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Dr. Anand Jillella Receives Georgia CORE's "Optimistic Oncologist" Award

Dr. Anand Jillella, the J. Harold Harrison, MD, Distinguished University Chair in Medical Oncology at the Medical College of Georgia at the Augusta University received the first *Optimistic Oncologist Award* from the Georgia Center for Oncology Research and Education (Georgia CORE) at its annual meeting. The award, presented by Georgia CORE Board Chairman Dr. Andrew Pippas, was in recognition of Dr. Jillella's highly successful research on a rare form of leukemia that led to a national clinical trial through the National Cancer Institute. His research, which was originally conducted through Georgia CORE, has already made a major difference in saving lives of people with acute promyelocytic leukemia (APL).

APL is a very curable leukemia once the patient survives the first few weeks critical weeks of treatment. With his team, he developed an emergency checklist for physicians to guide them in recognizing and dealing with this rare disease in its early stages. Physicians, who don't often see this disease, may call for a consultation at any time.

Experience with the strategy in Georgia and South Carolina decreased initial deaths from an estimated 30% to 6.7%. Thanks to these results in research funded by the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society, the National Cancer institute has funded a national cooperative group trial, with plans to enroll about 200 patients over four years. Dr. Jillella and his research associate, Dr. Vamsi Kota, an Assistant Professor of Hematology and Medical Oncology at Emory University's School of Medicine, are developing plans to use the existing network to offer similar supportive services for a handful of other rare cancers.

"This is an extraordinary accomplishment and a well-deserved award," said Dr. Pippas. Dr. Jillella is also a Board Member of Georgia CORE. The Optimistic Oncology Award was named after a quote from the late Thomas E. Seay, MD, PhD, who chaired the Board of Georgia CORE until his death in 2016. (*"There is a bit of an optimist in all oncologists: we have to maintain a positive attitude for our patients and ourselves. Georgia CORE gives us an outlet for this optimism—a way to build infrastructure and collaboration to advance discovery, and an opportunity to expand access to cutting edge treatments. Ultimately, we are all seeking the same success in new cures for cancer."*)

Dr. Jillella's titles include Chief of the MCG Division of Hematology/Oncology and Associate Director of Medical Oncology Services at the Georgia Cancer Center, where he directs the cancer center's ambulatory services. He is the Founding Director of the Georgia Cancer Center's adult stem cell and bone marrow transplant program and served as Chief of the MCG Section of Hematology/Oncology from 2005-13, when he was named Associate Director for Community Affairs and Outreach at the Winship Cancer Institute at Emory University. He also has served as Medical Director of the Winship Cancer Network, which brings clinical and population based trials to communities throughout Georgia and the region.

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Georgia CORE is a public-private partnership designed to bring higher quality, better organized and more cost-effective care to cancer patients and survivors. The organization's Board of Directors is composed of cancer experts from leading cancer centers and academic institutions. CORE's network develops innovative tools and resources for cancer patients, survivors, caregivers, healthcare providers and researchers. Our collective vision is to contribute to the state's distinction as a national leader in cancer care and research and a higher caliber of health care for all Georgians. CORE's flagship resource, www.GeorgiaCancerInfo.org is the only statewide online information center of its kind, where details can be found on oncologists, clinical trials and treatment centers throughout the state.