# Project Cure CRC Announces First Five Research Awards Totaling $3.5 Million

*From the national nonprofit Colorectal Cancer Alliance, the awards advance innovative science to bring urgently needed progress to colorectal cancer patients*

Project Cure CRC has announced its first awards for innovative research totaling $3.5 million.

WASHINGTON, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, UNITED STATES, May 30, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Project Cure CRC, the breakthrough research fund of the national nonprofit Colorectal Cancer Alliance (Alliance), has announced the first five awardees of funds to advance urgent science for today's colorectal cancer patients.

Investigators from the University of Kentucky, City of Hope, MD Anderson Cancer Center, and the University of Miami will receive awards totaling $3.5 million. Researchers will focus on various topics in colorectal cancer, including BRAF-mutated CRC, theranostics, immunotherapy, and microsatellite-stable (MSS) disease.

> We are thrilled by the enthusiastic response to Project Cure CRC, which shows the immense need for research funding to end colorectal cancer. We congratulate this inaugural class of awardees."
>
> *Michael Sapienza, CEO*

The Alliance, the nation's nonprofit leader dedicated to colorectal cancer, launched Project Cure CRC in late 2023 as part of its mission to end colorectal cancer in our lifetime. Colorectal cancer is the second-leading cause of cancer deaths overall, yet it is less known and less funded than other less deadly cancers.

In December, the Alliance held an international summit with renowned CRC experts to identify research areas of urgent necessity and develop a framework for evaluating proposals. In March, the organization opened its first request for proposals, based on input gathered at the summit. Since then, researchers across the country have submitted 121 proposals for funding. Forty of those proposals, representing nearly $36

million in funding requests, have advanced to a full review by an esteemed panel.

“We are thrilled by the enthusiastic academic and industry response to Project Cure CRC, which shows the immense need for research funding to end colorectal cancer, and we congratulate this inaugural class of awardees,” said Michael Sapienza, CEO of the Alliance. “We look forward to receiving additional innovative proposals for science that can go from laboratory to bedside and help today’s patients live longer, better lives.”

The first five proposals earning awards from Project Cure CRC funding include:

Raghu Kalluri, M.D., Ph.D., of MD Anderson Cancer Center
$1.6 million over 1.5 years

Kalluri aims to rapidly develop urgently needed therapeutic options for the 96% of colorectal cancer patients with microsatellite stable disease who currently have limited options.

Peter P. Lee, M.D., of the City of Hope
$1 million over two years

Lee will pursue a novel combination immunotherapy to treat metastatic MSS colorectal cancer, which does not respond well to current treatments, including immunotherapy. Lee’s research could create an effective and less toxic treatment for this patient population, potentially improving survival rates and rapidly translating these findings into clinical trials and new combination therapies.

H. Charles Manning, Ph.D., of MD Anderson Cancer Center
$500,000 over one year

Manning will seek to develop a theranostic regimen using antibodies that target a chemically altered version of the protein TROP2 on BRAF-mutated colorectal cancer cells for both therapy and diagnostic imaging. The aim is to create a selective treatment for BRAF-mutated CRC with reduced side effects, allowing for simultaneous therapy and diagnostic imaging. This will ultimately improve patient outcomes and provide a useful assessment of treatment response.

Kevin Van Der Jeught, Ph.D., of the University of Miami
$200,000 over two years

Van Der Jeught will focus on improving intratumoral mRNA vaccination strategies for colorectal cancer by targeting immune checkpoints to enhance anti-tumor immune responses, leading to new treatment options for CRC patients and shaping the design of an upcoming phase I CRC intratumoral mRNA clinical trial.

Yekaterina Zaytseva, Ph.D., of the University of Kentucky

$200,000 over two years

Zaytseva will investigate new drug combinations that effectively kill colorectal cancer cells with a BRAF mutation. This condition currently has a low response rate to existing treatments. Zaytseva's research could help identify the best drug combinations to improve the survival of patients with BRAF mutant colorectal cancer, quickly translating these findings into clinical trials and new therapies that can become standard treatments.

The Alliance, the largest organization dedicated to ending colorectal cancer, invites the public, corporations, foundations, and philanthropic individuals to join our mission by contributing to Project Cure CRC. In addition, the Alliance seeks new ideas for mCRC research, with special attention given to immunotherapy-based studies and research focused on BRCA1, BRAF, TP53, TME, and associated pathway genes.

For more information on Project Cure CRC, to donate, or to learn more about submitting a research proposal, please visit colorectalcancer.org/research/research-investments/project-cure-crc.

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