

Nobel Laureate William Kaelin: Genetics May Help Turn Cancer into a Chronic Disease

UNITED KINGDOM, September 23, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- For decades, progress in the fight against cancer was frustratingly slow. But as discoveries in cancer genetics continue to translate into new treatments, the pace of progress is accelerating.

In early 2026, in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, William Kaelin, the 2019 Nobel Prize laureate in Physiology or Medicine, spoke exclusively with reporters from Southern Finance and 21st Century Business Herald, offering this perspective.

He said that as our understanding of the genetic mechanisms underlying cancer continues to deepen, the development of new cancer treatments has made major advances, with a growing number of targets once considered “undruggable” now becoming treatable. To continue advancing cancer drug development, he believes researchers need to leverage genetics to develop more precise therapies and use combination treatments to effectively address the problem of drug resistance.

After four decades of research, Kaelin helped uncover how cells sense oxygen and identified the central role of the VHL protein in regulating hypoxia-inducible factors. This fundamental research not only revealed how living organisms adapt to low-oxygen environments, but also contributed to the development of the cancer drug belzutifan, which was approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to treat certain cancers associated with von Hippel–Lindau disease, including kidney cancer. For this landmark discovery, Kaelin was awarded the 2019 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine.

When the honor arrived, it had been four years since Kaelin’s wife had died of breast cancer. On the night the Nobel Prize was announced, the cancer researcher shared a photograph of himself with his late wife, saying in effect that the honor belonged to the two of them and the fight against cancer they had shared.

Looking back at humanity’s century-long battle against cancer, treatment has evolved from conventional chemotherapy to targeted and precision therapies, with one previously unreachable frontier after another being overcome.

Today, advances in genomics are making the causes of cancer increasingly clear, while artificial intelligence is dramatically improving the efficiency of drug discovery and the path from scientific research to clinical applications is becoming more streamlined.

As scientific knowledge grows exponentially and the links between academia, industry and clinical practice become increasingly efficient, one question remains:

How much longer will it take humanity to truly overcome cancer?

Watch Southern Finance’s “High-Level Interviews: Conversations with Global Scientific Giants” — an exclusive interview with William Kaelin.

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