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Dr. Michael Lukey wins award for breast cancer research

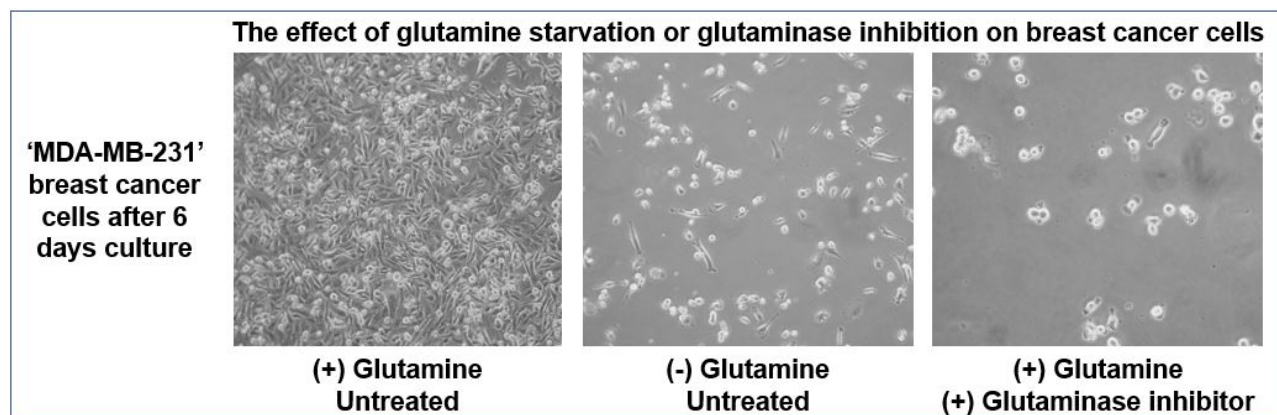
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Dr. Michael Lukey, a post-doctoral trainee in the Department of Molecular Medicine has received a \$25,000 research grant award from the Breast Cancer Coalition of Rochester to identify the impact of specific enzymes in the improvement of triple negative outcomes in breast cancer.

Lukey is one of two recipients of the Breast Cancer Coalition of Rochester awards, who received the grants at a press conference on April 5 at the Coalition office. The recipients were selected via a competitive application and review process that included Requests for Proposals sent to researchers in Rochester and the Western, Central and Finger Lakes regions.

"Being awarded the research grant from the Breast Cancer Coalition of Rochester is a great honor for me," says Lukey. "The research project that I proposed is based on a series of striking preliminary results that I was very eager to pursue, and finding out that I had received funding to continue this work was both very exciting and motivating."


Lukey's research focuses on the fact that many breast cancer cells depend on an abundant supply of the amino acid glutamine. The enzyme glutaminase (GLS) plays a key role in the metabolism of glutamine in a subset of breast tumors, and has been the focus of several recent drug-development efforts. "We are investigating the function of a related enzyme, which catalyzes the same reaction as GLS and is present at elevated levels in almost 70% of breast tumors," Lukey explains. "Using genetic approaches in combination with inhibitors identified in our lab, we will evaluate the opportunities for targeting glutamine metabolism in different subtypes of breast cancer, and will identify possible resistance mechanisms to this therapeutic strategy."




The Coalition's Research Initiative has awarded more than \$700,000 to area researchers since 2003. These grants are unusual for a nonprofit grassroots organization and focus on breast cancer cause, prevention, prevention of metastasis, and cure. Research grants are an integral part of the Coalition's mission and continuing efforts to eradicate breast cancer. Their Research Advisory Board is comprised of breast cancer survivors, scientists, researchers and clinicians.

"An award from the Breast Cancer Coalition of Rochester has a local connection, and puts me in direct contact with patients and survivors of breast cancers," says Lukey. "This is a powerful reminder of the 'real reason' we carry out this research--although we work on a daily basis with breast cancer cells grown in culture in the laboratory, the ultimate goal of our work is to generate findings that lead to improved therapies for patients.

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