

# The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio

ENDOWMENT PROFILE

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## The Cancer Center Council Distinguished Chair in Oncology

*Dedicated to Supporting Cancer Research Now and In the Future*

THE CANCER CENTER COUNCIL (CCC) is a group of more than 650 dedicated volunteers from across the San Antonio community. These volunteers know something about fund-raising; since 1984, they have raised more than \$3.5 million to benefit the Cancer Therapy & Research Center (CTRC). Housed at the UT Health Science Center in San Antonio, the CTRC has been designated by the National Cancer Institute to lead efforts in developing more effective approaches to the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of cancer.

For more than three years, the CCC has focused on its most ambitious goal yet: establishing the Cancer Center Council Distinguished Chair in Oncology. The impact of reaching this goal will resonate for years and potentially around the world. “When I came on board as director of the CTRC in late 2009, members of the CCC asked me what we most needed to achieve even greater things,” said Ian M. Thompson Jr., M.D., CTRC director. “Great people create great work, so I asked for a chair that would help us recruit the best talent in the country. The CCC committed itself to that goal and gave us that chair in three short years.”

The \$1 million endowment reflects collaborative leadership at the CCC. Two past presidents, Lisa Howlette Cohick (2009) and Laurie Kaplan (2010) championed Dr. Thompson’s request, which was passed by the CCC board in 2010. Succeeding CCC presidents Nancy Kelley (2011) and Mary Ballenger Brook (2012) embraced the goal and dedicated themselves to the effort. “A factor influencing our decision was that this gift would give in perpetuity,” said Brook. “It’s wonderful to know that you’re establishing a legacy that will help patients and continue the search for a cure for many years to come.”

Michael Wargovich, Ph.D., was recruited to fill the new position and to also co-lead the CTRC’s Cancer Prevention and Population Science program; he will also teach in the Department of Molecular Medicine. Dr. Wargovich is an expert in how anti-inflammatory agents, commonly found in



From left: Sheri Ortiz, Director of Development for CTRC at UT Health Science Center San Antonio; Nancy Kelley, CCC Immediate Past President; Mary Brook, CCC Current President; Michael Wargovich, Ph.D., holder of the Cancer Center Council Distinguished Chair in Oncology and Co-Leader of the CTRC Cancer Prevention Population Science program; Pam Burdick, CCC President-Elect; and Ian M. Thompson Jr., M.D., Director of the CTRC.

nature, can be used to reduce the risk of cancer. Inflammation appears to be at the root of not only cancer, but also killers like heart disease and diabetes, said Dr. Wargovich. He also examines the dietary habits of people in other parts of the world who seem to be protected from such illnesses. “I’ll be working to see why the risk for some of these diseases is higher here in South Texas,” Dr. Wargovich said, explaining that his research includes studying what foods and activities some people avoid and, as a result, are protected from disease.

“Michael will help lead our efforts to reduce the risk of cancer in South Texas where we face tremendous challenges,” said Dr. Thompson. “I am especially excited about his anti-cancer interventions that have the potential to reduce the risk of other diseases such as heart disease, stroke and Alzheimer’s with the same method.”

“I’m so pleased to be part of such forward thinking in terms of prevention,” said President-Elect Pam Burdick. “Lifestyle changes can make all the difference.”

For CCC members, this endowment means helping the CTRC and its patients—and anyone else who may benefit from what researchers are able to learn and share—for many years into the future. As Nancy Kelley observed, “This [endowment] will still be making a difference in people’s lives when we at the Cancer Center Council are long gone.”

If you would like more information about how to start an endowment, please contact: Office of Institutional Advancement | [Makelivesbetter@uthscsa.edu](mailto:Makelivesbetter@uthscsa.edu) | 210-567-9219