

Ho‘ōla

WORKING TO FIND THE CURE

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President’s Message

Aloha, friends and supporters of the UH Cancer Center!

These are unprecedented and sometimes quite stressful times. Positive thoughts and actions are important for us all to maintain our physical, mental and emotional health.

The outpouring of community support for each other has been amazing. Food distributions to thousands of local families are just one example of how we can organize, volunteer, and donate to help one another through these challenging times.

One of the fulfilling aspects of the Friends’ efforts is generating support that leads to community benefits. While the work of the UH Cancer Center and the Friends may not have as immediate an effect as those of food drives, we know that eventually it will significantly affect the quality of life for many in Hawai‘i and beyond.

And while we are not a well-endowed organization, we work very hard and closely with the UH Cancer Center to raise funds to support meaningful programs that otherwise might not be possible without our support. One great example is the Friends’ support for the UH Cancer Center’s summer internship program. For several years the Friends have hosted an annual event to raise funds to support local undergraduate and high school students to work at the UH Cancer Center, while being mentored by cancer researchers. The program’s goal is to inspire the interns to further their science and medical education.

Due to years of meaningful internship experiences, the UH Cancer Center received a \$1.36 million five-year grant from the National Institutes of Health to continue this and other mentorship programs. The Friends are proud to have helped support a program that is now flourishing on its own.

We see our role as just that—providing support for valuable programs and helping them flourish and grow. We are hopeful that we can do the same for Tickets for the Cure program, which we share about on the next page.

Please keep yourself safe, and let’s work together to take care of each other!

Mahalo,

Monica McLaren

MONICA MCLAREN

President, Friends of the UH Cancer Center



A Closer Look at Tickets for the Cure Program

Last fall we introduced Tickets for the Cure to you, our program that assists cancer patients with travel to and from the neighbor islands when participating on a clinical treatment trial. Fast-forward a year, and our everyday life has changed incredibly due to COVID-19. What HASN'T changed is the need for neighbor island clinical trial patients to be offered cutting edge clinical trials and to continue their study treatments, both for their health and for the important research that will benefit us all.

Tim Kelleher, one of the Research Nurses at The Queen's Medical Center, oversees clinical trial treatments there. He recently spoke to the Friends about his experience with neighbor island clinical trial patients and the crucial need for Tickets for the Cure. Here are some interesting insights that he shared:

- The Hawaii Cancer Consortium/Network currently does not have any sites on the neighbor islands for clinical trials, so these patients must come to O'ahu for their trial treatments. UH Cancer Center coordinates trials that are offered at the various hospitals and clinics where the trial treatments are administered.
- An important consideration in the field of cancer treatment is "financial toxicity," which is the financial burden that treatment and travel has on patients. Tickets for the Cure helps alleviate that financial burden, permitting neighbor island patients to participate in trials that may improve the quality of their lives as well as help new treatments be approved in the future.
- To participate in a trial, a patient may have to fly to O'ahu as much as once a week for months. Once on maintenance, they may need to return regularly throughout the year. Patient treatments may involve years of flying back and forth to O'ahu.

- While some studies show that the drugs being tested turn out to have no benefit, every patient in the study receives, at minimum, the current standard of care, which in some cases may not be available on their home island. Research Nurses like Tim and UH Cancer Center's Research Associates ensure patients receive treatments on time. This can make a huge difference in treatment and the overall quality of care.
- Enrollment in clinical trials is only around three percent for adults. It is higher for children, more than 75 percent. This is why progress in this field is achieved at a much more accelerated rate. Encouraging and supporting adults to participate in clinical trials is vital to finding better treatments and cures.

The Friends is presently the only source of support for this crucial program, so your donations are vital and so appreciated!



Left to right: Clinical trial participant Louis Dionese from Kihei, Maui with Research Nurse Tim Kelleher.

Winners of the 2020 UH Cancer Center Science Fair Awards

Three high school students received the UH Cancer Center awards for their winning projects at this year's virtual Hawai'i State Science and Engineering Fair. These awards were made possible through the generous support of the Friends.

THE WINNERS WERE:

First place (\$300 award) - Mary Winnicki, a senior at Punahou School, for her project titled, "Machine-Learning Driven Detection of Metastatic Cancer (Year Two). Her mother was the inspiration for this project when she was diagnosed with breast cancer. Winnicki's project focused on developing an affordable computer-based function and web app to improve patients' chances of survival through early detection of metastasis (spread of disease).

Second place (\$200 award) - Annabelle Ink, a sophomore from Mililani High School for her project titled, "Smoke Screen: The Effect of Social Media on Teenage Vaping." She created a survey, distributed to over 1,000 participants, to determine if there was a correlation between social media usage and teenage vaping. Ink's concern was "preventing more students from vaping, which is important because it has many dangerous side effects."

Third place (\$100 award) - Taylor Moniz, a junior at Kamehameha Schools, Kapālama Campus. Her project was titled, "Ivermectin Induces Apoptosis, Cell Cycle Arrest, and Senescence in C4-2 Prostate Cancer Cells." No further information was available on Moniz's project.