

Columbia University Medical Center, NewYork-Presbyterian and The Life Raft Group, a Non-profit, Announce Innovative Partnership to Accelerate Cancer Research

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New York, NY & Wayne, NJ - Columbia University Medical Center, NewYork-Presbyterian and the Life Raft Group (LRG), a patient advocacy organization specializing in GIST cancer, announced today that they have entered into a collaborative research project to investigate the efficacy of a novel system biology approach for identifying the best treatment options for patients with advanced gastrointestinal stromal tumors (GIST).

The science behind the approach, developed in the Califano Lab at Columbia University, utilizes VIPER algorithm software (Virtual Inference of Protein activity by Enriched Regulon analysis) to investigate the molecular networks of GIST patients that have become resistant to approved tyrosine kinase inhibitors. Although oncogene targets are already established in GIST, this will identify the master regulators or “tumor-checkpoints” that represent the final on and off switches in the GIST cells. Personalized therapeutic agents can then be selected for patients currently lacking any effective therapeutic options.

Clinical and molecular data from the study participants will be stored in the Life Raft Group’s Patient Registry, a unique data management analytics tool developed by the LRG which tracks a patient’s clinical history and links it to a companion record of tissue and mutational data housed in the LRG’s Tissue Bank. The project will launch with the mapping of tissue samples donated by patients to the LRG.

The LRG will also serve as the monitoring arm of the study and use their proprietary research collaboration platform, InterGR, to provide investigators a centralized repository for all data collected.

The collaboration is an example of the vital role patient advocacy groups play in bridging the gap between researchers and motivated patient populations who want to share their clinical histories and tissue to create new treatments and better outcomes.

According to Gary K. Schwartz, M.D, Chief of NewYork-Presbyterian/Columbia University Medical Center’s Division of Hematology and Oncology who is spearheading the project, “I think this could be monumental. It shows how a major patient advocacy group and academic centers can work so closely together.”

To quote Norman Scherzer, Executive Director of the Life Raft Group, “We agree that this is a historic occasion, and are both impressed and grateful for Columbia’s initiative in recognizing the importance of working with the patient community. We hope that this collaboration will serve as a model for other academic medical institutions.”

Collaboration begins with six other academic institutions including Fox Chase Cancer Center, Oregon Health & Science University, University of California San Diego, University of Miami, Washington University and Stanford University.

About Columbia University Medical Center

Columbia University Medical Center provides international leadership in basic, preclinical, and clinical research; medical and health sciences education; and patient care. The medical center trains future leaders and includes the dedicated work of many physicians, scientists, public health professionals, dentists, and nurses at the College of Physicians and Surgeons, the Mailman School of Public Health, the College of Dental Medicine, the School of Nursing, the biomedical departments of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, and allied research centers and institutions. Columbia University Medical Center is home to the largest medical research enterprise in New York City and State and one of the largest faculty medical practices in the Northeast. The campus that Columbia University Medical Center shares with its hospital partner, NewYork-Presbyterian, is now called the Columbia University Irving Medical Center. For more information, visit cumc.columbia.edu or columbiadoctors.org.

About NewYork-Presbyterian

NewYork-Presbyterian is one of the nation's most comprehensive healthcare delivery networks, focused on providing innovative and compassionate care to patients in the New York metropolitan area and throughout the globe. In collaboration with two renowned medical school partners, Weill Cornell Medicine and Columbia University College of Physicians & Surgeons, NewYork-Presbyterian is consistently recognized as a leader in medical education, groundbreaking research and clinical innovation.

NewYork-Presbyterian has four major divisions: **NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital** is ranked #1 in the New York metropolitan area by *U.S. News and World Report* and repeatedly named to the magazine's Honor Roll of best hospitals in the nation; **NewYork-Presbyterian Regional Hospital Network** is comprised of leading hospitals in and around New York and delivers high-quality care to patients throughout the region; **NewYork-Presbyterian Physician Services** connects medical experts with patients in their communities; and **NewYork-Presbyterian Community and Population Health** features the hospital's ambulatory care network sites and operations, community care initiatives and healthcare quality programs, including NewYork Quality Care, established by NewYork-Presbyterian, Weill Cornell and Columbia.

NewYork-Presbyterian is one of the largest healthcare providers in the U.S. Each year, nearly 29,000 NewYork-Presbyterian professionals deliver exceptional care to more than 2 million patients.




For more information, visit www.nyp.org and find us on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.

About the Life Raft Group

The Life Raft Group is a non-profit with a simple focus: to cure a form of cancer – GIST (gastrointestinal stromal tumors) – and to help those living with it until then. The mission is to ensure the survival of GIST patients through a comprehensive approach connecting individual patients' needs, the worldwide community of GIST advocates and the global health and research environment. This is achieved by focusing on three key areas: Patient Support & Education, Advocacy and Research.

To learn more, visit www.liferaftgroup.org

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