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VA and Stanford to Pursue the Nation's First Hadron Center

Goal for the center will be to treat Veteran and non-Veteran patients using Hadron therapy

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Stanford Medicine announced today that they are collaborating to establish the nation's first Hadron Center in Palo Alto, CA, for the benefit of Veteran and non-Veteran cancer patients who could benefit from Hadron therapy.

VA maintains a strong academic and research affiliation with Stanford Medicine. This long-standing partnership has enabled the VA Palo Alto Health Care System (VAPAHCS) to offer an exceptional breadth of medical services to Veterans. Now, VA and Stanford University are looking to expand and enhance this affiliation through new collaborative efforts around the Hadron Center and particle beam therapy for Veteran and non-Veteran patients with cancer.

During his 2016 State of the Union Address, President Obama called on Vice President Biden to lead a new, national Cancer Moonshot, focused on making a decade's worth of progress in preventing, diagnosing, and treating cancer in five years – ultimately striving to end cancer as we know it. After meeting with experts across the country and the world, Vice President Biden identified areas of focus for the Cancer Moonshot – based on barriers to progress and opportunities for improving patient outcomes – and announced a first wave of accomplishments at the Cancer Moonshot Summit on June 29, 2016 at Howard University in Washington, DC.

Today, Vice President Biden is releasing the final report of the Cancer Moonshot Task Force, along with his own Executive Findings, after traveling to many of the major nerve centers in the cancer community. He will also unveil a new set of Federal actions, private sector actions, and collaborative partnerships to further advance the goals of the Cancer Moonshot Task Force, including the Hadron Center.

"We are excited to further expand our current partnership with Stanford Medicine, and explore ways to continue leading Veterans health care into the 21st century. The state-of-the-art Hadron Center would not only improve the lives of those affected by cancer, but further demonstrate VA's ability to partner toward pioneering innovation and exceptional health care," said VA Secretary Robert A. McDonald.

In addition to the Hadron Center, other efforts are underway to support the Cancer Moonshot Task Force: the Prostate Cancer Foundation (PCF) made a contribution of $50 million dollars to VA for precision oncology research over the next 5 years; the IBM Watson Million Veteran Initiative will provide 10,000 diagnostic and cancer treatment analyses over the next 2 years; and VA and PCF will host a national oncology summit, "Launch Pad: Pathways to InnoVAtion," on November 29.

“These efforts underscore VA’s dedication and ability to work with private sector leaders and innovative academic institutions, like Stanford University, toward improving Veteran access to leading edge technology,” said VA Senior Advisor to the Secretary for Strategic Partnerships, Matthew S. Collier.

The Hadron Center is anticipated to be a clinical facility, designed to deliver particle radiation beam therapy for the treatment of cancer patients. Presently, the most common radiation beams used for cancer treatment are photons and electrons, which are easy to target to a tumor but can result in damage to normal tissue. Particle beam radiotherapy, on the other hand, uses beams of charged particles such as proton, helium, carbon or other ions to allow more precise targeting anywhere inside the patient’s body, resulting in less damage to normal tissue. Particle beam therapy can be more effective at killing radiation-resistant tumors that are difficult to treat using conventional radiation therapy. Judicious and innovative application of particle therapy can result in improved cure rates for cancer.

“Through our Precision Health vision, Stanford Medicine is committed to providing more personalized health care that is tailored to each individual,” said Lloyd Minor, MD, dean of the Stanford University School of Medicine. “Planning for the Hadron Center embodies this commitment, as we seek to identify optimal ways to offer targeted treatment that both reduces harm and promotes healing.”

This project would be the first of its kind in the nation and serves as an excellent example of public-private collaboration to further research and clinical care, using cutting-edge cancer therapy.

The Hadron Center would significantly complement VAPAHCS’s mission to provide the most advanced care for Veterans, by offering those with cancer access to Hadron therapy treatments and participation in clinical trials.

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