted to early-career researchers squeezed by stagnation in federal research dollars.

The grants include $3,824,300 in new funding for research at Duke University and the University of North Carolina at Chapel, bringing Komen's total research investment in North Carolina to $35,694,300 since 1982.

The 2015 research grants expand Komen's ongoing commitment to funding early-career scientists, that is, recent graduates and those trying to establish independent research careers. The group has been especially hard hit by real-dollar declines of as much as 25 percent in federal research funding over the past decade.

"We committed two years ago to do all that we can to ensure that talented early-career investigators remain in the breast cancer research field, while continuing our support for established researchers," said Komen President and CEO Judith A. Salerno, M.D., M.S. "We cannot afford to lose talented scientists to other fields for lack of funding."

This year's research slate brings Komen's total research investment to more than $889 million since 1982, the largest of any nonprofit, and second only to the U.S. government.

Grants from Komen's nearly $36 million research portfolio – including more than $17.6 million in grants awarded to early-career investigators – span the entire cancer continuum from prevention to treatments for aggressive and metastatic disease. These include:

- 36 grants to improve understanding of **metastatic breast cancer**
- 18 grants investigating how tumors develop **drug resistance**

- 19 grants related to the study of **triple negative breast cancer** – one of the most aggressive forms of the disease
- 15 grants working to identify and understand **biological and socio-economic health inequities**
- 13 grants seeking to develop **new and novel therapies**

Komen's Investments in North Carolina

Komen's research program is funded in part by contributions from Komen's nationwide network of Affiliates, which direct 25 percent of locally raised funds to Komen's national research program. The remaining 75 percent of net funds are invested into community outreach programs that serve local women and men facing breast cancer.

Since 1997, Komen NCTC has funded $14 million to community programs serving local women and men in our 29 county service area in central and eastern North Carolina, while contributing $4.6 million to Komen research.

"We are so proud to have the support of this community as we help our friends, coworkers and neighbors who are facing breast cancer, and work for continued progress against breast cancer through research," said Komen NCTC Executive Director Pam Kohl.

In the Triangle, researchers will receive more than $3.8 million to investigate novel breast cancer treatment and treatment resistance, metastasis, and disparities.

Duke University

- **Hongyu Tian, Ph.D.**, will receive $450,000 to investigate how the TGF- ß pathway is regulated during breast cancer progression, particularly by cells surrounding the tumor or its environment, which could potentially provide a new treatment target for metastatic breast cancer.

- **Komen Scholar Gerard Blobe, M.D., Ph.D.**, will receive $375,000 to continue investigating whether loss of the transforming growth factor-beta receptor, TβRIII, a protein on the cell surface whose normal function is to inhibit breast cancer formation, is responsible for a decrease in the stiffness of a cancer cell. Cancer cells that are less stiff and more pliable allow the breast cancer cells to become more mobile and invasive.

- **Komen Scholar Kimberly Blackwell, M.D.**, will receive $200,000 to study the amount of cholesterol and cholesterol byproducts in a breast cancer patient's blood. This could potentially determine if patients with estrogen-receptor positive breast cancer will respond better to standard anti-hormone treatment while on anti-cholesterol treatment.

- **Komen Scholar Neil Spector, M.D.**, will receive $400,000 to study the role of a variant form of HER2, referred to as p85HER2, in promoting resistance to HER2-targted therapies. Dr. Spector and team will also study the Hsp72 protein to determine if its inhibition can prevent or delay the formation of tumors.

- **Jian Chen, Ph.D.**, will receive $180,000 to identify how specific changes increase a breast cancer cell's ability migrate and eventually metastasize to other organs. Dr. Chen will focus on studying why the loss of cell surface protein ALK4 results in increased breast cancer cell movement and invasion.

