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For Immediate Release

## **Alliance for Cancer Gene Therapy Announces New Scientific Advisory Council and Board Members**

*Leading Cancer Researchers Join Nation's Only Non-Profit Dedicated to Cancer Gene and Cell Therapy Research to Oversee Grant Giving In Cancer Research*

**STAMFORD**, Conn., February 22, 2016 -- **Alliance for Cancer Gene Therapy (ACGT)**, the nation's only nonprofit dedicated exclusively to cell and gene therapies for cancer, is excited to announce new members to its Scientific Advisory Council and Board of Directors. Joining ACGT this year are some of the world's foremost leading scientists in the field of cancer gene therapy and immunotherapy.

ACGT welcomes to its 16-member Scientific Advisory Council:

### **Joseph Glorioso, III, Ph.D., chairman of the ACGT Scientific Advisory Council**

Dr. Glorioso is a professor of Microbiology and Molecular Genetics at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He is world-renowned for his work on the molecular and genetic aspects of the herpes simplex virus and how to better engineer this organism as a vector for transporting therapeutic genes. Dr. Glorioso's role as an international leader in the field of gene therapy also is recognized by his positions as founder and former president of the American Society of Gene Therapy, U.S. editor of *Gene Therapy*, and editorial board member of *Molecular Therapy*. Dr. Glorioso received his bachelor's degree and doctorate from Louisiana State University before joining the University of Michigan Medical School in the late 1970s. There, he attained the rank of professor and assistant dean for research and graduate studies. In 1989, he joined the University of Pittsburgh, School of Medicine where he served as professor and chair of the Department of Molecular Genetics and Biochemistry and the McEllroy Professorship in Biochemistry until 2009. He is currently a professor of Microbiology and Molecular Genetics. Dr. Glorioso continues his ground breaking work in the development of herpes viral vectors for the treatment of cancer, chronic pain and diseases of the central nervous system.



### **John Bell, Ph.D.**

Dr. Bell is a senior scientist with the Cancer Therapeutics Program at the Ottawa Hospital Research Institute and a 2013-2014 ACGT Research Fellow for his work using oncolytic viruses in the treatment of brain cancer. Dr. John Bell's research program is directed towards the identification and characterization of novel viruses



that specifically infect and kill cancer cells. His style is highly collaborative and generous, bringing experts from many different areas to tackle problems and come up with solutions. In addition to his many local collaborations, Dr. Bell also leads the Canadian Oncolytic Virus Consortium and the Ontario Regional BioTherapeutics (ORBiT) Program, and is the co-founder of the only conference in the world dedicated to oncolytic viruses. Dr. John Bell received his PhD from McMaster University in 1982, then for three years he trained as a post-doctoral fellow at the University of Ottawa and then at the Medical Research Council in London, England. Dr. Bell began his independent research career at McGill University in 1986 and moved to the University of Ottawa, Department of Medicine, in 1989, where he is a Professor of Medicine.

### **E. Antonio Chiocca, M.D., Ph.D., FAANS**

Dr. Chiocca is the neurosurgeon-in-chief and chairman of the Department of Neurosurgery at the Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston and also a 2007 ACGT Research Fellow for his work studying gene therapy for brain cancer using tumor specific replicating viruses and bacterium. Dr. Chiocca's work focused on developing novel genetic therapies for malignant brain tumors, engineering of viruses that can kill tumor cells without affecting normal brain cells. Dr. Chiocca's lab is combining this research with novel pharmacological and immunotherapeutic approaches for brain cancer. Currently, Dr. Chiocca is conducting preclinical evaluation of oncolytic viruses for glioma therapy. This project focuses on the development of a recombinant Herpes virus that specifically kills brain cancer cells and is being prepared for clinical studies. His lab is also studying gene, viral and immunotherapy of brain tumors, how to circumvent the host responses that limit the efficacy of novel engineered viruses that target gliomas, as well as how to stimulate the antitumor immune response. Dr. Chiocca is researching novel anti-invasive and anti-angiogenic drugs for gliomas: This study focuses on understanding the molecular mechanisms of a novel class of inhibitors called indirubins, which reduce tumor growth and dispersion in the brain. Dr. Chiocca completed medical school at University of Texas Houston and his residency in Neurological Surgery at Massachusetts General Hospital. Recently he identified a potential set-back to the use of this treatment. Dr. Chiocca found that natural killer cells (NK cells), a type of white blood cell that targets viruses and sometimes tumors within the body, are attacking the virus-infected cells, making the treatment much less effective. Dr. Chiocca has identified the specific receptors that allow the NK cells to impede the virotherapy and is looking for ways to prevent this so the treatment can work to its full potential and be the most effective.



### **Mitchell Finer, Ph.D.**

Dr. Finer is the founder and senior consultant with Avalanche Biotechnologies based in Menlo Park, California, and managing director of MPM Capital in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Dr. Finer has also served as chief scientific officer of Bluebird Bio from March 2010 to July 2015. Prior to joining Bluebird, Dr. Finer served as senior vice president of development and operations for Novocell, Inc. (now ViaCyte, Inc.), a stem cell engineering company researching treatments for diabetes and other chronic diseases, from 2008 through March 2010. Dr. Finer has also served as chief executive officer of Intracel Holdings LLC from 2005 through November 2008. From 2003 to 2005, Dr. Finer was President and Chief Executive Officer of Genteric Inc., or Genteric, where he had been Chief Scientific Officer. His past experience included vice president of research and development for the Gencell division of Aventis Pharma (now Sanofi) and vice president of research for Cell Genesys Inc., and a founder of Abgenix, Inc. Dr. Finer received his B.A. in biochemistry and bacteriology from the University of California at Berkeley and his Ph.D. in biochemistry and molecular biology from Harvard University. He completed a postdoctoral fellowship at the Whitehead Institute for



Biomedical Research.

