

NYGC Initiative Receives up to \$2.1M for Cancer Studies in Ethnic Minorities

Sep 09, 2020 | [staff reporter](#)

NEW YORK — The New York Genome Center (NYGC) said on Tuesday that its Polyethnic-1000 research initiative has been awarded up to \$2.1 million in grant funding over the next two years to support six projects using sequencing and other technologies to investigate the role of ethnicity in cancer.

According to the NYGC, funded researchers will collaborate with academic health centers and community hospitals in the New York City area to recruit patients and perform whole-genome and RNA sequencing on cancers and normal tissues to identify differences between ethnicities that may account for disparities in occurrence, response to treatment, and survival for different cancer types.

Award winners include a Weill Cornell Medicine team studying the impact of ethnic diversity on bladder cancer outcomes; a group led by Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory (CSHL), Northwell Health, SUNY Downstate Health Sciences University, and Kings County Medical Center scientists who are exploring the molecular mechanisms that make African Americans more vulnerable to pancreatic cancer; and a group led by CSHL and SUNY Downstate Health Sciences University investigators looking into the genetic and nongenetic factors that contribute to colorectal cancer in African Americans.

Other winners include a group from Weill Cornell Medicine aiming to identify somatic alterations in non-solid lung nodules that contribute to the genomic, transcriptomic, and immune differences in East Asians and Caucasians with lung cancer; scientists from Weill Cornell, the NYGC, Mount Sinai, and New York-Presbyterian Hospital who are examining the molecular links between African ancestry and aggressive forms of breast and prostate cancer; and a team of scientists from CSHL, Weill Cornell, New York-Presbyterian Brooklyn Methodist Hospital, and Northwell Health that is building an annotated biobank and research framework to study endometrial cancer disparities in African Americans.

The funding is being provided under the NYGC's Polyethnic-1000 (P-1000) initiative, which was [launched](#) in 2018 with [\\$1 million](#) in funding from the Mark Foundation for Cancer Research to study cancer care inequities in underserved populations. The new awards are supported by gifts from Weslie Janeway, an NYGC board member; the Mortimer B. Zuckerman Family Foundation; the New York Community Trust; Donna and Ben Rosen; and Illumina.

Awardees will also receive technical assistance from the NYGC, as well as preferential rates for whole-genome sequencing, data analysis and storage, legal services, clinical coordination, and pathology review.

Data from the studies will be stored in a NYGC-maintained repository and shared with the research community.

"Technological advances have enabled scientists to conduct comprehensive genomic studies that are leading to the development of next-generation therapies, as well as diagnostic and preventative public health strategies," Harold Varmus, a Weill Cornell professor and NYGC senior associate core member, said in a statement. "The objective of P-1000 is to democratize and broaden access to the power and potential of cancer genomics."