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Maine Medical Center and Partnering Institutions Awarded \$20M by the NIH

Funding from the National Institutes of Health will establish the Northern New England Clinical and Translational Research Network.

PORTLAND, Maine – The National Institutes of Health has announced a five-year, \$20 million research grant to Maine Medical Center, its research institute and their partnering institutions, the University of Vermont and the University of Southern Maine. The funding will establish the Northern New England Clinical and Translational Research Network, a consortium dedicated to enhancing collaborative biomedical research activities for the improvement of human health. This consortium joins nine other NIH-supported regional networks across the country.

Funding from this award will help researchers develop and implement innovative medical treatments for many chronic diseases prevalent in our region including cancer, heart disease, obesity, diabetes, Alzheimer's disease and substance abuse. Research activities will also focus on defining optimal methods of prevention and health care delivery in rural environments, where approximately 60 percent of Maine's population resides. Another key purpose of the network is training the next generation of biomedical scientists, physicians and nurses in research methodology to attract additional research support to the region. Such initiatives are critical in meeting the healthcare needs of the region's aging population in an era when ground-breaking medical treatments are rapidly being developed.

Collaborations with researchers at Tufts University School of Medicine and the Geisel School of Medicine at Dartmouth will serve to extend the capabilities of the network and its reach across the region.

Clifford Rosen, M.D., Director of the Center for Clinical and Translational Research at Maine Medical Center Research Institute, and Gary Stein Ph.D., Director of the University of Vermont Cancer Center and Chair of the Department of Biochemistry at the University of Vermont College of Medicine, will co-lead the program.

"Our goal is to support innovative and transformative research, increase participation in clinical research and improve access of our rural residents to clinical studies. This will ultimately improve the health and vitality of the people of Maine, Vermont, and New Hampshire," said Dr. Rosen.

Donald St. Germain, M.D., Director of Maine Medical Center Research Institute and Vice President of Research at Maine Medical Center, said, “This award by the National Institutes of Health to MMC acknowledges a truly unique collaborative effort on the part of three of the major academic institutions in northern New England and will bring important resources to bear across the region that will improve the health of our communities. The award represents the work of many dedicated individuals who will now turn their talents and expertise toward the discovery and implementation of novel preventative strategies and treatments for human disease and the development of optimal health care delivery methods in rural environments.”

St. Germain expressed appreciation for the strong support of biomedical research and the National Institutes of Health by Maine’s Congressional delegation.

Senator Susan Collins said, “This \$20 million grant for the Northern New England Clinical and Translational Research Network will improve collaboration among researchers and spur the advancement of treatments, means of prevention, and cures for diseases that affect nearly every American family. The fact that this exciting research will be conducted here in Maine is a credit to the skilled scientists at the Maine Medical Research Institute. As a senior member of the Appropriations Committee, I have worked to secure significant investments for biomedical research, including a \$2 billion increase for the NIH this year, which will help us conquer so many diseases that take both an emotional and financial toll.”

Senator Angus King also praised the researchers: “Maine Med has established itself as a premier medical institution with a dedicated team of health professionals and researchers who are advancing our understanding of medicine. This significant funding from NIH will support Maine Med's important and ongoing work with the Center of Biomedical Research, which will help save lives and build a healthier Maine community.”

Congresswoman Chellie Pingree noted the impact this research center can have on rural Maine: “I am delighted to see Maine Medical Center and its research institute receive the federal funding necessary to establish the Northern New England Clinical and Translational Research Network. This five-year NIH grant has a potential to change the health outcomes for thousands of Mainers living with chronic conditions ranging from cancer to diabetes. What’s more, this grant will support the retention of cutting-edge researchers working in rural states in Maine.”

Congressman Bruce Poliquin recognized the important role that this funding has in advancing medical treatment: “Thanks to our Nation’s strong commitment to our top-of-the-line research institutions and facilities, America continues to lead the world in medical innovation and in finding cures and treatments for ailments once thought impossible to overcome. I’m very pleased with the announcement of this substantial and important support for medical research at Maine Medical Center and their partners so these health innovators can continue their work in providing a better and healthier future for all.”

About Maine Medical Center

Maine Medical Center (MMC), recognized as the number-one ranked hospital in Maine by U.S. News and World Report for 2016-2017, is a complete health care resource for the people of greater Portland and the entire state, as well as northern New England. Incorporated in 1864, MMC is the state’s largest and only academic medical center, licensed for 637 beds, employing nearly 6,500 people, and dedicated to its mission that includes educating tomorrow’s care givers and researching new ways to provide care. MMC’s unique role as both a community hospital and an academic referral center requires an unparalleled depth and breadth of services, including nationally recognized educational programs and a world-class biomedical research Institute. As a nonprofit institution, Maine Medical Center provides nearly 23 percent

of all the charity care delivered in Maine. MMC is a member of the MaineHealth system, a growing family of health care services in northern New England. For more information, visit www.mmc.org.

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