

CASEY DESANTIS CANCER RESEARCH PROGRAM

Florida Cancer Innovation Fund Awardees

Fiscal Year 2025-26, Period 2

Institution	Principal Investigator	Budget	Project Title	Grant Category	Cancer Type	Research Category
Mayo Clinic Jacksonville	Saranya Chumsri, MD, Professor of Oncology	\$747,031.13	Postbiotic Immune Reprogramming to Overcome Checkpoint Inhibitor Resistance in Triple-Negative Breast Cancer	Clinical Trials	Breast Cancer	Clinical Trials
Mayo Clinic Jacksonville	Antonio Jorge de Vasconcelos Forte, Professor of Plastic Surgery	\$1,667,910.00	Deployment of a Multimodal Agentic Virtual Assistant (MAIVA) for Surgical Oncology and Oncologic Reconstruction	Clinical Trials	Breast, Colon, Prostate, and Colorectal Cancers	Clinical Trials
Florida International University	Diana Azzam, Associate Professor and Scientific Director	\$1,490,709.26	Advancing Functional Precision Oncology: Combining Generic Drug Repurposing and Natural Compounds to Overcome Therapy Resistance in Pediatric and Adult Cancers	Generic Drug Repurposing Grant	Treatment-Resistant, Relapsed, and Refractory Cancers	Generic Drug Repurposing Research
H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Center & Research Institute, Inc.	Lilit Karapetyan, Assistant Member, Department of Cutaneous Oncology	\$1,915,651.00	CD40L–41BBL–Augmented Tumor-Infiltrating Lymphocytes (TIL) for Advanced Melanoma: Phase I Evaluation of Safety, Feasibility, and Preliminary Clinical Activity	Clinical Trials	Skin/Melanoma Cancer	Clinical Trials
University of Florida	Kethandapatti Balaji, Professor and Chair, Department of Urology	\$1,571,148.20	Seeing and Sensing Cancer: PSMA-PET and ctDNA for Smarter Monitoring of Metastatic Prostate Cancer	Clinical Trials	Prostate Cancer	Clinical Trials
University of Miami	Coral Olazagasti, Assistant Professor	\$1,003,167.00	For the People: Expanding Access to Lung Cancer Screening in Florida's Medically Underserved Communities	Integrated Cancer Care Innovations	Lung Cancer	Nonmetropolitan/Medically Underserved Areas
Madison County Hospital Health Systems, Inc.	Dr. Daniel Perkins, Chief Medical Officer	\$1,999,991.00	Nutritional Strategies for Cancer Prevention: A Rural Pilot Study Using Wellness Coaching, Artificial Intelligence (AI), and Food as Medicine (FAM) for Cancer Prevention - Adults 19-64	Integrated Cancer Care Innovations	Breast, Colon, Prostate, and Colorectal Cancers	Nonmetropolitan/Medically Underserved Areas

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University of South Florida	Richard Heller, Professor	\$1,685,286.73	Optimization and Certification of Drug and Gene Delivery Platform Toward Clinical Translation and Commercialization	High Impact Pilot Grant	Skin/Melanoma Cancer	Technology Transfer Feasibility (TTF)
Florida State University	Akash Gunjan, Associate Professor	\$350,000.26	Combination therapy for fatal pediatric high-grade gliomas using repurposed drugs	Generic Drug Repurposing Grant	Brain/CNS and Homologous Recombination Deficient Subtype Cancers	Generic Drug Repurposing Research
H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Center & Research Institute, Inc.	Daniel A. Anaya, MD, MSHCT, Senior Member and Chair, GI Tumor (Gastrointestinal Surgical Oncology and Gastroenterology)	\$714,852.00	The FL-PAC CONNECT Pilot: Implementing a Multilevel, Telehealth-Enabled Patient Navigation to Accelerate Comprehensive Colorectal Cancer Treatment for Rural Floridians	High Impact Pilot Grant	Colorectal Cancer	Nonmetropolitan/Medically Underserved Areas
Florida State University	Q.X. Amy Sang, Endowed Professor in Cancer Res. & Distinguished Res. Professor	\$564,225.77	AI-Powered Drug Repurposing for Human Brain Cancers	Generic Drug Repurposing Grant	Brain/CNS Cancer	Generic Drug Repurposing Research
Mayo Clinic Jacksonville	Yan Luo, Associate Consultant 1 and Assistant Professor	\$658,153.60	Allogenic BAFF-R/CD19 Bicistronic CAR-T Therapy for Central Nervous System Lymphoma	Rapid Translation Grant	Brain/CNS Cancer	Translational Research
University of Florida	Aikseng Ooi, Associate Professor	\$913,307.00	Drug Repurposing and Synthetic-Lethal Discovery for Precision Therapy in FH-Deficient Cancer	High Impact Pilot Grant	Hereditary Leiomyomatosis and Renal Cell Cancer (HLRCC)	Generic Drug Repurposing Research
H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Center & Research Institute	Nagi B Kumar, Senior Member/Professor	\$632,503.30	A nutritional and exercise intervention (POWERUP-M) to ameliorate Sarcopenic Obesity and Prevent Prostate Cancer Progression in men treated with Androgen-deprivation therapy	Nutrition and Food-Based Cancer Prevention Grant	Prostate Cancer	Nutrition-Based Cancer Prevention Research

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University of Miami	Sabita Roy, Professor and Vice Chair for research	\$1,075,939.31	Engineered Probiotic Therapy to Prevent Chemotherapy-Induced Neuropathy in Breast and Colorectal Cancer	High Impact Pilot Grant	Breast, Colon, and Colorectal Cancers	Novel Treatments
Biom Pharmaceutical Corporation	Bobban Subhadra, Chief Technology Officer	\$383,228.09	Zowell as a Microbiome-Modulating Adjunct to Chemo-Immunotherapy for Non-Small Cell Lung Cancer (NSCLC)	High Impact Pilot Grant	Lung and Colorectal Cancers	Novel Treatments
Florida State University	Gary K. Ostrander, Professor of Medicine	\$365,437.52	Enhancing Niclosamide Activity for Cancer Treatment (ENACT)	Generic Drug Repurposing Grant	Lung, Breast, Colon, Prostate, Brain/CNS, Colorectal, and Blood Cancers	Generic Drug Repurposing Research
University of Central Florida	Pegah Khosravi, Associate Professor	\$974,680.20	Kidney-VLM: An AI-Driven Diagnostic Platform for Early and Accurate Kidney-Cancer Detection in Florida	Rapid Translation Grant	Renal Cell Cancer	Translational Research
Tampa General Hospital	Ivan Borrello, Director Myeloma and Cellular Therapies	\$711,277.16	A Pilot Study of Immunomodulation of the Tumor Microenvironment in Ovarian Cancer with Ivermectin and Tadalafil	Generic Drug Repurposing Grant	Ovarian Cancer	Generic Drug Repurposing Research
University of West Florida	Karishma Chhabria Unrue, Assistant Professor	\$824,827.91	Move & Nourish Florida: Lifestyle-Based Intervention to Reduce Cardiovascular Risk Among Breast and Prostate Cancer Survivors	High Impact Pilot Grant	Breast and Prostate Cancers	Nutrition-Based Cancer Prevention Research