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AACI Members Choose Knudsen President-Elect, Four Added to Board of Directors

AACI's current president is Stanton L. Gerson, MD, director of the Case Comprehensive Cancer Center in Cleveland, Ohio. He will be succeeded in September by Roy Jensen, MD, director of The University of Kansas Cancer Center.

The members of the Association of American Cancer Institutes (AACI) have elected **Karen E. Knudsen, PhD**, as vice president/president-elect of AACI's board of directors. Dr. Knudsen is enterprise director of the Sidney Kimmel Cancer Center (SKCC) – Jefferson Health in Philadelphia. Her two-year term will begin on September 30 during the AACI/CCAF annual meeting in Chicago.

Dr. Knudsen is the third director of SKCC, a National Cancer Institute (NCI)-Designated Cancer Center since 1995. Her translational research centers on prostate cancer and has contributed to new mechanisms for treatment of advanced disease. She was appointed enterprise director in January 2015 after serving as deputy director and the founding member of the SKCC Prostate Cancer Program. Dr. Knudsen is also the Hilary Koprowski Chair, Department of Cancer Biology at Thomas Jefferson University, and professor of cancer biology, urology, medical oncology, and radiation oncology. As the enterprise director, she governs cancer research and cancer care across 14 hospitals within Jefferson Health. Under her leadership, SKCC recently was evaluated as "Outstanding" in its most recent NCI Cancer Center Support Grant (CCSG) renewal and is routinely ranked amongst the top 30 cancer centers nationwide.

Dr. Knudsen has been a member of AACI's board of directors since 2016 and was program chair of the association's 2017 annual meeting. She also serves on review, advisory, and elected panels for the Department of Defense, the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO), the American Association for Cancer Research (AACR), and the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

"Karen has contributed significantly to AACI through her dedicated service as a member of our board of directors and the association will undoubtedly become an even stronger advocate for cancer centers under her leadership," said AACI Executive Director Barbara Duffy Stewart.

In addition to Dr. Knudsen, four leaders of AACI member cancer centers will join the board of directors on September 30:



Randall F. Holcombe, MD, MBA, has been director of the University of Hawai'i Cancer Center since 2016. Dr. Holcombe led the center through major milestones including NCI re-designation and CCSG renewal in 2017 and 2018, respectively. With over 25 years of experience in translational research and the conduct of oncology clinical trials, Dr. Holcombe has focused his research on topics ranging from clinical investigations for patients with colorectal cancer to laboratory studies involving signaling pathways in the colon tumor microenvironment. Dr. Holcombe is program chair for the 2018 AACI/CCAF Annual Meeting and has served as a member of AACI's Clinical Research Initiative (CRI) Steering Committee and chaired AACI's Physicians Clinical Leadership Initiative (PCLI).

Thomas P. Loughran, Jr., MD, is the director of the UVA Cancer Center in Charlottesville, Virginia. Under his leadership, the center's NCI Cancer Center Support Grant (CCSG) was renewed in 2017 with an outstanding rating, the highest score ever for UVA. The cancer center is ranked number 30 in the *U.S. News & World Report* rankings, up from number 67 just two years prior. Dr. Loughran previously served as the founding director of the Penn State Hershey Cancer Institute (2003 – 2013) and as program leader of hematologic malignancies at the H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Center and Research Institute at the University of South Florida. As a physician-scientist he has published more than 260 articles and has received continuous federal funding for his laboratory over the past 32 years.

Leonidas (Leon) Platanius, MD, PhD, leads the Robert H. Lurie Comprehensive Cancer Center of Northwestern University in Chicago, an NCI-designated comprehensive cancer center. Since becoming director in 2014, Dr. Platanius has overseen a 50 percent increase in NCI funding for the center, a near doubling of the number of patients enrolled in early phase trials, and the recruitment of more than 100 new faculty. Prior to his appointment as director, Dr. Platanius served as Lurie Cancer Center's first deputy director from 2002 to 2013. He has published more than 320 papers, and his research—which focuses on cytokine signaling pathways in malignant cells and its application to leukemia treatment—has been continuously funded by the NCI for more than 25 years.

Benjamin G. Neel, MD, PhD, has been appointed to fill the remainder of Dr. Knudsen's term as a regular board member. Dr. Neel is director of the Laura and Isaac Perlmutter Cancer Center and professor of medicine at NYU Langone Health in New York City. His research interests include cell signaling in cancer and developmental disease and the biology of breast and ovarian cancers. Dr. Neel is also an elected member of the American Academy of Physicians, a member of the American Association for Cancer Research (AACR), and the co-founder of Northern Biologics, a company focusing on antibody therapeutics for cancer and fibrosis.

Drs. Knudsen, Holcombe, Loughran, Platanius, and Neel will work closely with other AACI leaders to support the organization's mission of enhancing the impact of academic cancer centers.

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The Association of American Cancer Institutes (AACI) comprises 98 premier academic and freestanding cancer research centers in the US and Canada. AACI is dedicated to reducing the burden of cancer by enhancing the impact of the leading academic cancer centers.