

Targeted RFA for COVID-19 and Cancer

COVID-19 has transformed cancer care in unanticipated and unprecedented ways. Documented effects of COVID-19 on cancer care have included decreases in preventive service use (e.g., HPV vaccination, cancer screening), delays in timely diagnosis and treatment of cancer (including changes in scheduling of cancer surgeries, chemotherapy, radiation therapy and office visits), and missed opportunities for cancer survivors to receive optimal surveillance, supportive and palliative care. The transition to virtual telehealth in many patient populations has increased access for some (e.g., older patients for whom travel/transportation may be difficult), while simultaneously decreasing access for others (e.g., those with limited cellular or high-speed internet connectivity). At the same time, opportunities to reach patients in novel ways during COVID-19 may have emerged (e.g., through community pharmacies or offering drive-through services).

Furthermore, it remains unclear how COVID-19 diagnosis and downstream morbidity may affect cancer treatment or survivorship and to what extent cancer patients may be more vulnerable to COVID-19 infection or more severe symptoms or how COVID-19 disease might impact cancer progression. Compelling questions about how COVID-19 and cancer interact span basic, translational, clinical, and population sciences research.

The goal of this request for applications is to support research projects that **investigate linkages between COVID-19 and cancer**. Particularly of interest are proposals that consider **racial, ethnic or rural disparities in COVID-19 and cancer outcomes in our state**. Competitive proposals must describe clearly how the relationship between COVID-19 and cancer will be explored and how the work will lead to meaningful impact.

A number of initiatives recently developed by cancer-focused foundations and the National Cancer Institute have supported the collection of registry data in patients with cancer infected with SARS-CoV-2. At UNC, William Wood, MD MPH, is site PI of the UNC COVID-19 registries. The goal of this RFA is not to replace or compete with the funding for these registry initiatives. However, where these initiatives collect patient material, these funds could be used to perform correlative studies using that patient material. We encourage you to contact Dr. Wood if you wish to learn more about the potential to perform correlative research using these registries.

Proposed projects should be completed within a **2-year time period** and should allow researchers to generate preliminary data to support the submission of federal and/or private cancer research grant applications. UNC Lineberger encourages interdisciplinary collaboration (e.g., between public health, medicine, nursing, pharmacy, social work, health care administrators, etc.) and community partnership.

These funds also may be used to 'top-up' or provide supplemental funds to existing sources. Specifically, faculty with start-up funding are encouraged to consider matching funds provided by this mechanism with their own start-up funds to enable completion of projects with larger scope, and applicants with in-kind external funding for whom this award may enable supplemental activities are encouraged to apply.