

Caring for Carcinoid furthers research into often overlooked cancer

After collapsing on a Boston subway shortly before her first wedding anniversary, Nancy O'Hagan was diagnosed with carcinoid, a deadly cancer of the neuroendocrine cells. Discovering that this incurable disease receives little research funding from the government and pharmaceutical industry, O'Hagan decided to take action, establishing the Caring for Carcinoid Foundation in 2005. Recently, the foundation selected Matthew Meyerson, MD, PhD, director of the Center for Genome Discovery, as the recipient of its latest award to Dana-Farber, a two-year, \$250,000 grant in support of his genetic research into carcinoid tumors.

"Understanding carcinoid could have broad implications for cancer research, since neuroendocrine cells are found throughout the body," said O'Hagan. "The Caring for Carcinoid Foundation is about uniting patients, scientists, the pharmaceutical industry, and the government, and providing hope to those patients by funding research and collaboration that will result in a cure."

Caring for Carcinoid directs 100 percent of all contributions to support a three-step research "roadmap" designed to unlock this cancer's genetic origins and develop novel, targeted patient therapies.

Meyerson's research parallels the second step in this roadmap—mapping the pathways of carcinoid cell growth and proliferation—by focusing on a mutated tumor suppressor gene in carcinoid patients called *MEN1*. Searching for enzymes whose action counteracts the activity of the protein menin, which is produced by the *MEN1* gene, Meyerson's work provides optimism for a new avenue of

treatment for O'Hagan and the 8,000 to 10,000 people diagnosed with carcinoid each year.

"Nancy is an inspiring woman who has taken her battle with carcinoid tumors and used it to improve research and treatment for all carcinoid patients," said Meyerson. "I am delighted to work with the wonderful foundation she has created." ■



Matthew Meyerson, MD, PhD, believes unlocking the secrets of the MEN1 gene could improve the treatment of carcinoid tumors.