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**Public Forum Addresses Role of Genetics and Bioinformatics in the Future of Cancer Research**  
*Experts at The Cancer Institute of New Jersey Question “One Size Fits All” Treatment Approach*

**New Brunswick, N.J., June 10, 2009** – If you’re diagnosed with a specific type of cancer, it may seem logical to be treated with a drug or set of drugs that is widely used for that cancer type. But experts from The Cancer Institute of New Jersey (CINJ) say that as the concept of “personalized medicine” gains momentum, the first step toward treating cancer and other diseases effectively will be recognition of genetic differences in individuals. It is that quest regarding the evolving areas of genetics and bioinformatics, which was the central focus of an annual public forum recently held at UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School in Piscataway. CINJ is a Center of Excellence of UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School.

The gathering, now in its thirteenth year, is part of the Annual Retreat on Cancer Research in New Jersey, which is a joint venture between CINJ and the New Jersey Commission on Cancer Research (NJCCR). In addition to these principals, more than a dozen partnering organizations contributed their expertise to the event.

A panel discussion featuring Kim Marie Hirshfield, MD, PhD, medical oncologist at CINJ and assistant professor of medicine at UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School; and CINJ Certified Genetic Counselor Jana Pruski-Clark, MPH, MS, highlighted how genetics can yield specific information pertaining to cancer risk, outcome, and treatment. Eric D. Perakslis, PhD, advisory board chair to CINJ’s Center for Cancer Survivorship and vice president of Research and Development Informatics at Centocor R&D, discussed how bioinformatics -- the marriage of math, science and computers -- will eventually lead to tailored treatments for individuals.

Dr. Hirshfield is currently involved in studying how changes in one’s DNA can affect whether that person will be predisposed to breast cancer. By securing blood samples from both healthy individuals and those with breast cancer, Hirshfield and her team are discovering that those with a change in their genetic sequence are developing breast cancer earlier on average than those whose DNA sequence is normal. “Because these changes are being identified, a DNA blood test may one day be able to predict who is at risk for breast cancer and when,” said Hirshfield. “That would allow for physicians to make better screening recommendations and know who is an ideal candidate for chemoprevention.”

CINJ Deputy Director Edmund Lattime, PhD, who also is associate director for education and training at CINJ and professor of surgery at UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, is a co-chair of the Annual Retreat. He notes this year’s topic represents the future of cancer research. “Because cancer researchers are blazing new trails in the areas of genetics and bioinformatics, collaboration between scientists is key. It is precisely the reason we meet in this fashion, so that we can share our expertise with the hope of creating models for tailored treatment not only for cancer, but for other diseases as well,” he stated.

Another component of the Annual Retreat encourages leading experts in the basic science and clinical aspects of cancer to join together to share their research with each other and the public. This year approximately 150 abstracts were submitted by cancer researchers statewide -- including work by CINJ scientists -- and presented to the nearly 600 attendees.

Conference Co-Chair Ann Marie Hill, executive director of the NJCCR, says the overall event provides a great benefit to the state. "New Jersey has one of the highest incidence rates of cancer in the nation. Therefore we are fortunate that the Annual Retreat on Cancer Research has fostered long-time collaborations between many of the region's top oncology experts. Such relationships will help open new doors in cancer research and will help save many lives in the Garden State and beyond," she said.

Portions of the public forum will be made available at <http://www.youtube.com/cancerinstnj> this summer.

### **About The Cancer Institute of New Jersey**

The Cancer Institute of New Jersey ([www.cinj.org](http://www.cinj.org)) is the state's first and only National Cancer Institute-designated Comprehensive Cancer Center, and is dedicated to improving the prevention, detection, treatment and care of patients with cancer. CINJ's physician-scientists engage in translational research, transforming their laboratory discoveries into clinical practice, quite literally bringing research to life. The Cancer Institute of New Jersey is a center of excellence of UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School. To support CINJ, please call the Cancer Institute of New Jersey Foundation at 1-888-333-CINJ.

The Cancer Institute of New Jersey Network is comprised of hospitals throughout the state and provides a mechanism to rapidly disseminate important discoveries into the community. Flagship Hospital: Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital. Major Clinical Research Affiliate Hospitals: Carol G. Simon Cancer Center at Morristown Memorial Hospital, Carol G. Simon Cancer Center at Overlook Hospital, and Jersey Shore University Medical Center. Affiliate Hospitals: Bayshore Community Hospital, CentraState Healthcare System, Cooper University Hospital\*, JFK Medical Center, Raritan Bay Medical Center, Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital at Hamilton (CINJ at Hamilton), Saint Peter's University Hospital, Somerset Medical Center, Southern Ocean County Hospital, The University Hospital/UMDNJ-New Jersey Medical School\*, and University Medical Center at Princeton. \*Academic Affiliate

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