

UW Carbone Cancer Center: State budget expands precision medicine to Wisconsin cancer patients

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MADISON, Wis. – An item in the newly passed Wisconsin state budget will expand a collaborative network of the UW Carbone Cancer Center and cancer doctors around the state to help find treatments matched to the genetic differences in patients' cancer.

The budget designates \$980,000 for the Precision Medicine Molecular Tumor Board (PMMTB) to reach all Wisconsin cancer patients who may need a customized approach to their treatment.

“This will allow us to work with even more of the great cancer providers and clinics around the state to make sure even more Wisconsin residents who suffer from cancer benefit from our research and expertise,” says Dr. Howard Bailey, director of the UW Carbone Cancer Center.

The board began work in September 2015 as collaboration between UW Carbone and the state's largest oncology practices, including Gundersen Health System in La Crosse, Aurora Health Care in Milwaukee, and Green Bay Oncology. More recently, Fox River Hematology/Oncology, ProHealth and ThedaCare have joined.

When a patient needs new treatment options, physicians around the state can request a genetic test and refer the case to the PMMTB, which reviews the findings and identifies treatments that target the mutations. For example, a drug already approved for melanoma might target the same mutation found in the patient's lung

cancer. In other cases, the board might find a clinical trial of an experimental treatment that matches the patient's cancer. In the first year, PMMTB found treatment options for a majority of patients whose cases were reviewed.

The new funding will allow the board to:

- Increase access to precision medicine by supporting hospitals and clinics across the state that are not currently using precision oncology.
- Establish a state-wide precision medicine database which allows patients, treatments, and outcomes to be tracked, building a knowledge base for future cases. This has potential to benefit cancer patients across the state and the nation.
- Continue to review novel cases, while being able to respond more quickly to cases in which the mutations fit patterns that have been seen in the past.
- Provide support for specialized genetic testing for patients, and support patients who cannot afford testing.

“These new resources will allow us to handle exponentially more cases and share knowledge among providers, genetics experts and patients across the state,” says Dr. Mark Burkard, a UW Carbone breast cancer oncologist and director of the PMMTB.