"I love this place," said Dr. Waun Ki Hong of the MD Anderson Cancer Center in Texas.

"The center has the potential to be the premier cancer center in the United States. It's a very exciting place. The cancer center is newly constructed. The location is wonderful, and the people in the center are doing wonderful science research," he said.

During his visit in November to the University of Hawai`i Cancer Center, Hong, one of the world's foremost authorities on the treatment and prevention of head and neck cancer and lung cancer, assessed the Cancer Center's clinical and translational research operations.

For more than 36 years Hong made unprecedented advances in translational and clinical cancer research himself, so he understands the challenges of this field.
Hong thinks the NCI recognition of the cancer center validates the strength of its cancer treatments and research programs. He said, "It's known as having a gold star ranking, not everyone get's that recognition."

Hong feels it is crucial to have a dedicated cancer center in Hawaii because of the state's diverse ethnic population. Cancer behaves differently in people of different ethnic backgrounds. One out of two men and one out of three women can develop cancer in their lifetime.

"Cancer is a huge public issue we need to address," said Hong.