

Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center Earns Prestigious National Cancer Institute Designation

Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center, part of the University of Miami Leonard M. Miller School of Medicine, has received the prestigious NCI designation from the National Cancer Institute.



The NCI designation recognizes Sylvester as among the top cancer centers in the United States.

Sylvester joins a highly select group as one of only two NCI-designated

cancer centers in the state of Florida, and one of just 71 across the nation.

Julio Frenk, M.D., M.P.H., Ph.D., president of the University of Miami, and Stephen D. Nimer, M.D., director of Sylvester, made the announcement during a press conference on July 29.

Speakers included Senator Rick Scott, Congresswoman Donna Shalala, and Robert T. Croyle, Ph.D., director of the Division of Cancer Control and Population Sciences at NCI.

The National Cancer Institute recognized Sylvester for its outstanding work conducting research in its laboratories, treating patients in its clinics and hospitals, and reaching out to medically underserved communities with innovative prevention strategies.

Sylvester's renowned work ensures that patients in South Florida are able to receive the most advanced cancer care without traveling outside the region.

"Today, we recognize the exceptional research and clinical care that have led to this moment," President Frenk said of Sylvester's recognition as a top-tier U.S. cancer center. "It emanates from the dedication of every member of the cancer center and the leadership of Dr. Stephen Nimer. This is a milestone not just for Sylvester and the University of Miami, but also for the people of South Florida and throughout the state, the nation, the hemisphere, and the world."

Dr. Nimer, who was named director of Sylvester in 2012, said NCI designation is recognition of Sylvester's commitment to excellence and the groundbreaking research it conducts in its quest to understand the causes of cancer and develop new lifesaving therapies.

"This is a testament to the incredible focus and teamwork of every single member of our center," Dr. Nimer said. "We have more than 300 world-class physicians and researchers who are working together on outstanding collaborative and multi-

disciplinary research that is benefiting or will benefit patients here in our community and across the globe. This is just the beginning.”

Part of the National Institutes of Health, the National Cancer Institute is the federal government’s principal agency for cancer research and training. The NCI Cancer Centers Program leads, conducts, and supports cancer research across the nation through a network of elite cancer centers. Most of the 71 NCI-designated cancer centers are, like Sylvester, affiliated with university medical centers and have extensive clinical operations.

At any given time, hundreds of research studies are under way at Sylvester, part of UHealth – University of Miami Health System, and other NCI cancer centers, including basic laboratory research, clinical trials for new treatments, and prevention for populations at risk for cancer. In South Florida, Sylvester has the only Phase 1 Clinical Trials Program – the first step in evaluating how patients respond to new investigational treatments.

Edward Abraham, M.D., executive vice president for health affairs at the University of Miami and CEO of UHealth, said Sylvester’s NCI designation would not have been possible without the singular focus and dedication of the cancer center’s leadership and staff.

“We couldn’t be prouder that Sylvester has rightfully been recognized as one of the very best cancer centers in the nation,” Dr. Abraham said. “Earning NCI designation is a testament to the excellence in clinical care, research, and community outreach that Sylvester is known for.”

Some of the public health programs that helped propel Sylvester to NCI designation include its Firefighter Cancer Initiative, a long-term study of exposures to carcinogens and ways to reduce and prevent cancer risks for Florida firefighters. Another is Sylvester's Game Changer vehicle, which is helping address health disparities in medically underserved communities experiencing higher-than-expected cancer incidence and mortality rates.

"Public health and community outreach are a vital part of our mission at the Miller School," said Henri R. Ford, M.D., M.H.A., dean and chief academic officer of the Miller School of Medicine. "Through our education and training programs at Sylvester, we are preparing the next generation of cancer researchers and physicians, all as we serve our community."

Sylvester's history dates to 1973, when it was known as the Comprehensive Cancer Center for the State of Florida. In 1986, philanthropist Harcourt Sylvester Jr. pledged \$27.5 million to benefit cancer programs at the medical school, and the cancer center was renamed Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center in recognition of what was, at the time, the largest single gift to the University of Miami.

Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center has seven locations in Miami, Kendall, Coral Gables, Hollywood, Deerfield Beach, Coral Springs, and Plantation.

