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Indianapolis entrepreneur gives \$30 million for IU School of Medicine immunotherapy center

Dec. 13, 2016

INDIANAPOLIS -- One of the largest gifts ever to the Indiana University School of Medicine will enable researchers to harness the power of the immune system to cure cancer and other devastating diseases -- propelling Indiana's standing as an engine for biomedical discovery and innovation.

Indianapolis entrepreneur Donald E. Brown, MD, has announced a \$30 million gift to establish the **Brown Center for Immunotherapy** at the IU School of Medicine. The center will discover new ways to deploy immune-based therapies to treat cancers and pioneer use of this powerful technology in other diseases. Researchers will also study how to make this highly specialized therapy accessible to large numbers of patients.

"Immunology is the right place for a big investment. It is clear to me that this is the most exciting area in all of science," said Dr. Brown, a 1985 graduate of the IU School of Medicine who has founded three successful software companies. "It has tremendous potential for long-sought breakthroughs in cancer, but also autoimmune diseases, neurodegenerative diseases and a whole range of conditions. We have tremendous resources and talent in Indiana. Hopefully my contribution can push us over the top to do some really exciting things."

The gift is the IU School of Medicine's largest ever from an alumnus. The infusion of resources will enable IU School of Medicine Dean Jay Hess, MD, PhD, MHSA, Executive Associate Dean for Research Affairs Anantha Shekhar, MD, PhD, and other school leaders to move aggressively to build the center and recruit top-flight experts in immunotherapy to Indiana.

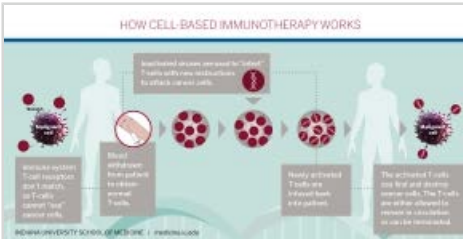
"Immunotherapy represents one of the most promising advances in my career, if not in the entire history of medicine," said Dr. Hess, vice president for university clinical affairs and Walter J. Daly Professor. "The impact of this gift on patients will be extraordinary. The center will focus on developing innovative therapies to cure at least one type of cancer and slow the progression of at least one other chronic disease. We are tremendously grateful to Dr. Brown for partnering with the IU School of Medicine to make this vision a reality."

The gift will also provide a powerful boost to the state's economy. Dr. Brown's charge to the IU School of Medicine is "to use the work of the center to catalyze the formation of new companies and the creation of new jobs in the field of immune-based biotechnology."

To accomplish these goals, the Brown Center for Immunotherapy will collaborate with the private sector throughout Central Indiana, including leaders in pharmaceuticals, biotechnology and other relevant fields.

"Throughout his exceptional career, Don Brown has established himself as one of Indiana's leading entrepreneurs in the fields of technology and software development," said IU President Michael A. McRobbie. "I am confident that, through his transformational gift, Don is catapulting the IU School of Medicine and state




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of Indiana to the leading edge of this vital area of research. By undertaking this grand challenge, the Brown Center for Immunotherapy will advance discovery that produces therapies for some of humanity's most insidious diseases. This is not simply a tremendous contribution to the IU School of Medicine and Indiana University; it is a life-changing gift for current and future generations around the world."

Video links:

- [A major gift funds immunotherapy center at IU School of Medicine](#)
- [A gift, immunotherapy research and new hope for patients](#)

About cell-based immunotherapy

While immunotherapy broadly refers to a variety of techniques used to spur the immune system to fight disease, the Brown Center for Immunotherapy will focus more specifically on the emerging field of cell-based therapies.

Thus far, these therapies have shown the most promise against cancer. Cancer is able to thrive in part because tumor cells evade the body's natural defense system. Cell-based immunotherapy seeks to retrain the immune system to seek out and attack these tumor cells.

T cells -- a type of immune cell -- are extracted from a patient and engineered in a laboratory to recognize specific antigens on tumor cells through the insertion of a chimeric antigen receptor. Such modified T cells are known as chimeric T cells, or CAR T cells. Thousands of the CAR T cells are created and infused into the patient's bloodstream.

The cells act as a living drug that hunts down and kills cancer cells. Importantly, these reprogrammed immune cells survive in the body for years, constantly patrolling for cancer cells and attacking them as they appear.

While use of the therapy is still in its infancy, the results of small trials elsewhere have been remarkable. For example, CAR T cell therapy has been successfully used to treat refractory acute lymphoblastic leukemia, a disease that was previously considered universally fatal. In early trials at the University of Pennsylvania, nearly 90 percent of patients treated with the therapy survived.

The Brown Center for Immunotherapy will initially focus on multiple myeloma and triple negative breast cancer, two diseases for which the School of Medicine and its clinical partner Indiana University Health have a strong foundation of talent, sizable patient populations and existing resources that can be leveraged to maximize impact.

Researchers will also investigate potential opportunities to prevent and treat Alzheimer's disease and other neurodegenerative disorders with immunotherapies.

"Our hope is to show this therapy's ability and effectiveness in one or two diseases while we simultaneously develop technology that is broadly applicable to many, many diseases," said Dr. Shekhar, who leads research for the School of Medicine. "Our vision is not simply to build a center or facility that can make immune cells and give treatments to a limited number of patients here in Indiana. Our vision is to create a program that will transform the whole technology so that thousands of patients all over the world can benefit from it."

How the gift will be used

Of the \$30 million gift, \$13 million will be directed to establish five endowed faculty chairs. These funds are crucial to recruit world-class leaders and provide them with an ongoing, stable source of funding. Thanks to a gift-matching program that is part of For All: The Indiana University Bicentennial Campaign, the financial support available from the endowed funds each year will essentially be doubled.

