



Lustgarten Foundation Chief Scientist Dr. David Tuveson Installed as President of the American Association for Cancer Research (AACR)

David A. Tuveson, MD, PhD, FAACR, Chief Scientist of the Lustgarten Foundation and Director of the Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory Cancer Center, was inaugurated as President of the American Association for Cancer Research (AACR), the world's oldest and largest professional association related to cancer research.

"I am humbly honored to serve the cancer research community as AACR President," said Dr. Tuveson. "I look forward to working with trainees, researchers, physicians, educators, policymakers, patients and their advocates, funding agencies and corporate colleagues to understand and overcome the scientific and logistical challenges we still face, and to improve patient outcomes. Collectively, we can solve the hardest problems and help the most cancer patients."

In addition to his role as the Lustgarten Foundation's Chief Scientist, Dr. Tuveson has served as the Director of the first Lustgarten Foundation Dedicated Pancreatic Cancer Research Laboratory at Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory since 2012, where he merges his laboratory and clinical research, enabling him to bring new options to patients more rapidly. The research in the lab focuses exclusively on pancreatic cancer, designing new models of the disease and discovering new therapeutic and diagnostic platforms.

"Dr. Tuveson's extensive accomplishments as a pancreatic cancer research expert, a compassionate clinician and a forward-thinking leader make him uniquely positioned to lead the AACR," said Linda Tantawi, Lustgarten CEO. "Dave is a true trailblazer with a single, defining focus: improving the lives of cancer patients."

An active AACR member since 2003, Dr. Tuveson was inaugurated as President for the 2021-2022 term during the AACR Annual Business Meeting, held virtually on Monday, April 12. He previously served as a member of the AACR Board of Directors from 2018 to 2020.

Early in his career, Dr. Tuveson and his team generated the first mouse model for human pancreatic cancer, providing an opportunity for researchers to study pancreatic cancer in a living organism and opening the door for major findings. One such breakthrough was his discovery that targeting the stroma, the physical barrier surrounding the tumor, could increase the amount of chemotherapy penetrating the tumor and killing pancreatic cancer cells.

Dr. Tuveson also was the first scientist to develop a pancreatic cancer organoid, a three-dimensional cell culture system reproduces a patient's tumor in a dish and that can be tested repeatedly with different drugs. Since this groundbreaking discovery, Dr. Tuveson has started demonstrating organoids can accurately predict how a patient will respond to various therapies. Organoids offer the hope of personalized cancer treatments, rather than a one-size-fits-all approach to pancreatic cancer, one of the most difficult cancers to treat with a five-year survival rate of only 10%.

In 2020, Dr. Tuveson's work with organoids led to the development of the [PASS-01 \(Pancreatic Adenocarcinoma Signature Stratification for treatment\) trial](#), which involves 150 metastatic pancreatic cancer patients. As part of this trial, researchers are working to maximize the response to standard, first-line chemotherapy and to improve patients' outcomes by comparing two standard-of-care chemotherapy regimens (Gemcitabine and nabpaclitaxel versus FOLFIRINOX). The study is the first to compare the two drug regimens head-to-head. For each trial participant, researchers develop an organoid and analyze its genetics, biology and drug sensitivity to determine the most effective chemotherapy regimen for each patient. If successful, this trial can pave the way for the use of organoids to help doctors personalize therapies for metastatic pancreatic cancer patients.

The critical organoid work for the PASS-01 trial is being conducted at the newly opened, state-of-the-art organoid testing facility at Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory, funded in part by a \$424,000 grant from the [Gail V. Coleman and Kenneth M. Bruntel Organoids for Personalized Therapy Project](#). The lab is growing and testing organoids for trial participants and will share its work with outside researchers, enabling physicians to make faster, better informed decisions about which treatments are likely to be most effective, since pancreatic cancer patients don't have time to waste on treatments that aren't likely to shrink the tumor.

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