On Campus

Top Cancer Researcher Dalla-Favera Named Director of Herbert Irving Comprehensive Cancer Center

Spring 2005

Riccardo Dalla-Favera, MD, is an expert at moving science from bench to bedside. Known best for his identification of genes that cause lymphoma, he has also developed experimental treatments for the disease.

Now, the internationally recognized geneticist is using his broad knowledge of oncology to lead the Herbert Irving Comprehensive Cancer Center (HICCC), which encompasses all the cancer-related research and education at Columbia University Medical Center and New York–Presbyterian Hospital/CUMC. A member of the Columbia faculty for more than 15 years, Dalla-Favera was announced as HICCC director on May 3. Previously, he directed the Institute for Cancer Genetics, from 1999, and served as HICCC deputy director.

He vows that HICCC — one of just three National Institutes of Health–designated comprehensive cancer centers in New York State — will help “revolutionize cancer therapy in the next 10 to 20 years.”

Driving HICCC’s success, he says, will be interdisciplinary projects conducted at its new Irving Cancer Research Center, on the medical center’s campus. The 13-story, 300,000-square-foot facility doubles Columbia’s lab space for studying cancer and brings under one roof geneticists, cell biologists, and other researchers and clinicians battling the disease.

“This new research center will reinvigorate our Cancer Center,” says Dalla-Favera, who has discovered many genes responsible for lymphoma development, including one that stimulates tumor growth in most types of B cell lymphoma. “In the last 20 years, enormous progress has been made in understanding how cancer develops, but our discoveries have just begun to improve therapies for patients.”

With one floor of research space occupied since last fall, HICCC was dedicated formally on May 5. It was developed through the support of Herbert and Florence Irving, the leading benefactors in the history of CUMC.

The opening of the new building, coupled with Dalla-Favera's appointment, should "foster collaboration and the translation of new ideas from clinical observations to new therapeutic options," says David Hirsh, Columbia's executive vice president for research and a biochemistry and molecular biophysics professor.

"As we move toward an era of personalized oncology, the Center . . . is primed to make significant contributions toward eliminating the suffering and death due to cancer," said Andrew von Eschenbach, MD, director of the National Cancer Institute (NCI) and a cancer survivor, and the keynote speaker at the ribbon-cutting ceremony.



Guide to school abbreviations

All categories >