News Highlights

June 3, 2015

External Advisory Committee completes its yearly visit

Every cancer center that has a designation from the National Cancer Institute has an External Advisory Committee (EAC) that visits each year to assess the center's progress. The University of Hawai‘i Cancer Center's EAC made its annual visit on June 1 and 2.

The EAC is composed of scientists and administrators from cancer centers around the nation. They met with UH Cancer Center faculty and leadership, as well as Hawai‘i legislative leaders, during their visit.

In preliminary comments, the committee noted that the Cancer Center has faced some challenges but needs to focus on the future.

Committee members urged the Cancer Center to think deeply about the direction of its scientific programs, including how to best serve the unique multiethnic population in the islands.

They emphasized that such an approach would be "valuable to the national cancer effort." Understanding how cancer affects people of various ethnicities differently helps to highlight opportunities for earlier detection and treatment for everyone. This is something that makes Hawai‘i special, and is a globally recognized strength of the Cancer Center.

The committee noted that it was a "time of considerable danger and risk, but also of great opportunity."

The committee members also advised Cancer Center stakeholders to work together
better and to take care not to lose its NCI designation. If the designation was lost, it would be a serious matter and the designation would not be regained easily. In the meantime the people of Hawai‘i would suffer, they said.

Of the NCI's $5 billion in annual research funding, 85% goes to the 68 cancer centers with a designation. Without a designation, a cancer center won't be competitive for major research grants.