



**Immediate Release**

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## **Christiana Care Health System Receives Gift from Delaware Ovarian Cancer Foundation for New Research Program**

(WILMINGTON, Del. — Feb. 24) Christiana Care Health System has received a gift of \$100,000 from The Delaware Ovarian Cancer Foundation (DOCF) to support ovarian cancer tissue research. The gift will enable the health system’s Helen F. Graham Cancer Center & Research Institute to advance its translational research program in ovarian cancer, the first such program in the state.

According to the American Cancer Society, ovarian cancer ranks fifth among all cancer deaths for women and is the leading cause of death among gynecologic cancers. In 2016, more than 22,000 women will be newly diagnosed with the disease and 14,000 women will die from it. Notoriously difficult to detect in its early stages, ovarian cancer is usually diagnosed after it has advanced, when mortality rates are much higher.

“Christiana Care has long offered ovarian cancer clinical trials, and with DOCF’s generous support we can now begin important translational research on this elusive and hard to detect cancer,” said Mark E. Borowsky, M.D., director, division of gynecologic oncology at the Graham Cancer Center. “This gift will allow us to jump-start translational research by creating a biorepository of diverse tissue samples for basic laboratory research. In time, what we learn at the bench can translate into new therapies that we’ll bring directly to the patient’s bedside.”

Over the next two years, Dr. Borowsky’s team will build a bank of ovarian tissues and serums collected from Christiana Care patients. It will also hire a researcher to oversee the process of procuring and analyzing these samples and creating a database of clinical information—such as surgical and chemotherapy responses and cancer recurrence times—from women receiving ovarian cancer care. The bank of ovarian tissues will allow researchers to conduct tumor molecular profiling and DNA sequencing. When they can identify and understand different mutations, they then will be able to target treatments to these specific defects.

“Women across the state turn to the Graham Cancer Center for its excellent care and compassionate people,” said ovarian cancer survivor Dorianne Short, who founded DOCF in 2009. “We are excited to help Christiana Care with ovarian cancer research that will someday

lead to more effective screenings and treatments, which are so desperately needed.” This is the foundation’s first major gift to Christiana Care for research.

“The Graham Cancer Center is already deeply engaged in translational breast, colon, radiation and tissue research at our Center for Translational Cancer Research. Now, thanks to generous support from DCOF, we will expand this work to include ovarian cancer,” said Nicholas J. Petrelli, M.D., FACS, Bank of America endowed medical director of the Graham Cancer Center. “Our partnership with DOCF illustrates how philanthropy can drive scientific inquiry and underscores the health system’s promise to serve as expert, caring partners in our community’s health.”

The Center for Translational Cancer Research is a collaboration among the health system, University of Delaware, Nemours/A.I. du Pont Hospital for Children, Rice University/Bio-Science Research Collaborative and the Delaware Biotechnology Institute and other partners.

The Graham Cancer Center ovarian tissue project builds on recent immunotherapy research, conducted with research partners at The Wistar Institute in Philadelphia, that explored how to stimulate the body’s own immune system to fight ovarian cancer. Dr. Borowsky and his division of gynecologic oncology colleagues Mark Cadungog, M.D., director of robotic surgery, and Stephanie Jean, M.D., director of gynecologic oncology research, demonstrated that inflammation, anti-tumor immunity and the clinical outcome of cancer patients are influenced by a common genetic difference in the TLR5 gene.

### **About Christiana Care Health System**

Christiana Care Health System is one of the country’s largest health care systems, ranking as the 22nd leading hospital in the nation and 12th on the East Coast in terms of admissions. The health system includes The Medical Group of Christiana Care, a network of primary care physicians, medical and surgical specialists as well as home health care, preventive medicine, rehabilitation services and patient/family advisors for core health care services. A not-for-profit teaching hospital affiliated with Sidney Kimmel Medical College at Thomas Jefferson University, Christiana Care is recognized as a regional center for excellence in cardiology, cancer and women's health services. Christiana Care has an extensive range of outpatient services, and through Christiana Care Quality Partners, Christiana Care works closely with its medical staff to achieve better health, better access to care and lower cost. Christiana Care is home to Delaware's only Level I trauma center, the highest capability center and the only one of its kind between Philadelphia and Baltimore. Christiana Care features a Level III neonatal intensive care unit, the only delivering hospital in Delaware that offers this highest level of care to the most critically ill newborns. Christiana Care includes two hospitals with 1,100 patient beds. For more information about Christiana Care, visit [www.christianacare.org/howeare](http://www.christianacare.org/howeare).

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