

Mission:

To protect, promote & improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county & community efforts.



Rick Scott
Governor

John H. Armstrong, MD, FACS
State Surgeon General & Secretary

Vision: To be the **Healthiest State** in the Nation

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THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH ANNOUNCES GRANT AWARDS TO RESEARCHERS WORKING TO CURE CANCER AND TOBACCO-RELATED DISEASES

TALLAHASSEE – The Florida Department of Health has awarded funding for nine research projects that are focused on finding cures for cancer and tobacco-related diseases. Cancer is the leading cause of death in Florida, claiming 41,696 Florida lives in 2012. The funds support research on diseases that relate to tobacco use, including heart disease, which is the second largest cause of death in Florida.

“High-quality, innovative research is key for a healthier Florida,” said State Surgeon General and Secretary of Health Dr. John Armstrong. “The Department is pleased to make these research awards that will focus on helping Floridians live free from cancer and tobacco-related disease.”

Ninety-one original applications from twelve universities and research institutions were submitted. From these competitive applicants, grant awards were provided to researchers at the University of Florida, Moffitt Cancer Center, the University of Miami, the University of South Florida, Florida International University and the Sanford-Burnham Research Institute.

The negative health impact of tobacco use is an agency priority and therefore four grants were awarded to research tobacco-related disease. One of the grants will support a smoking intervention program for low-income Hispanic women to help mothers with newborns stop smoking. One study will explore how tobacco use may result in loss of vision and will study a new drug to help those impacted in this way. Another grant will research ways a patient’s own immune system reduces the severity of stroke, and yet another will explore therapy for patients experiencing difficulty swallowing after a stroke.

As these awards are intended to advance the cure for cancer, the remaining five grants were allocated to recipients researching diverse cancer projects. One study explores an innovative approach to discovering drugs that may prevent arsenic exposure-related cancers. To support a cure for one of Florida’s most common cancers, another project strives to determine whether a patient’s immune system may be used to treat lung cancer. One grant funds research that may lead to therapy for currently therapy-resistant breast cancers, and another study will work to determine why certain cancers resist treatment and spread throughout the body.

Funding for the awards comes from programs established by the Florida Legislature. The James and Esther King Biomedical Research Program supports initiatives addressing tobacco-related diseases including cancer, cardiovascular disease, stroke, and pulmonary disease. The Bankhead-Coley Cancer Research Program provides grants to further the search for a cure to all types of cancer.

State Senator Anitere Flores said, “I am pleased to see the Department of Health continuing to award research funding to strategic projects that offer hope to Florida’s families who are struggling with cancer. Through collaboration, world-class research and targeted resources we will see improved treatments and lives saved.”

Florida Department of Health

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Dr. James F. Howell Assistant Dean for Professional Relations at Nova Southeastern University and member of the Tobacco Advisory Council said, "Prevention, treatment, and research are essential elements to address the addiction and diseases associated with tobacco products. Research discovers new prevention and treatment knowledge so needed to address the complex cancer issues we are all so aware of. The Florida Department of Health is to be commended for its leadership addressing tobacco addiction and related diseases."

Dr. Thomas J. George Jr., Chair of the Cancer Collaborative Research Advisory Council (CCRAB), said, "The commitment demonstrated by the State of Florida to support cancer-related research represents a key investment in our collective futures: The future of the health of our cancer patients in Florida, the future of innovative cancer advancements which originate or are developed in Florida, and the future where the burden of cancer is eliminated from our Florida families."

Ralph DeVitto, Executive Vice President for American Cancer Society Florida Division said, "We support the state's continued commitment to providing grants to the most promising cancer research through a competitive, peer-review process. These research grants are critical to finishing the fight against cancer, and offer hope to all Floridians dealing with a cancer diagnosis."

Dr. Mark Brantly, Vice-Chair of the Biomedical Research Advisory Council said, "On behalf of my colleagues with the Biomedical Research Advisory Council, I want to thank the Department of Health for moving forward expeditiously with these grant awards. The Bankhead-Coley and King Biomedical Research Programs remain a testament to the Legislature's vision for answering relevant research questions to improve the lives of people with cancer and tobacco-related diseases."

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