



# Dr. C. Ola Landgren Honored with the Paul J. DiMare Endowed Chair in Immunotherapy

The presentation of the Paul J. DiMare Endowed Chair in Immunotherapy could best have been described as a convergence of great generosity and brilliant talent. The event recognized the contributions of two remarkable people: philanthropist Paul J. DiMare and world-renowned multiple myeloma researcher C. Ola Landgren, M.D., Ph.D. Together, their efforts will go far toward advancing innovative research to cure cancer.



From left, Dipen J. Parekh, M.D., President Julio Frenk, Swanee DiMare, Stephen D. Nimer, M.D., Roy E. Weiss, M.D., Ph.D., and Provost Jeffrey L. Duerk with recipient Ola Landgren, M.D., Ph.D., as they celebrate his receiving the Paul J. DiMare Endowed Chair in Immunotherapy.



Through the chair, Dr. Landgren, chief of the Myeloma Program and Riney Family Multiple Myeloma Research Program, leader of the Experimental Therapies Program, and co-leader of the Tumor Biology Program at Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine, will be able to continue his groundbreaking research integrating immunotherapy into the development of curative treatment strategies for multiple myeloma and other cancers.

“This is a time of great hope and promise for cancer patients and their families,” said Dr. Landgren, who is also a professor at the Miller School. “The development of novel immunotherapies, partnered with improved biological understanding of the immune system, is already dramatically reshaping what we can achieve through cancer therapy.”

As the only National Cancer Institute-designated cancer center in South Florida, and one of only two in the state of Florida, Sylvester is leading the charge to cure cancer, thanks in part to financial support from generous benefactors like the DiMare family. Their contributions to the University of Miami were highlighted during the ceremony, which was held at the Coral Gables Country Club on October 25 and attended by family, friends, and colleagues both virtually and in person.

## **Recognizing Committed Allies**



UM Provost Jeffrey L. Duerk (left) and Stephen D. Nimer, M.D., present the certificate of gratitude to Swanee DiMare. Her husband, Paul J. DiMare, was unable to attend the ceremony.

UM's Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost Jeffrey L. Duerk recognized the DiMares as committed allies of the institution.

"Paul and Swanee's unwavering support has made a lasting impact across the university, including athletics, the arts, business, scientific research, and medical education. In 2014, they donated a historic \$6 million to support medical education scholarships at the Miller School. It is still the single largest gift to support scholars in the medical school's history."

The DiMare's most recent philanthropic pledge, the Paul J. DiMare Endowed Chair in Immunotherapy, will further position Sylvester, and the University, as among the best in the nation.



“Endowments offer sustained support, allowing our scientists to be nimble, focused, and responsive to the ever-expanding base of knowledge that drives innovation in health care,” said University of Miami President Julio Frenk, M.D., M.P.H., Ph.D. “They provide the resources researchers need to continue their work advancing therapeutics as they innovate and explore the ideas that fuel novel discoveries.”

Endowments also recognize the accomplishments of their esteemed recipients. According to Dipen J. Parekh, M.D., the chief operating officer of UHealth – the University of Miami Health System, “An endowed chair is one of the most important academic honors our faculty members can receive. Endowed chairs allow scholars like Dr. Landgren to continue their groundbreaking research in perpetuity and discover new treatments and cures to fight cancer.”

## **Belief in Potential and Talent**

Sylvester Director Stephen D. Nimer, M.D., said the Paul J. DiMare Endowed Chair in Immunology reflects a steadfast belief in the potential and the talent of Dr. Landgren.

“Dr. Landgren was a force of nature at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in New York, so I was thrilled when Dr. Craig Moskowitz and I were able to convince him to join our team here at Sylvester,” said Dr. Nimer, who is also the Oscar de la Renta Endowed Chair in Cancer Research, and professor of medicine, biochemistry, and molecular biology at the Miller School. “This chair will be a gamechanger. It will accelerate Dr. Landgren’s work in experimental therapeutics for decades to come. It will be a beacon of hope for many who need novel solutions to their diseases.”



The DiMare family recognized that spark of hope in Dr. Landgren's work. The Paul J. DiMare Endowed Chair in Immunotherapy is their personal representation of the importance they place on supporting the best and brightest of the medical field at Sylvester, UHealth and the Miller School.

"Paul and I believe that the solution to every disease lies in the talent and vision of those who dedicate their lives to finding cures," said Swanee DiMare, Paul's wife. "We recognize the unlimited potential of experimental therapeutics, especially in the hands of an exceptional scientist like Dr. Landgren. We understand that the groundbreaking nature of his work and his unique collaboration will advance medical knowledge and inspire generations to come."

## **Increased Survival Rates**

Dr. Landgren's research has already advanced science's understanding of multiple myeloma and its progression, resulting in increased survival rates. He is credited with driving new ideas and developing novel treatments and biomarkers to target imaging modalities and improve clinical outcomes.

"During his short time here, Dr. Landgren and his team have already opened a large range of new clinical trials, which are providing the newest treatment options for our patients," said Roy E. Weiss, M.D., chief medical officer, ambulatory services for UHealth; chair of the Department of Medicine, the Rabbi Morris I. Esformes Endowed Chair in Medicine and Endocrinology, and Kathleen and Stanley Glaser Distinguished Chair. "We are lucky to have his expertise driving innovative collaborations and focusing on the bench to bedside research that is the foundation of Sylvester's promise to the



communities we serve.”

In accepting his chair, Dr. Landgren shared the story of how he came to be one of the preeminent scholars in multiple myeloma. When he was a fellow in hematology oncology, senior teachers advised him to avoid the study of chronic lymphocytic leukemia and multiple myeloma because there had not been advances in those malignancies in decades. Dr. Landgren says he did not see that as negative, but rather a positive.

“It sounded like a fantastic opportunity to focus my clinical and scientific attention on multiple myeloma,” said Dr. Landgren, who has contributed to the enormous advances in treatment. “I have witnessed multiple myeloma change from a cancer with a short survival of only one to three years to a chronic disease with patients now living more than ten to twenty years.”

## **Benefiting Cancer Patients Everywhere**

Calling the Paul J. DiMare Endowed Chair in Immunology an incredible honor, Dr. Landgren says he welcomes the opportunity to create a myeloma program integrated in the experimental therapeutics program with the ultimate goal of integrating immunotherapy into the development of curative treatment strategies for multiple myeloma and for other cancers. “This work will benefit cancer patients here at the Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center, throughout the state of Florida, the United States, and the world.”

In appreciation of the DiMare’s generous donation in the form of the endowed chair, the DiMares were presented with a certificate of gratitude, and a thank-you from President Frenk.



“Swanee and Paul, your unrelenting philanthropic vision for the future of medicine really is a driver in our search for excellence,” he said. “And Paul, your volunteer leadership as a University Trustee and your tireless advocacy for excellence in medical innovation, the arts and athletics continues to make us strive harder and shine brighter every day. We really can’t thank you enough for everything you have done and continue to do for this university.”

Content Type article