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The James Graham Brown Cancer Center will receive a \$10.1 million federal grant to continue cancer research

\$10.1 million to further cancer research

BY RICK ROJAS • RROJAS@COURIER-JOURNAL.COM • JULY 19, 2008

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The James Graham Brown Cancer Center at University Hospital will receive a \$10.1 million federal grant to continue research on cancer treatment and prevention.

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Hospital officials yesterday announced the grant from the National Institutes of Health. It is an extension of the \$11 million, five-year grant the center got in 2003.

"It's based on research that makes a difference for cancer patients in Kentucky," said Donald Miller, director of the Brown cancer center. "We have put together a group of faculty to try to create a better way to treat cancer."

The previous grant allowed nine researchers to work on projects involving different aspects of cancer, and the extension will allow those researchers to continue to develop their

projects, he said.

One of those researchers, Dr. Jason Chesney, 37, said the funding has allowed him to take his work from the labs and into tests with humans. Moreover, he added, the grants have allowed younger researchers to take on major projects.

"We're able to find and train younger investigators," he said.

Chesney, whose research financing includes an individual NIH grant, discovered a drug that could allow the immune system to target and kill cancer cells in patients with advanced melanoma.

The NIH grant has also funded research in such areas as stopping cancer at a genetic level, developing drugs capable of attacking specific cancer cells and locating regenerative tissues that can help cancer survivors recoup from damage caused by treatments.

Miller said the center has recruited top researchers worldwide to its programs because of its opportunities for younger scientists and funding.

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"We're getting people with very strong backgrounds who are smart and want to be successful," he said.

He anticipates that with the grant extension, the center should produce at least one cancer drug a year.

The Brown cancer center received the grant after work completed with the previous grant was reviewed by NIH.

Receiving a grant of such size is quite an accomplishment, said U of L President James Ramsey, because NIH has seen budget cuts in the past year.

But it also shows, Ramsey said, the commitment U of L has in cancer research. That commitment has been reaffirmed by the university's board of trustees in the plan for U of L through 2020, he said.

Like the first grant, the renewal will be spread over five years.

Miller said his goal over those five years is to add more scientists to his team and "get a replacement grant that's even bigger."

Readers can reach reporter Rick Rojas at rrojas@courier-journal.com.

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