Cancer Researchers Gain Leading-Edge Scientific Opportunities with New Group

ECOG-ACRIN is Official after Approval of Constitution

Philadelphia, PA [May 17, 2012]: Today marks the official founding of the ECOG-ACRIN Cancer Research Group as its new constitution goes into effect. The leadership of the Group’s two founding organizations—the Eastern Cooperative Oncology Group (ECOG) and the American College of Radiology Imaging Network (ACRIN)—deliberated separately and approved the constitution in recent days, to establish a single organization. The new constitution fully integrates the governance, administrative, and scientific components of ECOG and ACRIN, two respected National Cancer Institute (NCI)-sponsored cooperative groups that signed a letter of intent to merge in March 2011.

Group Co-Chairs Robert L. Comis, MD, and Mitchell L. Schnall, MD, PhD, issued a joint statement, saying, “Building the most attractive scientific program is the motivation for all our efforts. With this constitution as the framework, ECOG-ACRIN establishes for the public and private sectors one organizational structure capable of studying the entire cancer care pathway—prevention and screening, surveillance, early detection, staging, diagnosis, treatment, follow-up, and survivorship. We are driven by a genuine belief that together ECOG and ACRIN will contribute more to oncology than either organization could individually. For example, our core pathology and imaging scientists, and their associated laboratories and extensive IT infrastructures, make it entirely possible for the Group to integrate large data sets required for biomarker-driven science. Thus, future ECOG-ACRIN studies will be informed more by process than the classic definition of disease, to allow our patients throughout North America and the world the best, most advanced clinical research opportunities.”

Dr. Comis is the President and Chairman of the Coalition of Cancer Cooperative Groups and Professor of Medicine/Director at the Drexel University Clinical Trials Research Center. Dr. Schnall is the Matthew J. Wilson Professor of Radiology and the Associate Chair for Research in the Radiology Department at the University of Pennsylvania.

The constitution establishes co-statistical leadership to oversee study design, data management, results analysis, and reporting of all Group studies. The co-statisticians of ECOG-ACRIN are Robert Gray, MS, PhD, and Constantine Gatsonis, PhD. Dr. Gray is Professor of Biostatistics in the Department of Biostatistics at Harvard University and Professor of Biostatistics in the Department of Biostatistics and Computational Biology at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute. Dr. Gatsonis is the Henry Ledyard Goddard University
Professor of Biostatistics and Chair of the Department of Biostatistics at Brown University. The combined, complementary excellence of their biostatistical academic programs makes ECOG-ACRIN well-positioned to implement a broad scientific program and a robust information technology platform to produce innovative study designs and cutting-edge statistical research.

The constitution adopts a hybrid membership structure that embraces both the ACRIN model of institutional participation in the scientific program on a study-by-study basis and the ECOG model of multiyear institutional memberships. The new Group comprises nearly 650 institutions with legacy affiliations, providing tremendous capabilities to carry out innovative research, whether a small focused study in a few centers or a large-scale population-based trial across multiple institutions. Member institutions include NCI-designated Cancer Centers, Community Clinical Oncology Programs (CCOPs), and minority-based CCOPS, along with university medical centers, health systems, community hospitals, and small and specialty practices. Along with its predominant base of participating institutions in the United States, ECOG-ACRIN has research sites throughout the world.

ECOG-ACRIN research capabilities draw upon its multidisciplinary base of more than 6,000 individuals working in the member institutions: physicians, scientists, nurses, research associates, statisticians, and biomedical information technologists. Experts in the medical disciplines include those in cancer treatment (medical oncology, surgical oncology, pathology, and radiation oncology) and diagnostic imaging disciplines (radiology and nuclear medicine). Epidemiologists and experts in survivorship, patient-reported outcome measures, comparative effectiveness research, health economics, and health outcomes are also members. Patient advocates, many of whom are cancer survivors, are another vital component of the organization.

Joint clinical trials will soon be enrolling patients. More information is available at the Group’s website, www.ecog-acrin.org, which is currently in beta testing.

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