



CANCER PREVENTION & RESEARCH  
INSTITUTE OF TEXAS

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**MEMORANDUM**

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**To: OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE MEMBERS**  
**From: WAYNE ROBERTS, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**  
**Subject: FY2015 REPORT ON MERIT AND PROGRESS OF PROGRAMS  
PURSUANT TO TEXAS HEALTH & SAFETY CODE § 102.260(C)**  
**Date: FEBRUARY 10, 2016**

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**Summary**

In FY2015, the Oversight Committee approved 134 grants totaling \$274,260,908.<sup>1</sup> Texas Health and Safety Code § 102.260(c) requires the Chief Executive Officer to report at least annually to the Oversight Committee on the progress and continued merit of each research program. CPRIT's Academic Research Program, Prevention Program and Product Development Research Program showed progress and merit in fiscal year 2015 (FY2015).

This report provides an overview illustrating the progress made in advancing CPRIT's mission to create and expedite innovation in cancer research and cancer prevention. Aligning program activities with the program priorities adopted by the Oversight Committee is a good gauge of progress and merit. This report highlights each program's implementation of the FY2015 program priorities. CPRIT's FY2015 *Annual Report* and quarterly *Achievements Report* provide more information on CPRIT awards.

With regard to progress made by individual grant projects within each of CPRIT's three programs, Texas Administrative Code § 703.21 requires all CPRIT grantees to submit progress reports at least annually. Outside experts evaluate these progress reports to ensure that the grantee has made sufficient progress and should continue work under the grant. To the extent that an expert reviewer determines that a grant project is not making sufficient progress, CPRIT may take a number of actions, including contract termination. CPRIT did not terminate any award during FY2015 for lack of sufficient progress.

**Academic Research Program**

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<sup>1</sup> Unless specifically noted, all grant awards and amounts discussed in this report reflect the awards approved by the Oversight Committee in FY2015 that are either under contract with a grantee or the grantee has not declined the award as of the date of this memo.

CPRIT's Academic Research Program supports innovative and meritorious projects that are discovering new information about cancer that can lead to prevention, early detection, and cures; translating new and existing discoveries into practical advances in cancer diagnosis and treatment; and increasing the prominence and stature of Texas in the fight against cancer.

In FY2015, CPRIT's Academic Research Program awarded 51 Individual Investigator Research Awards, 16 High Impact-High Risk research grants, 6 Core Facilities Support Awards, 2 Multi-Investigator Research Awards, and 17 recruitment awards to Texas institutions. In addition, the Product Development peer reviewers recommended 20 applications from 10 academic research institutions for Early Translational Research Awards (ETRA).<sup>2</sup> The total amount of Academic Research awards approved by Oversight Committee in FY2015 and under contract was \$189,327,986.

### Academic Research Program Priorities

The Oversight Committee adopted the following FY2015 program priorities for the Academic Research Program:

- A broad range of innovative, investigator-initiated academic research projects;
- Prevention and early detection;
- Rare and intractable cancers, including childhood cancers;
- Cancers of importance in Texas;
- Computational biology and analytic methods; and
- Infrastructure development.

This was the first full year that the Oversight Committee's program priorities have been in place. These priorities have influenced Requests for Applications (RFAs) and funding for the Academic Research Program. For example, the number of grants dedicated to childhood and adolescent cancers has increased from 4% to 13% after the Oversight Committee's decision to prioritize rare and intractable cancers, including childhood cancers. Similarly, the number of Academic Research grants awarded for prevention and early detection research has increased from 13% to 17%.

Seventeen recruits accepted positions at Texas institutions, for a total of \$49 million in recruitment grant awards. CPRIT is building a critical mass of cancer researchers in Texas by

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<sup>2</sup> The Product Development Research Program issued the RFA soliciting the proposals ultimately approved for ETRA grants in FY2015. The Academic Research Program awarded previous ETAs under its program with its reviewers. After discussion with CPRIT staff, the Oversight Committee decided that although ETAs have a place in both the Academic Research Program and the Product Development Program, it is appropriate to classify the awards under the Academic Research Program.

supporting recruitment of cancer scientists and clinicians as cancer research scholars to academic institutions in Texas. Since its inception through August 31, 2015, CPRIT has supported the recruitment of 95 outstanding cancer researchers to 14 academic institutions throughout Texas. This program has been highly successful in enhancing Texas' cancer research efforts and increasing the external visibility of the state in this field, which ultimately benefits the life sciences infrastructure in Texas.

## **Prevention Program**

CPRIT's Prevention Program supports effective, evidence-based prevention programs to underserved populations in the state. Prevention Program grants help Texans reduce the risk of getting cancer, identify cancers earlier, and assist people in finding cancer treatment. These efforts reduce the burden of cancer in Texas. There were 70 Prevention Program projects active throughout Texas in FY2015. The Oversight Committee approved 16 new grants during the fiscal year totaling \$27,890,646.

