



Lifespan Cancer Institute

Rhode Island Hospital / Hasbro Children's Hospital
The Miriam Hospital • Newport Hospital

Delivering health with care.®

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Contacts

Michael J. Cerio, Lifespan
(401) 743-8269

Michael@CerioCommunications.com

Deb Weinreich, POC
(401) 580-3106

dweinreich@perrypublicrelations.com

Lifespan Cancer Institute to Grow Research and Training Programs with Papitto Opportunity Connection Support

Transformational grant will launch effort to train high school students of color for careers in cancer medicine

PROVIDENCE, R.I. – With the goal to grow high technology cancer research and innovative education in Rhode Island, the Lifespan Cancer Institute has received a \$10 million grant from the Papitto Opportunity Connection (POC). The funds are making possible the Future Gen Cancer Scholars program and provide for cutting-edge research that will bring together researchers at Lifespan, The Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University, and students in the scholars program.

“Lifespan and our affiliate hospitals are home to some of the country’s top minds in cancer care and complex hematology-oncology research, and thanks to the incredible generosity of the POC, we can further benefit the community by exposing more youth to careers in cancer medicine,” said **Arthur J. Sampson, interim president and CEO of Lifespan**. “This is a tremendous, forward-thinking opportunity with the potential to not only save lives, but to change lives in our community by giving local students a first-hand connection to the work of cancer scientists who are national leaders in their field.”

Through the Future Gen Cancer Scholars program, Lifespan aims to build the next generation of cancer physicians and researchers reflective of the communities it serves. The first-of-its-kind mentoring program will specifically target public high school students of color from the urban core communities of Central Falls, Pawtucket, and Providence. It stands to also address the lack of physicians of color in a state with strong populations of Black and Hispanic residents. Experts often point to this shortage as a leading cause of the underuse of cancer screening and general mistrust of the medical system by communities of color.

The program will enroll up to twenty students of color annually who are [nominated](#) by their high schools and selected through an [application](#) process. Beginning at the conclusion of their sophomore year, the students will participate in a six-week program across two successive summers, shadowing some of the nation’s top cancer doctors and scientists at Rhode Island, The Miriam, and Hasbro Children’s hospitals. Scholars will also have access to state-of-the-art laboratories at the Lifespan Cancer Institute and the Cancer Center at Brown University, where cancer research space will become a classroom.

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As part of the POC grant, each student will receive a stipend of \$2,500 per summer, and transportation expenses will be reimbursed. Additionally, mentors will be available to students for counseling for college preparation, and there will be a connection between the Rhode Island First Generation College Students administrator and school guidance counselors for support with the college application and admissions process.

“The potential of this program is almost limitless – under the guidance and tutelage of our cancer experts, scholars will learn about oncologic and hematologic diseases and their management through practical, real patient experiences,” said **Howard Safran, MD, chief of hematology/oncology, Lifespan Cancer Institute**, and who developed the program. “That’s incredibly powerful, not only for our students, but for our patients and our community, today and for the future. I cannot thank the Papitto Opportunity Connection enough for wanting to make this type of impact in our state.”

Educators and students interested in learning more about the Future Gen program can do so online at futuregenri.org. The application process is also now open. Accepted students will be notified in early April 2023, with the program beginning next July.

“The Future Gen Cancer Scholars program is going to open doors for our students and allow them to make a difference in the rapidly growing and important field of cancer research,” said **Education Commissioner Angélica Infante-Green**. “We share our gratitude with Lifespan and the Papitto Opportunity Connection for recognizing the need for our medical professionals to better reflect their communities and providing students with high-quality learning and mentorship opportunities.”

Papitto Opportunity Connection’s community investment will also provide funding to enhance cancer research at Lifespan’s Coro building. The addition of new research technologies positions Lifespan scientists to expand the understanding and treatment of cancers such as brain tumors and hematologic malignancies, while being central to the ability to recruit the best and brightest to Rhode Island. Already, this gift was instrumental in the recruitment of Dr. Sendurai Mani, who joined the Lifespan Cancer Institute on Dec. 1 from MIT and the MD Anderson Cancer Institute. His research focuses on utilizing the immune system to block cancer cells from metastasizing.

“Throughout the United States, the number of persons of color who are doctors working in hematology and oncology are only a fraction of the medical profession,” said **John Tarantino, Managing Trustee of the Papitto Opportunity Connection**. “We want Rhode Island to change that narrative and be the nation’s leader in this area. When people don’t see doctors who look like they do, they often delay or even avoid treatment, leading to far greater negative health outcomes. It is our hope that by providing funding to both increase cancer research at Lifespan while at the same time exposing young people of color to professions in the medical field, we can encourage more young persons of color to enter these fields and ultimately save lives.”

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About Lifespan Cancer Institute

The Lifespan Cancer Institute at Rhode Island, The Miriam, Newport and Hasbro Children's hospitals is the leader in the diagnosis and treatment of all types of cancer and the best place for cancer care in the region. Our world-renowned physicians, specialists and additional experts—including advanced practice providers, nurses, patient navigators, pharmacists, social workers, and nutritionists—form multidisciplinary teams and work with patients and their families to ensure excellent and complete care from diagnosis through recovery. The Lifespan Cancer Institute treats patients our hospitals and at the Lifespan Ambulatory Care Centers in East Greenwich and Lincoln, bringing expert cancer care close to home. Moreover, the Lifespan Cancer Institute offers access to more than 90 clinical trials including groundbreaking immuno-therapies and the latest protocols, programs, and initiatives including chemotherapy, biologic agents, radiation oncology, surgery, and image-guided procedures.