



Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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Murray, Massachusetts Life Sciences Center Announce Multi-National Research Study on Pre-Malignant Lesions in Throat Patients

BOSTON – Massachusetts Senate President Therese Murray (D-Plymouth), Massachusetts Life Sciences Center President and CEO Dr. Susan Windham-Bannister, and Dr. Ramon Franco of the Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary announced a multi-national research study to develop non-invasive procedures to detect pre-malignant lesions. Finland, Northern Ireland and Catalonia have also made commitments to be part of the study.

The collaboration for this study, led by Franco, was fostered during several different meetings of NIMAC (Northern Ireland Massachusetts Connection) – an informal organization formed in 2009 which includes Massachusetts, Northern Ireland, Finland and the Catalonia region of Spain.

“These are the types of opportunities that NIMAC was designed to help facilitate,” **Senate President Therese Murray** said. “The work by Dr. Franco and his international partners will improve patient care and wellness by preventing unnecessary surgery and making more cost-effective diagnosis of premalignant lesions. Here in Massachusetts, we understand that we must look beyond both our state and national borders to find opportunities for collaboration which can make an impact around the world. That is why we continue to encourage and emphasize research and innovation in the life sciences and biotechnology sectors.”

The study, which received a \$300,000 grant from the Massachusetts Life Sciences Center, will look at samples from all of the participating nations and will also utilize the most effective, cutting edge applications to analyze the data collected. The result will be to determine at-risk patients without unnecessary surgery.

“This project provides an exciting opportunity to further develop a novel technology that will advance personalized medicine, improve patient care, and promote cost reductions in our health care system,” said **Susan Windham-Bannister, Ph.D., President & CEO of the Massachusetts Life Sciences Center**. “I commend Senate President Murray and our partners in Northern Ireland, Catalonia and Finland for their leadership in forming and building upon the NIMAC collaboration.”

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Dr. Ramon Franco of the Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary discussed the importance of the opportunities NIMAC has provided for this collaboration:

“The NIMAC collaboration is invaluable in today’s world because science is no longer a solo endeavor. Our research aims to use the DNA, RNA and protein changes seen in a patient’s biopsy sample to personalize the decisions in their healthcare. Specifically, in laryngeal premalignant tumors, 90 percent are benign. By using these analyses, we will be able to identify and target the 10 percent who are at-risk for progressing to cancer, decreasing healthcare costs and protecting patients from unnecessary surgical procedures.

“NIMAC gives us the ability to interface with our colleagues in Northern Ireland, Finland and Catalonia to perform the highest level of research possible. In the future, we hope to leverage the strength of this association when we seek federal grant money in the US and Europe to support this and many other projects. The knowledge gained through this research has no borders. Patients in all fields of medicine, as well as all countries, will be able to benefit.”

NIMAC was formed to help create connections on the research, academic and business level to promote mutually beneficial economic opportunities. NIMAC members also include the Massachusetts Life Sciences Center, the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative, Invest Northern Ireland, Tekes (Finland), VTT (Finland), BioCat (Catalonia) and several universities and research institutions in reach member region.

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