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\$6 million gift advances veterinary medical research

By *Stephanie Specchio*

The Starr Foundation, chaired by Maurice R. (Hank) Greenberg, has committed \$6 million to the Cornell College of Veterinary Medicine. The gift will create two endowed professorships in clinical research, positions that are critical for the improvement of animal health, according to the college.

These professorships follow an anonymous gift dedicated to canine genomics research, which also supports endowed professorships and faculty startups, genetic research on cancer and other diseases, and the DNA Bank, an archive of canine DNA and medical information partially funded by the National Institutes of Health.

"The College of Veterinary Medicine's reputation as the top-ranked school in the U.S. stands on its superb teaching, research and clinical care. These strengths make it a world leader in discovering the genetic causes of cancer and other diseases and in accelerating the development of treatments that benefit animals," said Cornell President David J. Skorton. "Given the limited availability of federal funding for animal health, private support is critical in advancing this work. We are extremely grateful to The Starr Foundation for partnering with Cornell to improve animal health around the world."

Greenberg said: "The Starr Foundation recognizes the importance of veterinary research. We rely on animals in our economy and our lives, and their diseases often are related to human diseases. This grant is part of Starr's larger commitment to human cancer and genomics research, and will advance our understanding of infectious diseases that spread between animals and humans."

Relatively little funding is dedicated to better understanding and treating diseases that affect animals even though they suffer from many of the same diseases that humans do. One of the College of Veterinary Medicine's highest priorities is to establish resources that enable discoveries that make a real impact on cancer and other devastating diseases.

While the specific research to be conducted will be determined once the professorships are filled, the veterinary college has undertaken a major effort to advance canine genetic research. It is capitalizing on strengths in clinical genetics, computational biology and opportunities provided by the genomic and breed structure of the dog. Research is under way in cancer, liver, heart and blood diseases applicable to treatment of animal and human diseases.

"This commitment will help us achieve our vision for clinical research, discoveries and treatments related to cancer and other complex diseases with a genetic basis," said Michael Kotlikoff, the Austin O. Hooey Dean of the college. "We are deeply grateful for The Starr Foundation's generosity."

"The Maurice R. and Corinne P. Greenberg Professorship and the C.V. Starr Professorship in the College of Veterinary Medicine will allow the college to recruit and retain some of the most respected minds in veterinary science, people who will drive the development of new treatments, vaccines and therapies," Kotlikoff said. "We will all benefit from the new knowledge created by their cutting-edge discoveries in medical science."

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The Starr Foundation and the Greenberg family are longtime Cornell benefactors and have given generously to the College of Veterinary Medicine and to Weill Cornell Medical College, where Greenberg is a member of the Board of Overseers.

Stephanie Specchio is director of communications for the College of Veterinary Medicine.

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