News Release

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MD Anderson joins CATCH Global Foundation to boost child health, prevent cancer in later years

Moon Shots Program connects to extensive effort created by UTHealth School of Public Health

HOUSTON – Cancer prevention experts at The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center have allied with the CATCH Global Foundation, whose comprehensive child health program reaches children and their families in more than 10,000 educational settings nationwide, to promote behavior that will lower children’s lifelong risk of developing cancer.

“Establishing healthy eating and physical activity habits early in life is a powerful way to reduce lifetime cancer risks. Recent estimates suggest that a third to half of all cancers are preventable if Americans adopt and maintain a healthy lifestyle,” said Ernest Hawk, M.D., MD Anderson vice president of cancer prevention and population science. “MD Anderson’s affiliation with CATCH Global Foundation greatly accelerates our ability to promote healthy lifestyles in childhood and adolescence.”

The University of Texas System Board of Regents approved the agreement that makes MD Anderson a founding partner in the foundation at the board’s Feb. 12 meeting. CATCH®, an acronym for Coordinated Approach to Child Health, is a program developed and disseminated by The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston (UTHealth) School of Public Health.

The agreement is an initiative of MD Anderson’s Moon Shots Program, which aims to accelerate the conversion of scientific discoveries into advances that drastically reduce cancer deaths. MD Anderson will focus its initial CATCH efforts on skin cancer prevention education through the Melanoma Moon Shot and tobacco-use prevention through the Lung Cancer Moon Shot.

“Effective cancer prevention will play a powerful role in the future health of our country and in our team meeting its moon shots goals,” said MD Anderson President Ron DePinho, M.D. “It’s important that we deploy MD Anderson’s programs for optimum impact. With CATCH, we’re fortunate to combine our expertise with a successful, longstanding program providing a practical, research-based approach to child health that’s already national in scope.”

Kevin Dillon, senior executive vice president and COO/CFO of UTHealth, noted: “We are very pleased to see the programs created at UTHealth supported and disseminated by our sister UT organization—a great collaboration with direct preventive health benefits for our youth. Since 1992, CATCH has been a
flagship program for UTHealth, demonstrating the creativity and innovativeness of our child health faculty.”

Originally developed by a coalition of five research universities including UTHealth School of Public Health, CATCH has expanded through the Michael & Susan Dell Center for Healthy Living within the school. CATCH includes programs for early childhood education, elementary school, middle school and after-school programs. Each includes components for nutrition, physical education, classroom and community/family outreach.

Steve Kelder, Ph.D., and Deanna Hoelscher, Ph.D., professors at UTHealth School of Public Health and founding directors of the Michael & Susan Dell Center for Healthy Living, initiated the CATCH Global Foundation to ensure that effective programs are put into broad practice.

“Our goal is to create a public entity dedicated to improving the health of children, in perpetuity, by disseminating programs developed and proven effective at UTHealth and MD Anderson. MD Anderson’s generous support will greatly accelerate the foundation’s progress in obesity prevention, cancer prevention and population health,” Kelder said.

“CATCH is backed by 25 years of scientific evidence proving that it is the most cost-effective means to prevent childhood obesity. And since obesity is a leading risk factor for cancer, CATCH has really always been an anti-cancer program,” said Duncan Van Dusen, founding executive director of the CATCH Global Foundation and UTHealth School of Public Health graduate. “Joining forces with MD Anderson immediately expands the value of CATCH to our partners in schools, YMCAs and other settings around the country, and will power several large initiatives to benefit hundreds of thousands more kids.”

The four-year agreement calls for MD Anderson to provide $3.3 million in funding for infrastructure and operations, curriculum development and dissemination, and program and technologic support. Anticipated projects include:

- Transformation of CATCH curriculum to a digital format.
- Development and dissemination of new program content, including UV light protection to reduce skin cancer risk and tobacco use prevention to reduce the risks of multiple cancer types.
- Promotion of peer-to-peer student engagement in prevention programs.
- Education about vaccination to prevent cancers associated with human papilloma virus (HPV).

MD Anderson’s contribution is financed by the Moon Shots Program, which focuses on accelerating progress against eight cancers with extraordinary potential for improvements in prevention, care and survivorship.

Hawk and Mark Moreno, MD Anderson vice president of governmental relations, also lead the moon shots cancer prevention and control platform, which supports prevention efforts through enhanced public policy, public education, or clinical dissemination to effectively address community needs and priorities.

The Melanoma Moon Shot and Lung Cancer Moon Shot each have specific youth cancer prevention education programs under way that build on or extend programs developed by faculty in the Division of Cancer Prevention and Population Sciences.

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About MD Anderson

The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston ranks as one of the world's most respected centers focused on cancer patient care, research, education and prevention. MD Anderson is one of only 41 comprehensive cancer centers designated by the National Cancer Institute (NCI). For the past 25 years, MD Anderson has ranked as one of the nation's top two cancer centers in U.S. News & World Report's annual "Best Hospitals" survey. MD Anderson receives a cancer center support grant from the NCI of the National Institutes of Health (P30 CA016672).

About CATCH Global Foundation

The CATCH Global Foundation is a 501(c)3 public charity founded in 2014. Our mission is to improve children’s health worldwide by developing, disseminating and sustaining the highly effective CATCH program in collaboration with researchers at UTHealth. The Foundation links underserved schools and communities to the resources necessary to create an environment that improves children’s health, increases academic success, and supports a lifetime of wellness.

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