$111M Grant to Focus on HIV-Related Cancers [VIDEOS]

"People living with HIV shoulder an enormous burden of cancer," said lead researcher Joseph Sparano, MD.

September 24, 2020 By Trent Straube

A five-year $111 million grant from the National Cancer Institute will help doctors study, prevent and treat cancers associated with HIV. Joseph Sparano, MD, will lead a research team that will include numerous specialists at Montefiore Health Systems and Albert Einstein College of Medicine, both located in Bronx, New York.

Such research is important because people living with HIV are at increased risk for many cancers. As POZ noted in a cover story on HIV and cancer last year, although AIDS-defining cancers such as Kaposi sarcoma, non-Hodgkin lymphoma and cervical cancer have decreased dramatically since effective HIV treatment became available in the mid-1990s, other cancers are on the rise. This is partly because cancers have more time to develop now that people with HIV live longer; long-term inflammation and the extra burden on the immune system that result from HIV are other drivers of cancer rates.

Below is a Facebook video post by Albert Einstein College of Medicine about the cancer research grant.

NCI-Funded Research to Prevent and Treat HIV-Associated Cancer

People living with HIV have an increased risk of cancer. What can be done to help? The AIDS Malignancy Consortium (AMC) is a National Cancer Institute (NCI)-funded organization dedicated to the prevention and

treatment of HIV-related cancers. Einstein and Montefiore's Joseph Sparano, M.D., has received a $111 million grant from the NCI to lead the AMC. In this video, he explains why people living with HIV are more susceptible to cancer, how the AMC is focused on helping to prevent and treat cancer in people living with HIV, and the organization's goals for the future. He also shares how Montefiore and Einstein's unique experience in caring for the population of the Bronx provides important support for AMC's mission.

Posted by Albert Einstein College of Medicine on Tuesday, September 22, 2020

"People living with HIV shoulder an enormous burden of cancer," Sparano said in an about the federal grant. He is the associate chair for clinical research in the department of oncology at Montefiore and the associate director for clinical research at Albert Einstein Cancer Center.

What's more, the press release points out, marginalized communities are disproportionately affected by HIV. In fact, 70% of new diagnoses are among people of color. (Visit POZ Basics about HIV in Specific Populations to learn more details about HIV rates and related health issues.)

Sparano will collaborate with Harris Goldstein, MD, a professor of microbiology and immunology at Einstein, and Howard Strickler, MD, professor and chief of epidemiology in the department of epidemiology and population health at Einstein and Montefiore. They'll guide collaborative research at the AIDS Malignancy Consortium (AMC), a global network of over 40 sites that run clinical trials and working groups, and at the Einstein-Rockefeller-CUNY Center for AIDS Research, which is funded by the National Cancer Institute.

The scientists will design new trials, evaluate research and identify areas of need among the HIV population. "AMC is the only organization worldwide solely dedicated to the study, treatment and

prevention of cancer in this group of people," Sparano said. "Montefiore and Einstein are perfectly positioned to lead this organization and steer research advances."

Below is another Facebook video post by Albert Einstein College of Medicine about the cancer research grant.

Montefiore Health System and Einstein Will Lead AIDS Malignancy Consortium

Approximately 38 million people are infected with HIV, including 1.2 million in the U.S. People living with HIV have an increased risk of developing a range of cancers compared with the general population and are more likely to die of cancer, interrupting otherwise healthy lives. Montefiore and Einstein's Joseph Sparano, M.D., is now leading the worldwide research consortium focused on changing the odds for these patients.

Posted by Albert Einstein College of Medicine on Friday, September 18, 2020

One of the topics they plan to focus on is anal cancer among people with HIV, notably by completing the Anal Cancer/HSIL Outcomes Research (ANCHOR) Study. The trial is currently underway at numerous sites nationwide (to enroll, visit AnchorStudy.org or call 844-HIV-BUTT). "The aim of the study is to establish best practices for the prevention and treatment of anal cancer," said Rebecca Levine, MD, ANCHOR's principal investigator at Einstein and Montefiore, in the press release. "We expect the results of this study will have an enormous impact on clinical care.'

To learn more about the ANCHOR study, read the July/August 2019 POZ cover story "Rising Above" as well as "Older & Wiser," which profiles HIV treatment activist and long-term survivor Jeff Taylor

who works with the AIDS Malignancy Consortium (AMC), a global clinical trials group focused on HIV-related cancers, and the ANCHOR Study. Also visit Cancer Health, a sister publication of POZ magazine. Each website features a Basics section that provides a wide-ranging introduction to the topics of cancer and HIV, respectively.

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