

**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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**Contact:** DOH Communications  
(850) 245-4111

**THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AWARDS 31 GRANTS TO RESEARCHERS WORKING TO CURE CANCER AND TOBACCO-RELATED DISEASES**

**TALLAHASSEE** – The Florida Department of Health today announces the summer 2013 research grant funding awards for 31 projects to find cures for cancer and tobacco-related diseases that affect Florida’s families. Cancer is the leading cause of death in Florida, claiming 41,696 Florida lives in 2012.

“This peer reviewed program is directing research dollars to projects that will help Florida’s families with innovative and life-saving treatments,” said Secretary of Health and State Surgeon General Dr. John Armstrong. “The recipients of these new grant awards are addressing many of the biggest challenges we face in finding cures for cancer and tobacco-related diseases.”

The awards are designed to advance the cure of all cancers and funding was given to researchers with diverse projects. Funding is provided through the Bankhead-Coley Cancer Research Program and the James and Esther King Research Program that funds research for tobacco-related diseases, including cancer. The summer 2013 competition was extremely competitive with 106 applicants seeking funding for tobacco-related diseases, including heart and lung diseases. In addition, there were 160 applicants seeking funding for cancer research. Grants were awarded based on rigorous peer review and the competition resulted in 11 percent of applicants being funded, which is consistent with the standards used by federal funding agencies and demonstrates that these grant programs have rigorous standards for scientific peer review.

The funding supports a wide range of projects specifically related to cancer, including four basic science grants, a project involving new drug development and a community health project focused on health disparities. The research covers the most common types of cancers such as breast, colorectal, and prostate cancers and also includes research on melanoma, mesothelioma and gliomas.

The studies directly impact the lives of Floridians. For example, one project studies the role of smoking mentholated cigarettes on osteoporosis, and provides health screenings and education on ways to improve bone health. There are two studies that include education on smoking cessation.

One study will attempt to translate a new type of therapy into clinical practice that may eventually improve stroke treatment. Another will explore how prenatal and neonatal exposure to tobacco may result in a lifelong predisposition to heart disease. And another involves a community-based education program to improve adherence with cholesterol lowering medications in Hispanics and African-Americans in Florida.

Funding supports researchers at the state’s cancer centers, universities and research institutes. The following organizations received awards:

- Bay Pines Veterans Affairs Hospital- one researcher
- Florida International University- one researcher
- Florida State University- two researchers
- H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Center - eight researchers

**Florida Department of Health**

Office of Communications  
4052 Bald Cypress Way, Bin A-04 • Tallahassee, FL 32399-1705  
PHONE: 850/245-4111 • FAX 850/488-6495

**www.FloridasHealth.com**

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YOUTUBE: fldoh

- Mayo Clinic Jacksonville - two researchers
- Sanford-Burnham Medical Research Institute- one researcher
- University of Central Florida- three researchers
- University of Florida – six researchers
- University of Miami- seven researchers
- University of South Florida- two researchers

State Representative Debbie Mayfield said, "It is encouraging to see this important research advancing and I congratulate the award recipients. These innovative studies will provide hope to every family in Florida that has had a loved one battle with cancer. I appreciate the careful attention and diligence that the Department of Health has shown in this process."

State Senator Lizbeth Benacquisto said, "I applaud Department of Health's support in the fight against cancer. Their efforts, and the work performed by these researchers, will let all families know that Florida is serious about finding an end to a disease that has taken so much from so many."

Dr. Daniel Armstrong, Chair of the Biomedical Research Advisory Council said, "The large number of quality applications from Florida's biomedical research community for the King and Bankhead Coley programs speaks volumes about the promising future of research in our state. These high-caliber proposals included many different types of research, and addressed diseases of major importance to Floridians, including more than 10 types of cancer, heart and cardiovascular disease, lung disease, osteoporosis, and tobacco-related risks for pregnant women and their infants. Projects also addressed health disparities, community education, new medications, and use of cutting edge technology. We could not ask for a broader or stronger research community in our state, a community most deserving of our public support for work that benefits us all."

Dr. Penny A. Ralston, Director, Dean Emeritus & Professor, Center on Better Health and Life for Underserved Populations, Florida State University said, "I am very pleased that the awards made include two that focus on health disparities. These awards are in keeping with the direction of the state in health disparities as demonstrated by the Health Disparities Research Agenda for Florida, which was developed in 2011, and more recently by the Florida Health Equity Research Institute, which was established this year."

Brenda Olsen, Chief Operating Officer of the American Lung Association in Florida said, "Tobacco use is the number one preventable cause of death in Florida and the leading cause of COPD and lung cancer. The American Lung Association in Florida continues to fight to fund the James and Ester King Research Program so that one day Florida families no longer have to deal with the heartbreak of seeing a loved one suffer from tobacco-related illnesses."

Megan Wessel, Vice President of Health Systems for the American Cancer Society said, "We are encouraged by the quality cancer research being funded by these grants. Once again, the peer-review process has resulted in an impressive array of projects awarded - work that will undoubtedly benefit cancer patients and their families. These programs continue to serve as the cornerstone of biomedical research infrastructure in our state, and we applaud the state's commitment to this competitive model."

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