$250K Grant Funds a Global Collaborative Research Study on Myxoid Liposarcoma

Ossining, New York – April 12, 2012 - The Liddy Shriver Sarcoma Initiative has awarded a $250,000 grant to fund a new collaborative research study on myxoid liposarcoma. The grant brings together researchers from Canada, the Netherlands and the United States in a two-year study of a rare cancer.

Myxoid liposarcomas account for about 10% of all soft tissue sarcomas, which are rare cancers of the connective tissues. They typically affect adults between the ages of 30 and 50 years old and are prone to metastasize (spread throughout the body). There are currently no effective systemic therapies for the disease, which can be highly lethal.

One of the difficulties in studying rare diseases is a lack of resources, specifically tissue specimens and patient data. This study addresses that challenge by creating the world's largest collection of primary tumor samples and cell models of myxoid liposarcoma, a resource that will be made available to qualified researchers worldwide.

Dr. Torsten Nielsen says, "We're combining resources from multiple countries to get enough samples of a relatively rare disease that we can make sense out of them -- a scientifically large enough collection."

Investigators will then use tissue samples to better understand myxoid liposarcoma and its response to various treatments. They will also work to identify pathways that can be targeted with existing and experimental drugs.

According to Dr. Nielsen, there is definite promise in this research: "In myxoid liposarcoma, we know that there is a very specific, causative mutation called FUS-DDIT3. The scientific community has yet to translate this finding into new therapies for patients -- partly because there have not been enough researchers working on it, and partly because no one research team has access to enough materials (cancer cells and tumor specimens) to do this work effectively. I believe that with this funding we have a great opportunity to connect the underlying molecular biology to new treatment opportunities."

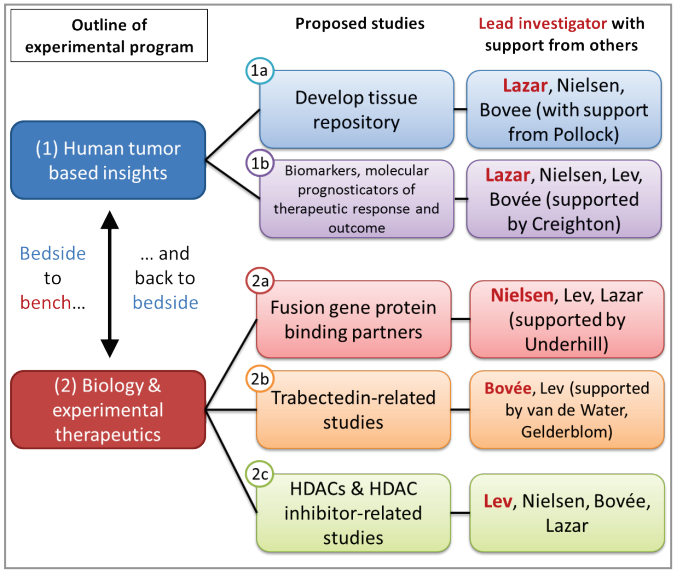
According to Dr. Dina Lev, studies like this one are often inspired by physicians' interactions with their patients: "Personal experience in caring for myxoid liposarcoma patients, including the opportunity, unfortunately, to directly observe therapeutic failure, has been and continues to be a powerful motivation to pursue these research opportunities."

The study's investigators hope to learn enough about myxoid liposarcoma to improve the treatment of the disease. Dr. Judith Bovée explains: "The aim is to better understand the development of myxoid liposarcoma, which will contribute to 'personalized' or tailor-

made medicine: each patient will receive the most optimal treatment for his or her tumor."

THE COLLABORATIVE MODEL

Cancer research can be a highly competitive field, but sarcoma researchers share a unique sense of teamwork within the cancer research community. Dr. Nielsen explains, "Sarcoma researchers have a real sense of community and cooperation. Sometimes it feels like there are more types of sarcoma than there are sarcoma research teams! We are keenly aware that we need to combine resources to achieve critical mass for the study of rare diseases."