**Dario Vignali, Ph.D.**

Dr. Vignali is vice-chair of the Department of Immunology and co-leader of the Cancer Immunology Program at the University of Pittsburgh. Dr. Vignali is an eminent immunologist known for his discoveries in cytokine biology, regulatory T cell function, immunoregulation, autoimmunity and cancer immunology. Dr. Vignali has done extensive research regarding the immune system, most notably on the ways in which the immune system is inhibited from detecting cancer, and the causes of various autoimmune disorders. Some of his many findings include the identification of novel regulatory T cells (Treg), their function, and how their pathways are involved in cancer and other autoimmune diseases such as type 1 diabetes. He has also worked with immune inhibitory molecules, mostly LAG3 and PD1. While these and other inhibitory molecules have been studied independently, little is known about the relationship between them which is what Dr. Vignali aims to uncover. Dr. Vignali will continue his research at the University of Pittsburgh at his lab in the Department of Immunology. This research will further develop his analysis of the immune system and immune cell function in mouse model systems and disease models of cancer and autoimmune disease. His second lab, at the University of Pittsburgh Cancer Institute (UPCI) will site his research on inhibitory molecules. His position will serve as an important link between the research facilities. Dr. Vignali received his undergraduate degree from North East London Polytechnic (now East London University), before receiving his PhD at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine at the University of London. He completed two postdoctoral fellowships at the Institute for Immunology and Genetics at the German Cancer Research Center, and at the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology at Harvard University. He is the Vice Chair and a member of St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, co-leader of the Cancer Immunology Program at the University of Pittsburgh Cancer Institute, and currently sits as Vice Chair and Professor in the Department of Immunology.



Joining ACGT's Scientific Advisory Council and its Board of Directors is **Aya Jakobovits, Ph.D.**, president and CEO of Adicet Bio, Inc., and a venture partner at OrbiMed Advisors, LIC, a healthcare-dedicated venture capital firm. Dr. Jakobovits is an accomplished biotech executive and longstanding promoter of scientific innovation. She was the president and founding CEO at Kite Pharma, Inc., and also held executive positions at Agensys, Inc., a subsidiary of Astellas Pharma Inc., where she led research, clinical and corporate development activities. She earned a Ph.D. in Life Sciences and MS.C. in Chemistry at Weizmann Institute of Science in Rehovot, Israel.



Other ACGT Scientific Advisory Council members include:

Stuart A. Aaronson, MD  
Xandra O. Breakefield, PhD  
Lieping Chen MD, PhD  
Stephen L. Eck, MD, PhD  
Carl H. June, MD  
Michael T. Lotze, MD  
Jack A. Roth, MD, FACS  
Stephen J. Russell, MD, PhD  
Michel Sadelain, MD, PhD  
George D. Yancopoulos, MD, PhD  
Savio L.C. Woo, PhD - Chairman Emeritus

ACGT has marked several major accomplishments recently including surpassing the \$25 million funding milestone, a particularly exciting moment given ACGT's commitment to contributing 100 percent of donations directly to research. Additionally, breakthroughs carried out by ACGT grantees, like Dr. Carl June at the University of Pennsylvania and Dr. Michel Sadelain at Memorial Sloan Kettering for their work successfully treating leukemia through cancer gene therapy, have been touted in recent national documentaries aired on PBS and HBO. ACGT-funded work is also attracting increasing attention from the pharmaceutical industry, which is swiftly discovering the amazing potential of cell and gene therapies.

"Throughout ACGT's 15 years of supporting innovative cancer research in the fields of gene and cell therapies and immunotherapies, we have always been honored by attracting some of the top cancer researchers in the United States," noted Barbara Netter, ACGT president and co-founder. "These new additions to our Scientific Advisory Council and the addition of Dr. Jakobovits to our SAC and Board, are extremely exciting as these scientists truly are on the verge of overseeing what ACGT believes to be some of the most exciting breakthroughs ever in treating cancer."

#### **About Alliance for Cancer Gene Therapy (ACGT)**

Established in 2001, ACGT is the nation's only non-profit dedicated exclusively to cell and gene therapy treatments for all types of cancer. One hundred percent of contributions go directly to research. ACGT has funded 46 grants in the U.S. and Canada since its founding in 2001 by Barbara Netter and her late husband Edward, to conduct and accelerate critically needed innovative research. Since its inception, ACGT has awarded 31 grants to Young Investigators and 15 grants to Clinical Investigators, totaling more than \$25 million in funding. ACGT is located at 96 Cummings Point Road, Stamford, Connecticut 06902; 203-358-5055. To learn more, visit [acgtfoundation.org](http://acgtfoundation.org) or join the ACGT community on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube at @acgtfoundation.

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