- Funding at Duke University also includes $45,000 in support of the **2015 Accelerating Anticancer Agent Development and Validation Workshop**. The workshop will educate investigators on new approaches to developing or enhancing agents, or combinations of agents for the diagnosis, treatment, or prevention of cancer, and provide real-life examples of how high quality data enable effective interactions with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

University of North Carolina (UNC) at Chapel Hill

- **The Carolina Breast Cancer Study (CBCS) III, led by H. Shelton Earp, III, M.D.**, will receive nearly $875,000 to continue research into disparities in breast cancer outcomes. The CBCS study is on track to be the largest population-based studies of breast cancer in African-American and Caucasian women. CBCS III aims to obtain clinical treatment and outcomes data from patients across the state of North Carolina. The study would be the first to address how treatment decisions, access to care, and financial or geographic barriers impact breast cancer outcomes among African-American breast cancer patients in low-income and rural areas. Komen Scholars, Lisa Carey, M.D. and Komen Grantee Charles Perou, Ph.D. are also co-investigators in this study.

- **Katherine Reeder-Hayes, M.D.**, will receive $450,000 to analyze the data resources of the CBCS III to better understand how obesity, biological differences, and underuse of recommended endocrine therapy contribute to racial disparities in hormone-receptor positive breast cancer.

- **Qing Zhang, Ph.D.**, will receive $450,000 to investigate methods of inhibiting mitochondrial function within breast cancer cells, depriving the cells of the energy they need to grow. Dr. Zhang and team will specifically investigate the role of EgIN2 – a regulator of mitochondrial function.

- **Groesbeck Parham, M.D.,** will receive $215,000 to study factors that affect breast cancer outcomes for patients at a public hospital in Zambia. Dr. Parham will assess both immediate biological factors (prognostic factors, tumor biology, treatment received) and indirect factors that represent barriers in obtaining regular clinical breast exams, receiving an earlier diagnosis, and being given timely and appropriate treatment. The project is a collaboration between UNC and the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC).

- **Sara Hanna, Ph.D.**, will receive $180,000 to determine the biological differences between the Hippo pathway (a regulator of tissue growth) in chemo-sensitive and chemo-insensitive triple negative breast cancer (TNBC) tumors. The project aims to understand why some TNBC tumors respond to chemotherapy and others remain insensitive.

A full list of Komen's 2015 research grants can be found here.*

In addition to funding breast cancer research, Komen has invested more than $1.95 billion into community health outreach and global programs that serve hundreds of thousands of women and men annually through breast cancer health and support programs that screen, educate and provide financial, medical and psychosocial assistance.

For more information about Komen's mission investment, please visit komen.org.

About Susan G. Komen®

Susan G. Komen is the world's largest breast cancer organization, funding more breast cancer research than any other nonprofit while providing real-time help to those facing the disease. Since its founding in 1982, Komen has funded more than $889 million in research and provided $1.95 billion in funding to screening, education, treatment and psychosocial support programs serving millions of people in more than 30 countries worldwide. Komen was founded by Nancy G. Brinker, who promised her sister, Susan G. Komen, that she would end the disease that claimed Suzy's life. Visit komen.org or call 1-877 GO KOMEN. Connect with us on social at ww5.komen.org/social.

About Susan G. Komen® North Carolina Triangle to Coast

The Komen North Carolina Triangle to the Coast (NCTC) Affiliate serves 29 counties in central and eastern North Carolina; holding two annual Race for the Cure events in Raleigh and Wilmington. Since its first Race in 1997, $14 million has been raised and used for breast cancer research, local education, advocacy, health services and social programs. Seventy-five percent of the net proceeds generated by the Affiliate stay in the service area. Twenty-five percent of the net proceeds supports Susan G. Komen's National Research Program. In 2015, Komen NCTC granted $545,000 to community organizations to provide a continuum of breast health services to underinsured and uninsured people from the Triangle to the Coast. Visit komennctc.org or call 919-493-2873. Connect with us on Facebook and Twitter.

**Contingent upon signed and executed contracts with Komen*