The director of the center will hold the Don Brown Chair in Immunotherapy. Other chairs that will support center leadership are named after four of Dr. Brown's eight children: the Paige Brown Chair in Experimental Therapeutics, the Nicole Brown Chair in Immunology, the Christopher Brown Chair in Immunology and the David Brown Chair in Genomic Medicine.

The remainder of the gift will be used to invest in necessary infrastructure and technologies and to fuel

research.

About Don Brown

Dr. Donald Brown is one of Indiana’s most successful and respected entrepreneurs, and his ties to Indiana University run deep.

He earned his Bachelor of Science in physics from Indiana University Bloomington in 1978 and later enrolled in a combined MD/PhD program with the intent of becoming a laboratory researcher. After deciding that career path was not a good fit, he switched his focus to computer science. He earned a master of science in 1982 before finishing medical school in 1985.

Dr. Brown launched his first software company with a friend while still in medical school. Dealership Programming Inc. allowed car dealerships to easily calculate monthly payments for consumers financing their vehicles, a task that had previously been done on paper.

In 1988 he co-founded Software Artistry Inc., a developer of customer support software. He left to start Interactive Intelligence in 1994. Software Artistry became the first Indiana software company to go public in 1995 and was acquired by IBM in 1998.

Dr. Brown grew Interactive Intelligence into a national leader in call center and communication technologies, enabling businesses to improve customer service and productivity. He took the company public in 1999 and led the charge to migrate their software onto a cloud-based platform before most others in the industry had contemplated such a move.

The company was acquired on Dec. 1 by Genesys Telecommunications Laboratories Inc. for \$1.4 billion in the second largest tech deal in the state’s history.

“When I learned that we were going to be selling Interactive Intelligence and I would be able to monetize the investments I had made, I wanted to take some portion of the fruit of my efforts and use it to give back to the larger community, and to do so at least partly as a message to my children,” Dr. Brown said. “I wanted to communicate to them as much as anybody that my life has not been about accumulating wealth. I’ve always wanted to build teams and do really interesting things. The wealth has been a byproduct of that, and I’d like to be able to use that to do things that benefit not just me and not just my family, but society as a whole. That’s been a huge factor behind this effort.”

About For All: The Indiana University Bicentennial Campaign

For All: The Indiana University Bicentennial Campaign is taking place on all IU-administered campuses including IU Bloomington, Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, IU East, IU Kokomo, IU Northwest, IU South Bend, and IU Southeast. The campaign will conclude in December 2019 to coincide with IU’s bicentennial year celebration in 2020. To learn more about the campaign, its impact, and how to participate, visit forall.iu.edu.

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CTSI Young Investigator Award in Clinical - Translational Research - 2017.01

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Description

SUBMISSION DEADLINE - JANUARY 17, 2017 (5:00 PM).

The Indiana Clinical and Translational Sciences Institute (CTSI) is seeking applicants for the CTSI Young Investigator Awards in Clinical-Translational Research. These awards are designed to provide promising junior investigator faculty with the opportunity to be mentored in research-intensive multi-disciplinary settings toward the goal of developing careers in clinical-translational research. Clinical research includes epidemiological studies, clinical trials, or other investigations involving human subjects. Translational research consists of either "T1 research" (interface of basic science to human studies) or "T2 research" (interface of human studies to the community). To be eligible, candidates must fall into 1 of the following 2 categories: 1) Clinician-scientists with a doctoral degree (physicians, nurses, dentists, pharmacists, clinical psychologists, optometrists, veterinarians, allied health care professionals, etc.) or 2) Basic scientists with a PhD who are doing translational research, which involves some component of human subjects research and has high potential for early translation in impacting patient care.

Benefits include partial salary support, as well as tuition and fees for required and elective coursework, pilot research monies, and travel funds to attend the national CTSI young investigator meeting.

Interested candidates must e-mail their CV to Donna Burgett at dfburgett@regenstrief.org for eligibility determination, prior to submission of a full application online.

Contact Information

Contact Name: Donna Burgett

Contact Email: dfburget@regenstrief.org

Submission Checklist

1. The applicant meets the eligibility criteria outlined in the application guidelines and has received prior approval from the CTSI Education office to submit their application online.
2. The applicant has identified a Primary Mentor and Co-Mentor, that meet the criteria outlined in the application guidelines.
3. The application uses no smaller than 11 point font format for questions 1-9.
4. The application includes:
 - o Completed questions 1-9 (6 page maximum)
 - o CV for applicant
 - o Two (2) letters of recommendation (one from the Primary Mentor)
 - o Letter from Department Chair assuring 75% protected research time during the award period.
 - o CV or Biosketch of Primary Mentor (5 page maximum)
 - o CV or Biosketch of Co-Mentor (5 page maximum)
5. The submission is collated into a single electronic file that is in PDF file format.

Files for Investigators

- [DOWNLOAD THE COMPETITION GUIDELINES](#)
- [DOWNLOAD APPLICATION FORM](#)
- [INSTRUCTIONS](#)

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Andrea Zeek Joins Indiana CTSI



Andrea Zeek has joined the IU School of Medicine as communications coordinator for the Indiana CTSI and school-wide research communications.

Andrea comes to the CTSI from the University of Iowa, where she worked in science news and media relations. Her prior experience includes communications roles at IU Bloomington and IUPUI and working as a journalist in Indiana.

She has a master's degree in journalism with a concentration in health and science communication from IU Bloomington and a bachelor's degree in journalism from Ball State University.

If you have a news tip or communications question, you can contact her at 317-278-2886 or anzeek@iu.edu

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