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News From the Association of American Cancer Institutes | November 2026
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Awards & Honors | Grants & Gifts | Leadership Transitions | Research Highlights | Other News
Job Opportunities | Meeting Announcements

AACI HEADLINES

Drapkin Named President and CEO of The Wistar Institute



Ronny Drapkin, MD, PhD, was appointed as the next president and CEO of The Wistar Institute, effective November 30, 2026. Dr. Drapkin will lead the institute's early-stage discovery research in cancer, immunology, and infectious disease; strengthen and expand its workforce education and training programs; and broaden support for Wistar's scientific mission and future growth by working closely with donors, trustees, corporate and academic partners, and policymakers. He succeeds **Dario Altieri, MD**, who is stepping down after a decade. ***Read More***

Koong Named Director of UT MD Anderson



UT MD Anderson has appointed **Albert Koong, MD, PhD**, as cancer center director, effective October 1. Dr. Koong, who previously served as UT MD Anderson's chief scientific officer, will also act as principal investigator on the center's National Cancer Institute Cancer Center Support Grant (CCSG). The recently renewed CCSG will provide nearly $80 million over seven years to support infrastructure for clinical research, community outreach and engagement, and research training and education. ***Read More***

El-Khoueiry Appointed Director of USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center

Anthony B. El-Khoueiry, MD, has been named director of the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center, effective November 1. Prior to the appointment, Dr. El-Khoueiry served as associate director for clinical research, medical director of the Clinical Investigations Support Office and Chief of Section of Developmental Therapeutics/Phase I program at USC Norris. He is a medical oncologist with Keck Medicine of USC and has led numerous clinical trials. ***Read More***



AACI Mourns Dr. Rachna Shroff, Whose Legacy Includes Endowment for Biliary Cancer Research



Rachna Shroff, MD, MS, FASCO, an internationally renowned expert in cholangiocarcinoma, leader at the University of Arizona Cancer Center, and valued AACI friend and colleague, **has died**. Her campaign to endow the **Conquer Cancer – Rachna Shroff, MD, MS, FASCO Young Investigator Award in Biliary Cancer** exceeded its $1.35 million goal before her passing. AACI shares its condolences and fondly remembers her contributions to the cancer research community. ***Read More*** | ***Watch a* Today Show *Segment on Dr. Shroff***

AACI Announces New Treasurer, Finance & Investment Committee Member



Pictured, L to R: Julie C. Schaum and Nicholas Fisher

Julie C. Schaum, MS, of Vanderbilt-Ingram Cancer Center, has assumed the role of AACI treasurer. She succeeds **David M. Gosky, MA, MBA**, of Fox Chase Cancer Center, Temple Health. AACI also welcomes **Nicholas Fisher, MBA**, of Siteman Cancer Center, as a new member of the Finance & Investment Committee. ***Read More*** | ***Related News: Fox Chase's David Gosky Concludes Six Years as Association of American Cancer Institutes Treasurer***

Global Competition in Clinical Research Takes Center Stage at 2026 Annual Meeting



All photos by Randy Belice

L to R: AACI Executive Director Jennifer W. Pegher, AACI Immediate Past President Dr. Robert A. Winn, Annual Meeting Program Chair Dr. Candace S. Johnson, NCI Director Dr. Anthony Letai, AACI President Dr. Joann B. Sweasy, and AACI Vice President/President-elect Dr. Cornelia Ulrich

AACI is grateful to over 400 registered attendees, representing 95 cancer centers, who joined us **October 25-27** in Chicago for the 2026 AACI/CCAF Annual Meeting. The 2026 Annual Meeting Program Committee, led by **Candace S. Johnson, PhD**, Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center, designed engaging, educational content, with global competitiveness in clinical research appearing as a common theme throughout the three-day meeting. ***Read More***

AACI GR Forum Highlights Clinical Trial Innovation, Federal Policy Priorities

All photos by Randy Belice



AACI held its annual Government Relations (GR) Forum on Monday, October 26, in conjunction with the 2026 AACI/CCAF Annual Meeting in Chicago. Eighty-one registered attendees gathered to discuss emerging federal policy issues, efforts to strengthen U.S. leadership in biomedical research, and the upcoming midterm elections. The forum was led by GR Steering Committee Chair **Catherine Liao**, Duke Cancer Institute. ***Read More***

Expanded Networking Opportunities Connect 2026 AACI LDW Attendees With Peers, Mentors



All photos by Randy Belice

Emerging cancer center leaders gathered **October 24-25** in Chicago for AACI's **Leadership Development Workshop** (LDW), a two-day program pairing cancer center-specific leadership skills training with direct access to the directors and executives leading many of North America's top cancer centers. ***Read More***

