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Surge of New Cancer Center Leadership Marks 2017 AACI/CCAF Annual Meeting

The Association of American Cancer Institutes will welcome about two dozen new cancer center directors when it convenes its annual meeting in Washington, DC, on October 15.

The unprecedented influx of new directors “is a watershed opportunity to reinvigorate our focus and determination,” said AACI President Stanton Gerson, MD. “The cancer centers represent the major national effort against cancer, combining research, clinical care, training and community outreach.”

He noted that a center director typically provides a leadership trajectory for all research and cancer care, and that cancer centers are becoming more complex organizations rather than purely academic research institutions.

“The dramatic turnover in cancer center leadership could have an impact on local ecosystems,” said Dr. Gerson, who is director of the Case Comprehensive Cancer Center at Case Western Reserve University, in Cleveland. “It takes a while to develop strategy, refigure priorities and navigate the complexity of cancer research and care.”

AACI comprises 97 premier academic and freestanding cancer research centers in the U.S. and Canada.

According to AACI Executive Director Barbara Duffy Stewart, MPH, one benefit of so many new faces is the promise of fresh perspectives on the association’s mission to help centers keep pace with the changing landscape in science, technology and health care.

“We are looking forward to the dedicated service of this new wave of cancer center leaders as we work together to improve prevention, detection and treatment of cancer,” she said.

This year’s annual meeting program, jointly formulated by AACI and the Cancer Center Administrators Forum (CCAF), also features an update on AACI’s Network Care Initiative, led by Dr. Gerson, followed by a panel discussion on managing cancer center networks. The meeting, running from October 15 - 17 at the Grand Hyatt Washington, will also feature talks on immunotherapy, clinical trials, precision medicine, cancer disparities, and the impact of Washington’s new political landscape on financing cancer care.

Stan Collender, a federal budget issues expert and Merkel cell carcinoma survivor, will be the meeting’s keynote speaker, and the 2017 AACI Distinguished Scientist Award will be presented to Carl H. June, MD, director of translational research at the Abramson Cancer Center of the University of Pennsylvania. U.S. Senators Roy Blunt (R-MO) and Bob Casey (D-PA) will receive the 2017 AACI Public Service Award.

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The Association of American Cancer Institutes (AACI) comprises 97 premier academic and freestanding cancer research centers in the U.S. and Canada. AACI is dedicated to reducing the burden of cancer by enhancing the impact of the leading academic cancer centers.