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Norris Cotton Cancer Center looks ahead to the next 40 years

In November, Norris Cotton Cancer Center celebrated its 40th anniversary. Over those decades, cancer care has changed dramatically. In some cases, knowledge of the causes of cancer has led to more successful prevention efforts. For other cancers, improved treatments have led to increased survival rates. Even for cancers that remain stubbornly resistant to treatment, advances in helping people cope with advanced disease have improved the lives of cancer patients.

At a symposium held in November, Cancer Center researchers discussed areas of research that hold promise for future improvements, from prevention to treatment to understanding the risks of getting cancer. To read more about two research projects currently being led by Cancer Center and Geisel researchers, see the articles “The new smoking” on page 22 and “A dog has its day” on page 34.

Amos Esty

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARK WASHBURN



Mark Israel, M.D., the director of Norris Cotton Cancer Center, talks with Soya Sam, Ph.D., a postdoctoral fellow in molecular pathology at the Cancer Center, at a poster session held as part of the anniversary celebration. As the Cancer Center has grown, so too has its roster of research faculty, who together now receive about \$65 million in external funding each year to support cancer research.



O. Ross McIntyre, M.D., served as director of the Cancer Center from 1974 to 1992, guiding it from humble beginnings to being named as a comprehensive cancer center by the National Cancer Institute, a designation that just 41 facilities in the country currently hold. Each year, more than 31,000 patients are now treated at the Cancer Center’s 17 sites in New Hampshire and Vermont.



The symposium included talks by several Cancer Center researchers, including Randolph Noelle, Ph.D., a professor of microbiology and immunology. Noelle investigates ways to harness the immune system to fight off cancer. The immune system often fails to recognize cancer cells as a threat, allowing tumors to grow unchecked. Noelle and other researchers at the Cancer Center are working to understand and alter the immune system’s response to cancer.



David Livingston, M.D., a professor of genetics and of medicine at Harvard and a distinguished researcher, gave the keynote address at the scientific symposium. Livingston has helped lead research into the understanding of genes that play a critical role in the development and suppression of cancer.



Cancer Center researchers are also working to prevent cancer from developing in the first place. James Sargent, M.D., a professor of pediatrics, is an expert on the influences that lead adolescents to take part in behaviors—such as smoking—that are risk factors for disease. He has worked to apply his findings by advocating for policy changes that might help reduce those behaviors.