NEWS FROM THE CENTERS

AWARDS & HONORS

U-M Researchers Elected to National Academy of Medicine

University of Michigan Rogel Cancer Center



University of Michigan faculty members, **Diane M. Harper, MD, MPH, MS**, and **Jacqueline Jeruss, MD, PhD**, were elected to the National Academy of Medicine, one of the highest distinctions in health and medicine. Dr. Harper is an internationally recognized physician-scientist in cervical cancer prevention and Dr. Jeruss focuses her clinical practice on caring for patients with benign and malignant breast disease. ***Read More***

Ferraro Named Damon Runyon Clinical Investigator

Siteman Cancer Center



Francesca Ferraro, MD, PhD, a WashU Medicine researcher and medical oncologist at Siteman Cancer Center, has received a 2026 Damon Runyon Clinical Investigator Award. The grant, given by the Damon Runyon Cancer Research Foundation, supports early-career physician-scientists conducting patient-oriented research. ***Read More***

GRANTS & GIFTS

Siteman Awarded $11.7M to Research Inflammation in Blood Cancers

Siteman Cancer Center

Fred Hutch Receives $3.5M NIH Grant to Study Graft-vs.-Host Disease Prevention

Fred Hutch Cancer Center

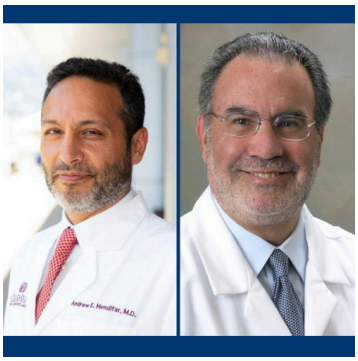
KUCC Receives $2.1M NCI Grant for Cancer Education and Career Programs

The University of Kansas Cancer Center

LEADERSHIP TRANSITIONS

Hendifar Appointed Interim Director, Figlin Assumes Associate Dean Role at Cedars-Sinai

Cedars-Sinai Cancer



Andrew Hendifar, MD, was appointed interim director of Cedars-Sinai Cancer, while his predecessor, **Robert Figlin, MD**, assumed a new role as associate dean of Cedars-Sinai Cancer Care. As interim director, Dr. Hendifar will continue building the academic cancer program based on excellence in clinical care, research, and teaching. As associate dean, Dr. Figlin will serve as a senior adviser and institutional leader. ***Read More***

Washington Named Chief Operating Officer of AbbVie Foundation Cancer Pavilion

The University of Chicago Medicine Comprehensive Cancer Center



UChicago Medicine has appointed **Kimyatta Washington** as chief operating officer of the AbbVie Foundation Cancer Pavilion, expanding her leadership responsibilities as the health system prepares to open the 575,000-square-foot facility in April 2027. She will continue to serve as vice president and chief administrative officer of cancer services. ***Read More***

MECCC Establishes New Cancer Leadership Roles

Montefiore Einstein Comprehensive Cancer Center

Amit K. Verma, MD, MBBS, was appointed as deputy director of the Montefiore Einstein Comprehensive Cancer Center in a slate of senior leadership announcements. Other appointments include **Julio A. Aguirre-Ghiso, PhD**, as associate director of basic science; **Marina Konopleva MD, PhD**, as associate director of translational science; **H. Dean Hosgood, PhD**, as associate director for population and community sciences; **Wenjun Guo, PhD**, as co-leader of the Tumor Microenvironment & Metastasis Program; and **Aditi Shastri, MD**, as co-leader of the Cancer Therapeutics Program. ***Read More***

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

AI Breast Cancer Survival Model Could Improve Accuracy and Personalize Care

University of Cincinnati Cancer Center

Clinical Trial to Evaluate Blood Test for Early Detection of Breast Cancer

USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center

Focused Ultrasound to Transform Brain Disease Treatment

UVA Comprehensive Cancer Center

Investigators Identify a Metabolic Weak Point in Exhausted Immune Cells in Head and Neck Cancer

Sidney Kimmel Comprehensive Cancer Center at Johns Hopkins University

NCI-Funded Lab to Evaluate Nanotechnology Targeting Brain Metastatic Breast Cancer

Cedars-Sinai Cancer

New AI Platform Helps Uncover Promising Cancer Drug Combinations

UCLA Jonsson Comprehensive Cancer Center

Novel CAR T Therapy for Multiple Myeloma Shows Durable Responses

The University of Chicago Medicine Comprehensive Cancer Center

Pancreatic Cancer Uses Blood-Clotting System to Evade Attack

Mount Sinai Tisch Cancer Center

Study Identifies Potential Drug Combination Strategy for Colorectal Cancer

Helen F. Graham Cancer Center & Research Institute at ChristianaCare

Study: Sex Chromosomes Drive How Bodies Deal With Cancer

The University of Arizona Cancer Center

Study: SurVaxM Extends Survival for Glioblastoma Patients 65 and Younger

Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center

Trial Shows Positive Results for Enhanced CAR T-Cell Therapy for B-Cell Blood Cancers

