The Wistar Institute is a National Cancer Institute-designated Cancer Center.


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The Wistar Institute and The Moulder Center for Drug Discovery Research at Temple University Announce New Alliance to Accelerate Drug Development

PHILADELPHIA – (February 22, 2012) – The Wistar Institute and The Moulder Center for Drug Discovery Research at Temple University today announce their new partnership to accelerate the transition of biomedical research into new drug therapies for cancer and other diseases.

Their goal is to take biologically-active molecules that have the potential of targeting disease-related processes within cells and refining them into drugs that could be safely used as human therapeutics. It is a partnership that plays to the strengths of both institutions. The Wistar Institute and The Moulder Center for Drug Discovery Research will have access to cutting edge scientific expertise in basic biomedical research, medicinal chemistry, pharmacology, and translational medicine.

“Wistar scientists excel in the sort of biomedical research that generates both potential drug targets and promising new inhibitors to attack those targets, but developing a useful human drug from a potential therapeutic is a slow and daunting process,” said Russel E. Kaufman, M.D., president and CEO of The Wistar Institute. “This collaboration would hasten the earliest stages of drug development by expediting very early phase research into pre-clinical trials, and ultimately to clinical trials in patients.”

“Our Drug Discovery Center is currently engaged in collaborative scientific programs with research institutions in the US and abroad. We are excited about the opportunity to work with the Wistar scientists. Together, we will apply our drug discovery expertise and state-of-the-art enabling technologies to explore new targets in several therapeutic areas,” said Magid Abou-Gharbia, Ph.D., FRSC, associate dean for research and director of The Moulder Center for Drug Discovery Research based at the School of Pharmacy at Temple University.

Increasingly, academic institutions like Wistar and The Moulder Center are taking on the challenges of early-stage drug discovery and refinement, a role once exclusively filled by the biotech and pharmaceutical industry. In a struggling economy, as drug companies become more risk averse, they spend fewer resources on the very early stages of the drug discovery process. This partnership is designed to help realize the lifesaving potential of Wistar’s ongoing biomedical research while hurdling the barriers of early-stage drug discovery.

“Our scientists work very hard to understand the fundamental biology that underlies disease and would like nothing more than to see their efforts translated into useful therapies,” Kaufman said. “This partnership will enable us to reach out to industry and say ‘here it is, a potentially viable new drug candidate, let’s make this happen.’

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This initial drug discovery phase relies not only on an understanding of disease biology and identification of good drug targets, but also on the availability of large libraries of chemical compounds against which to test them. In Wistar’s advanced Molecular Screening Facility researchers test target proteins against libraries of tens of thousands of potential molecules looking for so-called “hits” that modulate function. The screening assays enable researchers to visualize and quantify biological effects at the molecular level, providing valuable data that would inform additional biological studies of the original targets, as well as potentially validate them as candidates for further pharmaceutical development.

Collaborations between Wistar’s structural biologists and Temple’s medicinal chemists and pharmacologists will address questions about the lead compound’s pharmaceutical properties – such as how it would be ingested, metabolized and excreted by the body – with the goal of developing a drug candidate that is ready for pre-clinical testing in animal models and, ultimately with further refinement, clinical testing in humans.

More than a dozen Wistar research projects have already been identified as potential candidates for this collaboration. These include inhibitors that target telomerase, a protein essential in cancer growth and the natural aging process, and Epstein-Barr Virus, a virus responsible for numerous diseases including forms of head and neck cancer.

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**The Wistar Institute** is an international leader in biomedical research with special expertise in cancer research and vaccine development. Founded in 1892 as the first independent nonprofit biomedical research institute in the country, Wistar has long held the prestigious Cancer Center designation from the National Cancer Institute. The Institute works actively to ensure that research advances move from the laboratory to the clinic as quickly as possible. The Wistar Institute: Today’s Discoveries – Tomorrow’s Cures. On the Web at [www.wistar.org](http://www.wistar.org).

**The Moulder Center for Drug Discovery Research** was established in 2008 as a multidisciplinary drug discovery research hub equipped with unique capabilities and experienced scientists that are actively pursue collaborative research opportunities within Temple university and with external collaborators in the academic community and industrial partners both in the U.S. and abroad. Recently the Moulder Center received substantial funding from Temple University Drug Discovery Initiative expanding Center’s capabilities. On the web at [http://moulder.temple.edu/](http://moulder.temple.edu/)