



SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY BOARD UPDATE

January 2009

On November 2, 2009, ACCRF convened a meeting of its Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) in Boston, Massachusetts. Dr. Bruce Chabner hosted the event at the Lawrence House of Massachusetts General Hospital. The seventeen participants are listed below.

Scientific Advisors

Dr. Bruce Chabner	Massachusetts General Hospital
Dr. Robert Haddad	Dana-Farber Cancer Institute
Dr. Norman Sharpless	University of North Carolina
Dr. David Sidransky	Johns Hopkins University

Speakers

Dr. Adel El-Naggar	MD Anderson Cancer Center
Dr. Göran Stenman	Sahlgrenska Academy (Sweden)
Dr. Andy Futreal	Sanger Institute (United Kingdom)
Dr. Patrick Ha	Johns Hopkins
Dr. Henry Frierson	University of Virginia

Participants

Dr. Jeffrey Engelman	Massachusetts General Hospital
Dr. Yasaman Shirazi	National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research
Dr. Osamu Tetsu	University of California, San Francisco
Dr. Kwok Wong	Dana-Farber Cancer Institute
Dan Dube	ACCOI
Ralph Mollis	ACCRF
Marnie Kaufman	ACCRF
Jeff Kaufman	ACCRF

The primary purpose of the meeting was to review research developments and determine what adjustments were warranted in the Research Agenda given the recent discovery of a recurrent fusion gene in ACC by Dr. Göran Stenman. Dr. Stenman presented in detail his findings and fielded many questions about his experiments. Dr. El-Naggar described his efforts with the *Salivary Gland Tumor Biorepository*, the *Rare Diseases Clinical Research Network* and the development of valid ACC cell lines. Dr. Futreal outlined a *Comprehensive Somatic Genetics* proposal for sequencing all genes and RNA in ACC samples, an extension of his pilot sequencing project. Dr. Ha reviewed the results of a recently completed methylation study of ACC. And Dr. Frierson presented on potential targets of interest derived from new phosphoproteomics and drug screening data.



Lively and collegial discussions raised several issues for further study. And in the ensuing month, additional feedback was gathered from participants to inform the deliberations of the SAB. On December 7, 2009, the SAB met again via teleconference to make its final recommendations on project proposals. The following proposals were approved by the SAB and subsequently confirmed by the Board of Directors:

- Fusion Gene Studies – MD Anderson – Dr. El-Naggar plans to determine the incidence of translocation variants in a large cohort of ACC samples and compare their genomic characteristics.
- Comprehensive Somatic Genetics – Sanger Institute – Dr. Futreal plans to sequence the exome and transcriptome of a set of ACC samples, seeking additional genomic alterations and targets of interest in ACC.
- Transgenic Mouse Model – Dana-Farber Cancer Institute – Dr. Wong plans to create an inducible bitransgenic model with the fusion gene. Dr. Gigi Lozano of MD Anderson and Dr. Inder Verma of the Salk Institute also plan to develop mouse models of ACC using alternative approaches.

Prior to its Boston meeting, the SAB had already approved a proposal from Dr. Stenman to pursue his current line of research into the fusion gene, its variants and functional studies to understand the signaling pathways involved. Considering the four newly-approved projects, ACCRF is moving aggressively to ensure rapid discovery of the translocation's implications for ACC patients.

These projects will help answer crucial questions. How common is the translocation (and its variants) in ACC? Is the translocation sufficient to develop ACC tumors? Is it necessary to maintain the tumors once they've grown? Are additional genetic events required for the initiation, maintenance and/or metastasis of ACC? And, most importantly, what therapeutic targets should be pursued to extend the lives of ACC patients? As in the past, ACCRF's SAB and affiliated researchers have given generously of their time, shed light on difficult questions, provided excellent guidance, and bolstered our hopes for better treatments and a cure.