Funding from the Liddy Shriver Sarcoma Initiative will enable these four researchers to collaboratively employ their resources and make more progress than each investigator can make individually. By working as an international team with complementary strengths, each team member can focus his or her skills to address specific questions while also contributing to a larger project that is both scientifically tractable and clinically relevant.

Dr. Lazar believes that this grant is a model for rare disease research: "This type of structure is a very good model for studying rare diseases and has been used successfully for studying sarcomas in the Children's Oncology Group in the US and in various European jurisdictions as well."

There can even be unexpected benefits of global collaboration. Dr. Lazar notes that grants like this one "help to create patterns of interaction between the participants that will likely lead to unanticipated future discoveries and advances solely because of the unique conditions created from the collaboration."

Bruce and Beverly Shriver, co-founders of the Liddy Shriver Sarcoma Initiative, are committed to providing a unique source of support for global initiatives in sarcoma research. They explain: "The approach we are taking with our International Collaborative Grants program brings quality researchers and clinicians together to help find cures for these rare cancers. What is particularly exciting is that the new myxoid liposarcoma research team will be meeting to share insights with the research team we funded in well-differentiated and de-differentiated liposarcoma a year and a half ago."

THE FUNDING

This grant was made possible by generous donations in support of the Wendy Walk. Wendy Landes' three children, Ali, Matt and Jackie, created the Wendy Walk in 2010 after their mother was diagnosed with multi-focal dedifferentiated liposarcoma. Ali, Matt

and Jackie were inspired by Wendy's strength, courage, faith, and unwavering positive attitude, and they wanted to increase liposarcoma awareness and raise funds to support liposarcoma research. Together the Landes family has raised more than $450,000 to date, and their dedicated efforts continue. The Wendy Walk will be held in three cities this spring:

- Miami, Florida: April 14th
- New York City: April 29th
- Los Angeles: May 6th

THE INVESTIGATORS
Each investigator involved in this study has an established infrastructure of equipment, specimens, models, and supporting personnel for sarcoma research. In addition, each member of the research team has demonstrated a track record of productivity and accomplishment in studying liposarcoma. Investigators include:

- **Judith Bovée, MD, PhD,** a pathologist and associate professor in the Department of Pathology at Leiden University Medical Center. Her focus is on translational sarcoma research, for which she has several grants from the Netherlands Organization for Scientific research (NWO) and the KWF Dutch Cancer Society.
- **Alexander Lazar, MD, PhD** a faculty member in the Sarcoma Research Center at the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center (UTMDACC). Dr. Lazar's particular expertise lies in tissue-based translational research, molecular diagnostics and early genetic changes in sarcoma.
- **Dina Lev, MD,** the principal investigator of the Sarcoma Research Laboratory (SRL) at UTMDACC. The SRL provides unique access to a large number of sarcoma patient derived samples, permitting the development of human sarcoma experimental models. Dr. Lev's research focuses on the identification of molecular markers and therapeutic targets for a range of soft tissue malignancies.
- **Torsten Nielsen, MD, PhD**, a clinician-investigator pathologist at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver. Dr. Torsten runs research labs active in translating novel molecular findings into practical diagnostics and new treatments. His work has already led to two new, widely-used diagnostic biomarkers in sarcoma and to two clinical trials that are currently underway.

About the Liddy Shriver Sarcoma Initiative
The Liddy Shriver Sarcoma Initiative is a small organization dedicated to increasing global public awareness of sarcoma, raising funds to award research grants, and providing support and timely information to sarcoma patients, their families, and medical professionals. The International Collaborative Grant program is an integral part of the Liddy Shriver Sarcoma Initiative's philosophy: that improved outcome for sarcoma patients can best be made by teams of dedicated investigators working collaboratively and cohesively.

This grant was approved through the Initiative's unique peer-review process. A comprehensive experimental plan for the study has been published in April's issue of the Electronic Sarcoma Update Newsletter, and a study report will be published when the project is completed.