

New Lab Tests Can Potentially Identify Beneficial Cancer Therapy



The Knight Diagnostic Laboratories at Oregon Health & Science University have recently made available new tests designed to identify potential treatment targets in cancer and to predict the likelihood of benefit for patients treated with the latest therapeutics.

The testing is based on an approach called “mass spectroscopy,” which supports the readout of hundreds of DNA assays in a very short period of time. These assays, combined into two new panels, allow screening for DNA mutations that are known to play a role in cancer growth and progression. One of the panels is designed for solid tumors; the other panel is for leukemia and related blood disorders.

The Knight Cancer Institute has partnered with the Fanconi Anemia Research Fund to make this new testing available at cost for FA patients who develop a malignancy. The Fund will pay the \$300 fee for any FA patient. Testing can be requested by the patient’s oncologist using a simple order form. In approximately six months, the form will be available on a new website;

To request a form and/or to send samples:

Dr. Christopher Corless
OHSU Dept. of Pathology (mailcode L113)
3181 SW Sam Jackson Park Road
Portland, Oregon 97239
Phone: (503) 494-6834
Email: corlessc@ohsu.edu

in the meantime, either the patient or the oncologist can contact Dr. Christopher Corless (see box) or Teresa Kennedy at the Fund for the form. ***The form, together with the tumor material to be tested and a copy of the original pathology report, can be shipped to the address below.*** A copy of the report will be faxed to the oncologist in 10 to 15 workdays. The testing can be done on almost any tumor material, including paraffin-embedded tissue, blood or bone marrow.

Paraffin-embedded tissue, routinely generated on all surgical and biopsy specimens, is very stable and can be tested months to years after the procedure. Chris Corless or Teresa Kennedy may be contacted at any time before or after the surgery to request a form.

While the new mutation panels represent a novel approach in cancer diagnostics, there is no guarantee that any submitted tumor will yield a mutation that can be targeted by drugs that are currently available or are being tested in clinical trials. Regardless, screening FA malignancies by using the panels will help researchers develop a more complete picture of which mutations are, or are not, contributing to the growth and progression of these cancers.

Finally, please note that this new tissue testing option does not preclude our work with the National Disease Research Interchange (NDRI). The Fund strongly encourages FA patients to donate tissue to NDRI so that FA researchers around the globe can study the tissue samples and potentially learn new information that could lead to better treatments and a cure. ■