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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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AACI Launches National CAR T-cell Therapy Initiative

Pittsburgh, PA (October 22, 2018) — The Association of American Cancer Institutes (AACI) has established a national initiative to advance the use of chimeric antigen receptor T-cell therapies (CAR T).

CAR T-cell therapy is a form of adoptive cell transfer (ACT) immunotherapy, in which patients' immune cells are harvested to treat their cancer. In 2017, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved Kymriah® and YESCARTA® CAR T-cell therapies for the treatment of certain relapsed or refractory leukemias and lymphomas.

By early 2018, nearly half of AACI's 98 member cancer centers were approved to provide the therapies. To establish best practices, AACI developed a CAR T working group, spearheaded by Joseph McGuirk, DO, division director of the Hematologic Malignancies and Cellular Therapeutics program at The University of Kansas Cancer Center (KU Cancer Center).

Throughout 2018, the working group led discussions on common challenges and weighed in with the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS) on recommendations for reimbursement. Recognizing an opportunity for greater engagement with subject matter experts in the rapidly growing field, the AACI Board of Directors voted to expand the CAR T working group into an initiative, effective September 29.

"We are convening CAR T-cell experts across the country to identify obstacles and enhance opportunities for centers offering these therapies," said Dr. McGuirk, who has been tapped to lead the AACI initiative. "In 2018 alone, nearly 15,000 patients should have been able to access the therapies while only a small fraction of that number utilized them. This underscores the need for AACI's CAR T Initiative – to allow AACI cancer centers to ensure access to these therapies to eligible patients."



According to AACI President and KU Cancer Center Director Roy Jensen, MD, an effective CAR T program requires “a robust clinical and operational infrastructure.”

Members of the initiative will formulate working groups focused on addressing pertinent issues, including clinical research, management, and operations.

Dr. McGuirk added, “CAR T-cell therapies signal a new era for cancer treatment, and AACI’s member centers throughout North America want to ensure they are able to effectively treat every patient who qualifies for this therapy.”

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The Association of American Cancer Institutes (AACI) comprises 98 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.