



# Leveraging opportunities for exceptional translational breast cancer research through increased intra- and inter-institutional collaborations

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## Background

- “Womens Cancer Research Center” was founded in 2010 as collaboration between UPMC Hillman Cancer Center (HCC) and Magee Womens Research Institute (MWRI)
- Majority of recruitment resources were provided by HCC. WCRC is physically located at MWRI, adjacent to Magee Womens Hospital (MWH)
- Strong research and clinical programs in both breast and gyn/onc cancer
- Large complex academic-community clinical enterprise (HCC, Magee, OHA)
- Gyn/Onc researchers are (mostly) recruited through Division of Gyn/Onc which is deeply integrated in MWRI, and funds flow through MWRI/MWH
- Breast cancer researchers are recruited through HCC, and funds flow through HCC
- Magee Womens Research Institute and Foundation is 501c3 organization with strong fundraising potential, providing financial support for WCRC efforts
- Minimal communication and collaboration between HCC and MWRI, and competition for “ownership”, has limited fundraising efforts, and effectiveness of WCRC
- Pitt (UPMC) is finishing a new building (“5KB”) adjacent to HCC, and HCC leadership is suggesting to relocate HCC-Womens Cancer Faculty to “5KB”
- SO – Co-Leader of Cancer Biology Program at HCC, and Co-Director of WCRC, and hence has leadership roles at both HCC and MWRI

## Objectives

- Synergize efforts and make use of opportunities at HCC and MWRI/MWH to improve women's cancer research in Pittsburgh
- Develop a multi-disciplinary, highly competitive Breast Cancer team with foundation support and achieve named recognition

## Methods

- Meetings with various leaders and stakeholders at HCC, MWRI, MWH, UPMC and Pitt SOM (R Ferris, A Shekhar, Y Sadovsky, R Edwards, R Beigi, L Davis and M Annichine)
- Multiple transparent yet sensitive discussions on how a win-win could be achieved for both HCC and MWRI

## Results

- Open discussions on long-term goals and future of breast and gyn/onc research in Pittsburgh with representative from both HCC and MWRI
- Clarification from MWRI/MWH that breast and gyn/onc cancer research is a much-wanted research focus in MWRI building
- Weekly communication between HCC and MWRI fundraising teams.
- HCC Director now participates in MWRI Foundation meetings, and there are regular meetings with representatives from Development offices from HCC and MWRI
- First ever co-branded fundraising effort now started – a walk to end women's cancers in September 2021
- Awareness and support from leadership for my efforts in increasing synergy between HCC and MWRI

## Interpretation

- Realization that WCRC provides highly valuable intellectual, social and financial capital for many institutions in Pittsburgh
- Situation provides reason for optimism

## Conclusion and Next Steps

- Set up monthly meeting with HCC and MWRI leadership
- Negotiations for space to move entire breast cancer and some gyn/onc researchers to “5K”, while also leaving critical presence at MWRI.
- Negotiation for breast cancer recruits (translational breast cancer research and med/onc)

## Collaborators

- Ron Buckanovich, MD PhD and Adrian Lee, PhD

