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Aga Khan University and Fred Hutch join in global collaboration

The organisations signed a memorandum of understanding to collaborate on prevention, diagnosis, treatment of cancer and related diseases



Seattle, USA, 6 March 2019 - The Aga Khan University and Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center today expressed their shared commitment in working together to improve the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of cancer and related diseases in low- and middle-income countries.

President Firoz Rasul of Aga Khan University and President and Director of Fred Hutch, Dr. Gary Gilliland, signed a memorandum of understanding which aims to foster joint international scientific research projects, training programmes in clinical care, laboratory and clinical research programmes and infrastructure development in low- and middle-income settings, primarily in East Africa.

Prince Rahim and Princess Salwa Aga Khan, Dr. Carl Amrhein, Provost & Vice President, Academic for Aga Khan University and leaders from both organisations joined President Rasul and Dr. Gilliland for a signing ceremony at Fred Hutch's Seattle campus. The group also visited the labs of Dr. Edus "Hootie" Warren, head of Global Oncology at Fred Hutch, and Dr. Stan Riddell, scientific director of Fred Hutch's Immunotherapy Integrated Research Center.

"Cancer is a global problem that requires global cooperation to deliver new diagnostics and treatments that will save lives around the world," Rasul said. "We are proud to be partnering with Fred Hutch, a world leader in cancer research and care, to tackle one of the biggest challenges in global health today."

"I believe we can reach curative approaches to most, if not all, cancers by 2025, and it's through this type of collaboration that we'll get there," said Gilliland. "Together, Aga Khan University and Fred Hutch have the potential to improve quality of life for cancer patients on a global scale, through enhanced treatment, training and scientific research programmes. I thank Prince Rahim and Princess Salwa Aga Khan and President Firoz Rasul for joining us at Fred Hutch today to celebrate and share our ideas for this exciting collaboration."

The two organisations are committed to pursuing oncology research that is directly relevant to patients in low- and middle-income countries. Aga Khan University and Fred Hutch engage in programmes to improve the next generation of cancer care through hematology and oncology training fellowships and have identified this as an area of potential collaboration. In addition, the two organisations share the goal of increasing infrastructure development in low- and middle-income countries, with particular emphasis on laboratory and biorepository capacity, to accelerate cancer research globally. The Aga Khan University is a pioneering institution of higher education that works to improve quality of life in the developing world and beyond. The University educates world-class health professionals, conduct cutting-edge health research and treats more than two million patients every year at seven hospitals and more than 300 medical centres in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. Since it opened in 2011, the Aga Khan University Hospital's Heart and Cancer Centre in Nairobi, Kenya, has been regarded as a leader in cardiovascular and oncology care in East Africa.

Fred Hutch and the Uganda Cancer Institute officially opened the UCI-Fred Hutch Cancer Centre in Kampala, Uganda in 2015. As the first comprehensive cancer centre jointly built by U.S. and African cancer institutions in sub-Saharan Africa, the Centre houses research and molecular diagnostics laboratories, training facilities and outpatient clinics for children and adults that can accommodate up to 20,000 outpatient visits a year. Its researchers are engaged in 30 studies of five types of cancer (Kaposi sarcoma, non-Hodgkin lymphomas, cervical cancer, breast cancer and Hodgkin lymphomas) and four viruses (HIV, human herpes and simplex viruses and Epstein Barr virus).

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At *Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center*, home to three Nobel laureates, interdisciplinary teams of world-renowned scientists seek new and innovative ways to prevent, diagnose and treat cancer, HIV/AIDS and other life-threatening diseases. Fred Hutch's pioneering work in bone marrow transplantation led to the development of immunotherapy, which harnesses the power of the immune system to treat cancer. An independent, nonprofit research institute based in Seattle, Fred Hutch houses the nation's first cancer prevention research programme, as well as the clinical coordinating centre of the Women's Health Initiative and the international headquarters of the HIV Vaccine Trials Network.

The *Aga Khan University* (AKU)'s mission is to improve quality of life in the developing world and beyond through world-class teaching, research and health-care delivery. The University educates students for local and global leadership from campuses and teaching hospitals in six countries, primarily in Asia and Africa. AKU generates new knowledge to solve problems that affect millions of people, especially the most vulnerable. The University achieves international quality benchmarks and raise standards and aspirations in the countries in which it works. In partnership with governments and leading private-sector organisations, AKU works to build a world that values pluralism, encourages civil-society initiatives and provides opportunity to all. The University is a private, not-for-profit institution and an agency of the Aga Khan Development Network.

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