The Prevention Program reached an important milestone in FY2015: CPRIT grantees have provided more than 2.6 million education and clinical prevention services since 2010. These services reach all Texas counties and include tobacco cessation, genetic testing and counseling, vaccinations and survivor care services. Texans received more than 1.4 million clinical prevention services. Screenings and diagnostics for breast, cervical, colorectal, and liver cancer account for more than 628,400 of the clinical services. The CPRIT-funded screenings identified 51,708 abnormal results, detected 4,063 cancer precursors, and found 1,778 cancers. More than 226,000 recipients received their first cancer screenings from CPRIT projects. These numbers highlight the impact CPRIT has in Texas communities.

In addition to the impact on the health of people in Texas, the Prevention Program grants also improve the healthcare system and foster greater collaborations. Health system improvements include reducing wait times for diagnostic testing, reducing the number of people lost to follow-up, implementing patient reminder systems, enhancing electronic medical records, and training a cadre of community health care workers to help educate and navigate people through the system. These grants stimulate greater collaboration among academic institutions, community organizations, and clinics; 95% of the academic institutions receiving a Prevention Program grant are collaborating with a non-academic organization.

### Prevention Program Priorities

The Oversight Committee adopted the following FY2015 program priorities for the Prevention Program:

- Prioritize populations and geographic areas of greatest need, greatest potential for impact;
- Focus on underserved populations; and
- Increase targeting of preventive efforts to areas where significant disparities in cancer incidence or mortality in the state exist.

Six RFAs were released in FY2015 including one on Colorectal Cancer Prevention Coalitions and another on Cancer Prevention and Navigation to Clinical Services. Due to the timing of approval of the program priorities by the Oversight Committee, the FY2015 RFAs do not explicitly reflect the program priorities. Nonetheless, upon review of the active projects, 21 prevention grants prioritize population and geographic areas of greatest need, 62 grant projects currently focus on underserved populations, and 25 grants increase targeting of efforts to areas where significant disparities in the state exist.

### **Product Development Research Program**

CPRIT's Product Development Research Program funds innovative and scientifically meritorious product development projects with the potential of translating research discoveries into commercial products that can benefit cancer patients. During FY2015, the Oversight Committee approved six Product Development Research awards totaling \$57,042,276.

CPRIT has 19 active company grants in FY2015. Five CPRIT-funded company projects conducted clinical trials in FY2015, reaching cancer patients in Texas with innovative, early stage treatments. The Product Development Research program benefits not only cancer patients, but like CPRIT's recruitment grants, the Product Development Research awards are an important component in building the life sciences infrastructure and community in Texas.

Since 2010 through August 31, 2015, CPRIT companies raised \$911 million in follow-on funding from other investors. During FY2015, three CPRIT-funded companies announced plans for initial public offerings (IPOs). One IPO occurred in June and another took place in September. In addition, NASDAQ listed ESSA for the first time. These follow-on investments and activities testify to the quality of the CPRIT-funded projects and CPRIT's review process.

### **Product Development Research Program Priorities**

The Oversight Committee adopted the following FY2015 priorities for the Product Development Research Program:

- Funding projects at Texas companies and relocating companies that are most likely to bring important products to the market;
- Providing funding that promotes the translation of research at Texas institutions into new companies able to compete in the marketplace; and
- Identifying and funding projects to develop tools and technologies of special relevance to cancer research, treatment, and prevention.

The six companies funded in FY2015 work in Texas to bring important products to market. Three companies awarded grants in FY2015 relocated to Texas: Armada Pharmaceuticals (renamed Formation Biologics, from Toronto, Canada), Immatics U.S. (from Germany), and Medicenna (from Vancouver, Canada). Five of the six company projects approved in FY2015 have collaborations with academic institutions in Texas, promoting the translation of research into Texas-based companies. In addition, two of these awards fulfill the priority for developing tools and technologies of special relevance to cancer research and treatment. One project funds research and development for a test to assess the risk of ovarian cancer prior to surgery. Another project funds clinical research for a device that restores bladder function and improves quality of life for cancer patients suffering complications from surgical resection and radiotherapy.

## **Conclusion**

CPRIT's three programs show merit and progress and should continue operations. The work conducted under the purview of CPRIT's programs is part of an iterative cycle with observations emerging from the laboratory making their way to the public and back again to the laboratory. Essential players in this cycle are basic scientists, physician scientists, clinical researchers, product development entrepreneurs, public health professionals, health care providers, patients, community organizations, early stage companies, and research institutions across Texas.