

Newsroom



Wilmot Family and the James P. Wilmot Foundation Give \$4 Million for Cancer Research at University of Rochester

Gifts launch new campaign for cancer research, establish the Wilmot Distinguished Professorship in Cancer Genomics

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Judy Wilmot Linehan tonight announced a \$4 million gift to support research at Wilmot Cancer Institute. She is pictured with Harmut "Hucky" Land, Ph.D., director of cancer research.

Citing a commitment to cancer research that spans three generations of Wilmot family members, Wilmot Cancer Institute director **Jonathan W. Friedberg**, M.D., M.M.Sc., announced combined gifts totaling \$4 million from **the Wilmot family** and the **James P. Wilmot Foundation**, to support cancer research as part of a \$30 million research-focused campaign at UR Medicine.

"The Wilmot family's commitment to cancer research is measured not simply in dollars, but in decades," said Friedberg.

"It has been amazing watching the progress in cancer research and patient care at Wilmot since 1980. We are thrilled to participate in its continued progress," said **Judy Wilmot Linehan**. "Our family has been so affected by this terrible disease. It has taken away some of the most important people in my life. It is truly our

pleasure to support the Wilmot Distinguished Professorship in Cancer Genomics. I can't wait to see what it will accomplish!"

The gifts will fund the recruitment of a senior researcher in cancer genomics – a relatively new discipline that is transforming the study of cancer. It involves the use of vast computing power to analyze every gene in a cancer cell – its genome – and identify the mechanisms that drive each cancer's growth. That work is the first step toward designing new "targeted therapies"—drugs that act on the precise trouble spots in a cancer cell.

A portion of the Wilmot gift will be placed into an endowment that will fund the Wilmot Distinguished Professorship in Cancer Genomics, and the remaining portion will help to pay the start-up costs for setting up his or her laboratory.

"In a field that's advancing as rapidly as cancer, it's a tremendous advantage to have researchers and oncologists working together in the same facilities," said University of Rochester President **Joel Seligman**. "New research findings quickly make their way into clinical decision making. The tremendous support we've received from the Wilmot family has made that possible, and the impact is seen in the care of every patient who comes through our doors."

"We're entering a new era in cancer research and treatment, and the Wilmots' support is keeping UR Medicine at the forefront of that effort," said UR Medicine CEO **Bradford C. Berk**, M.D. "The research taking place in our labs and our new understanding of the genetic underpinnings of many types of cancer is already influencing the care that we provide. It's helping our oncologists make smart, informed treatment decisions."

The Wilmot family's philanthropic commitment to cancer research began in 1981 when James P. Wilmot Foundation funded the Wilmot Fellowship Program, which provides funding to train physicians in cancer research. Since then, more than 100 Wilmot Fellows have trained in cancer research at UR Medicine and gone

on to pursue careers in cancer research. Since the fellowship program was established, the Wilmot Foundation and the Wilmot family have donated more than \$50 million to the University to support cancer research and treatment.

Commitments to the campaign for the Wilmot Cancer Institute that are received by June 30, 2016, will support the Medical Center's \$650 million goal, as a part of *The Meliora Challenge*: The Campaign for the University of Rochester, a \$1.2 billion comprehensive fundraising effort.

Funds raised in the Wilmot campaign will be used to expand Wilmot's research program by creating endowed professorships for cancer researchers, endowed program support for multidisciplinary research funding, and "seed grants" to allow researchers to explore new avenues of research.

Local philanthropists Richard T. Bell and Robert W. Kessler are leading the Wilmot campaign. Bell, an eight-year throat cancer survivor who was treated at Wilmot, established the Richard T. Bell Endowed Professorship in the Department of Radiation Oncology at Wilmot. Kessler is a longtime member of the Wilmot National Advisory Board; University Trustee Thomas C. Wilmot, Sr., is serving as honorary chair of the campaign.

For Media Inquiries:

Lydia Fernandez

(585) 276-5788

[Email Lydia Fernandez](#)