The Ohio State University Comprehensive Cancer Center - James Cancer Hospital and Solove Research Institute

Urine Test May Improve Bladder Cancer Diagnosis, Guide Treatment Decisions

Stanford Cancer Institute

Wistar Scientists Uncover Two-Pronged Strategy to Overcome Glioblastoma's Resistance to Immunotherapy

Ellen and Ronald Caplan Cancer Center of The Wistar Institute

Exclusive Trial Launched of 'Armored' CAR T Therapy for Ovarian Cancer

Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center

New Study Will Test Whether Probiotics Can Help Ovarian Cancer Patients Tolerate Chemotherapy

The Ohio State University Comprehensive Cancer Center - James Cancer Hospital and Solove Research Institute

Newly Identified Prostate Cell Type May Help Explain Enlarged Prostate in Gland Region

Sidney Kimmel Comprehensive Cancer Center at Johns Hopkins University

Researchers ID Pathway Driving T-Cell Exhaustion in Cancer Immunotherapy

UCLA Jonsson Comprehensive Cancer Center

Study Identifies Why Some Patients Develop Severe Intestinal Inflammation After CAR T Therapy

Mount Sinai Tisch Cancer Center

OTHER NEWS

First Patient Treated With Orca-T After FDA Approval

Stanford Cancer Institute



Stanford Medicine recently administered the world's first commercial Orca-T treatment outside of clinical trials. Orca-T was approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration after a phase 3 clinical trial found that 78% of Orca-T patients were free from moderate-to-severe graft-vs-host disease a year after transplant, compared with 38.4% of those who received the standard transplant. ***Read More***

$10M Histotripsy Research Center Launched to Advance Sound Wave-Based Cancer Treatment

University of Michigan Rogel Cancer Center



The University of Michigan Histotripsy Center opened September 10 with the ultimate goal of expanding use of a non-invasive, ultrasound-based cancer treatment. In an effort to accelerate the technology's scientific and clinical progress and enable more patients to benefit faster, the histotripsy research center is open to researchers outside the University of Michigan at no cost. ***Read More***

First UF Health Patient Receives Specialized Treatment for Advanced Colorectal Cancer

UF Health Cancer Institute

Pictured: Stephen Hutto with his wife, Angela Barksdale

An Ocala man is the first patient at University of Florida Health to receive a hepatic artery infusion, or HAI, pump. It's an advanced treatment that implants a pump in the abdomen to directly target liver tumors. ***Read More***



Rockefeller Cancer Institute Unveils State's First Lung Screening Fleet

UAMS Winthrop P. Rockefeller Cancer Institute



Pictured: U.S. Senator John Boozman (R-AR) with Rockefeller Cancer Institute Director Michael J. Birrer, MD, PhD

The UAMS Winthrop P. Rockefeller Cancer Institute launched the first lung cancer screening vans in Arkansas and an unprecedented statewide effort to reduce the state's leading cause of cancer death. ***Read More***

JOB OPPORTUNITIES

RN Manager Clinical Research

UNC Lineberger Comprehensive Cancer Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Associate Director for Administration (ADA)

Indiana University Melvin and Bren Simon Comprehensive Cancer Center

Executive Director of Clinical Research Operations

Wilmot Cancer Institute, UR Medicine

Senior Director of Executive Operations

VCU Massey Comprehensive Cancer Center

MEETINGS & EVENTS

Gordon Ginder Innovations in Cancer Symposium: ELEVATE Liver Cancer & MASH

Hosted by VCU Massey Comprehensive Cancer Center and the VCU Stravitz-Sanyal Institute

SAVE THE DATE

April 8-9, 2027

Richmond, VA

2027 AACI/AACR Hill Day

SAVE THE DATE

May 20, 2027

Washington, DC

19th Annual AACI Clinical Research Innovation (CRI) Meeting

SAVE THE DATE

June 28-30, 2027

Rosemont, IL

2027 Catchment Area Data Excellence (CADEx) Conference

Hosted by AACI in partnership with the Cancer Center Community Impact Forum

SAVE THE DATE

September 28-30, 2027

Kansas City, MO

2027 AACI Leadership Development Workshop

SAVE THE DATE

October 23-24, 2027

Washington, DC

2027 AACI/CCAF Annual Meeting

The 2027 Impact Summit and New Cancer Center Directors Meeting will be held in conjunction with the 2027 AACI/CCAF Annual Meeting in Washington, DC.

SAVE THE DATE

October 24-26, 2027

Washington, DC

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AACI Association of American Cancer Institutes

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