

FOR RELEASE 3 P.M. PST, SEPTEMBER 27, 2018



Mikayla Carpenter  
Marketing and Communications Manager  
Komen Oregon and SW Washington  
(503)553-3678  
mcarpenter@komenoregon.org

**SUSAN G. KOMEN OREGON AND SW WASHINGTON ANNOUNCES \$830,000 INVESTMENT IN NEW RESEARCH TO FIND SOLUTIONS FOR AGGRESSIVE AND METASTATIC BREAST CANCERS**

**Portland – Sept. 27, 2018** – Komen Oregon and SW Washington announces \$830,000 in new funding for research at one institution in Oregon, bringing its total research investment to \$13,230,000 since 1991. Komen’s research program is funded in part by contributions from Komen’s nationwide Network of Affiliates, which directs a portion of funds raised locally to Komen’s national research program, while also investing in vital community programs that serve local women and men facing breast cancer.

Since 1991, Komen Oregon and SW Washington has funded \$19.8 million to community programs serving local women and men, while \$13.2 million has been dedicated, locally, to cutting edge research.

“We are so thankful for the friends, family and neighbors that fight alongside us, helping to reduce the number of breast cancer deaths in Oregon, both on the ground and through research,” said Andrew Asato, CEO of Komen Oregon and SW Washington.

*Komen Scholar Gordon Mills, M.D., Ph.D., from Oregon Health & Science University, will receive \$600,000 to expand his work to identify and target pathways of drug resistance in triple negative breast cancer. His project is focusing on reversing resistance to drugs called PARP inhibitors. Dr. Mills hopes to identify and validate different combinations of therapies to enhance the effects of treatment, and increase the number of patients that can benefit from this therapy.*

*Komen Scholar Joe Gray, Ph.D., from Oregon Health & Science University, will receive \$230,000 to expand his research into the factors that influence the response to HER2-targeted therapies, including epigenetics (changes to DNA), the tumor’s microenvironment, and the timing of drug treatment. Dr. Gray will use this information to design more robust treatment strategies to overcome resistance to HER2-targeted therapy.*

*This year’s Brinker Award for Scientific Distinction in Basic Science will be presented to Lisa Coussens, Ph.D., Professor of Cell, Developmental and Cancer Biology, School of Medicine, at the Knight Cancer Institute at Oregon Health & Sciences University.*

*Dr. Coussens has made several pivotal discoveries about the role of immune cells in cancer development and progression. In a seminal study, she demonstrated that certain immune cells were actually “hijacked” by early tumors to promote breast cancer growth and metastasis. She and her team discovered an intricate cell-cell communication process through which tumor cells trigger T-lymphocytes or T-cells (a type of white blood cell involved in controlling the immune response to foreign substances) to recruit another type of white blood cell called macrophages to early tumors. Normally involved in clearing debris, macrophages around tumor cells produce epidermal growth factor (EGF) that in turn promotes tumor cell proliferation and invasion. This provocative finding expanded our understanding of the tumor microenvironment and sparked*

*additional research aimed at reprogramming these immune cells by designing and then testing targeted and immune-based therapies to prevent them from aiding and abetting the cancer.*

In total, Susan G. Komen® invested \$26 million to fund 62 new research projects that seek to answer some of the toughest questions facing breast cancer this year. This new funding is part of the organization's efforts to reduce the number of breast cancer deaths in the U.S. by 50 percent by 2026 and brings its total research investment to \$988 million to date – the largest nonprofit investment outside the U.S. government.

“This year, Komen is investing in a number of areas that will help us achieve our bold goal and save lives. We are seeking answers to why our current drugs work for some patients, but not all, or why they work at first, but later become ineffective.” said Komen Chief Scientific Advisor, George Sledge, M.D., Chief of Oncology at Stanford University Department of Medicine. “We are also looking into aggressive forms of the disease like triple negative and inflammatory breast cancer, which tend to have poorer outcomes. By investigating novel techniques and therapies, we hope to bring new treatment options to patients.”

The new grants will investigate critical areas in breast cancer research, including:

- Drug Resistance and Metastasis (40 grants, representing 70 percent of the grants awarded)
- Triple Negative Breast Cancer (23 grants)
- New Treatments (38 grants) such as Immunotherapies (9 grants)
- Health Disparities (8 grants)

“More than 41,000 women and men will lose their lives to breast cancer this year alone. I lost my mother to the disease a few years back, and I myself have been treated for aggressive triple negative breast cancer. The idea that it could impact my daughters is unacceptable,” said Komen President and CEO Paula Schneider. “We all have a personal reason or passion that we support the fight against breast cancer, and we're proud to invite people to support the work that means the most to them. It will take all of us working together to save lives and ultimately end this disease.”

Research has been a cornerstone of Komen's work since opening its doors in 1982. Komen also works to inspire action through advocacy and public policy, to mobilize communities through support services and opportunities to make a local impact, and provide the care that patients need (including screening, diagnostics, treatment and navigation).

### **About Susan G. Komen®**

Susan G. Komen has set a Bold Goal to reduce the current number of breast cancer deaths by 50 percent in the U.S. by 2026. Since its founding in 1982, Komen has funded more than \$988 million in research and provided more than \$3 billion in funding to screening, education, treatment and psychosocial support programs and research, serving millions of people in more than 60 countries worldwide. Komen was founded by Nancy G. Brinker, who promised her sister, Susan G. Komen, that she would end the disease that claimed Suzy's life. That promise has become Komen's promise to all people facing breast cancer. Visit [komen.org](http://komen.org) or call 1-877 GO KOMEN.

##