

shorttake



GEOFFREY BEENE RETREAT HIGHLIGHTS CANCER RESEARCH, FOSTERS COLLABORATIONS



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To improve the understanding of cancer and its biology the Geoffrey Beene Cancer Research Center sponsored a research retreat in May. The principal participants were members of the Cancer Biology and Genetics Program (CGB) within the Sloan-Kettering Institute and the Human Oncology and Pathogenesis Program (HOPP) within Memorial Hospital.

The two-day retreat, held at the Skytop Lodge in the Pocono Mountains in Pennsylvania, brought together members of both programs, including laboratory heads, postdoctoral fellows, and graduate students. Senior members of MSKCC's faculty who act as advisors to the Beene Center or sit on the Beene Executive Committee were also invited. In total, approximately 120 people attended.

"The Beene retreat was a huge success," said HOPP Chair Charles L. Sawyers. "The talks were outstanding and generated much discussion during the Q&A sessions. It was particularly gratifying to see students and postdocs jumping up to the microphone to spark conversations."

The educational sessions featured panels on a variety of topics including cancer metastasis, signaling pathways, and novel targets for cancer therapeutics. Members of HOPP and CGB participated in the panels, as did recipients of the 2007 Geoffrey Beene Research Grants, which also included members of other SKI programs and Memorial Hospital departments. In addition, there was a guest lecture by Charles J. Sherr, Co-Chair of Genetics and Tumor Cell Biology at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital.

In addition, a poster session was held, which gave graduate students and postdoctoral fellows working in the laboratories of Beene

grant recipients and other HOPP and CGB members the opportunity to present and discuss their latest research projects.

"The research interests of CGB and HOPP aim at bettering our ability to manage cancer through an improved knowledge of the biology and genetics of this disease," said Joan Massagué, Chair of the CGB Program. "It is therefore only natural — in fact, indispensable — that the entire HOPP and CGB community should put their heads together to deal with this problem, and the Beene retreat was a magnificent venue for accomplishing just that."

"The Beene retreat sparked many new collaborations among members of CGB and HOPP," said MSKCC President Harold Varmus. "We are grateful that Beene Center funding created this opportunity, which all of the attendees found valuable to their research efforts."

The Geoffrey Beene Cancer Research Center at MSKCC was established with a gift from the estate of Mr. Beene, a fashion designer and philanthropist. Since its inception, it has appointed investigators Johanna Joyce and Ross L. Levine as incumbents of the first Geoffrey Beene Junior Faculty Chairs; named students Hyung-song Nam and Sindy N. Escobar-Alvarez as the first Geoffrey Beene Graduate Fellows; and provided support for several core facilities at MSKCC, including the establishment of the Geoffrey Beene Translational Oncology Core, which helps perform detailed genetic analysis of patient tumor samples.

According to Carol Slattery — Program Administrator for the Geoffrey Beene Cancer Research Center and Administrator of HOPP, as well as one of the retreat organizers — there are plans to make the retreat an annual event. ✨

MSKCC researchers confer at the Beene retreat. (1) From left: MSKCC President Harold Varmus, HOPP Chair Charles Sawyers, guest lecturer Charles Sherr of St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, and CGB Program Chair Joan Massagué; (2) From left: HOPP members Marc Ladanyi, William Pao, and Ross Levine, who holds a Geoffrey Beene Junior Faculty Chair; (3) Discussion at a poster session; (4) Charles Sawyers; (5) Harold Varmus; (6) CGB Program member Johanna Joyce, who holds a Geoffrey Beene Junior Faculty Chair.