LIMR HISTORY

A Tradition of Research

The Lankenau Institute for Medical Research's (LIMR) roots can be traced back to 1917 when Stanley P. Reimann joined the Lankenau Hospital as Chief Pathologist, but only under the condition that he could build a research effort at the hospital. His vision along with that of Frederick S. Hammett, a biologist and biochemist, instilled a basic research philosophy with the novel insight to use wound healing as a model to study cell division in cancer. They believed this work would allow a better understanding of the fundamental processes of cell division and could be used to help treat or prevent diseases.

Original Home of LIMR, the Lankenau Hospital Research Institute on Girard & Corinthian in Philadelphia

Through the assistance of Dr. Harvey Shoemaker, Chief of Medicine, and Dr. John B. Deaver, Chief of Surgery, both at Lankenau Hospital, they roused the interest of a friend and patient, Rodman Wanamaker. Mr. Wanamaker, LIMR's original benefactor and son of John Wanamaker, Philadelphia businessman and "father" of the department store, donated funds to build a research center on the Lankenau Hospital Campus, which was located then at Girard and Corinthian in Philadelphia. The new research building was dedicated in 1925, unveiling the brass seal "FOR HUMANITY", highlighting the hospital's fundamental commitment to research. This seal, which is still located in LIMR's current lobby, remains a symbol of our Institute. The new center was named the Lankenau Hospital Research Institute (LHRI) and began its formal research program in 1927. However, from 1917 to 1927, Dr. Reimann and his colleagues had already published over 40 research papers.

Over the next ten years the support of the Pew Family, known for the creation of the Pew Charitable Trusts in honor of their parents, Mary Anderson Pew and Joseph N. Pew, founder of Sun Oil Company, were central to the growth of research at the LHRI. J. Howard Pew joined the LHRI Committee in 1935 and his sisters, Ethel Pew and Mabel Pew Myrin also supported the Institute for many years. In 1941, Philip T. Sharples, a Philadelphia industrialist and philanthropist, joined the LHRI Committee and together with Mr. Pew were the driving force behind the creation of the Institute for Cancer Research (ICR), an offshoot of the LHRI focused exclusively on cancer research and originally created to be able to access additional funding opportunities. In addition to cancer research at LHRI, the Institute became a center of excellence in nutrition and biochemistry in the 1930's and 1940's including key studies by Dr. Mary Bennett that contributed to the discovery of Vitamin B12.

In 1947, construction of a new facility for the ICR began in Fox Chase and was completed in November of 1949. In that same year, Lankenau Hospital committed to building new facilities in Overbrook that included a new building dedicated to research. In 1950, ICR and LHRI merged their cancer research and began to share the new ICR facilities, which later became the Fox Chase Cancer Center. In 1953, Lankenau Hospital moved to its current site in Wynnewood, PA, on land donated by Mabel Pew Myrin, and the LHRI moved from Fox Chase to the first three floors of the Medical Science Building, which was built for the sole purpose of medical research in 1958. It was at this time that the LHRI became a separate entity known as the Research Department of Lankenau Hospital.

For 30 years, Dr. Reimann served as Director of LHRI until 1957 when Dr. Kaare Rodahl became Director of Research at Lankenau Hospital. During Dr. Rodhal's time as director, research included work on cardiovascular disease, cancer, arthritis, aging, alcoholism, and work physiology including occupational medicine, rehabilitation, and environmental stress. In 1959, there were 40 scientists and technicians working in the labs. By 1964, that number had more than doubled to 85. Beginning in the 1970's, extensive cancer research resumed within the department.

In 1981, the Lankenau Medical Research Center (LMRC) was created and the Hospital Research Division was transferred to this new center. The LMRC was an independent institution established under the Lankenau Hospital Foundation. A few years later, Main Line Health formed and became the parent of and holding company for Lankenau Hospital and the Lankenau Hospital Foundation. During this time, research began to reflect the wider community of opportunities presented by clinical investigators from a four-hospital network on the Main Line, a suburban region west of Philadelphia. Over the next two decades, the Institute greatly expanded research into the genetics and cell biology of cancer, cardiovascular disease, aging, and transgenic mouse models of disease.

Current Home of the Lankenau Institute for Medical Research in Wynnewood, PA

By 1992, with the guidance of Dr. George Reichard, President of the Research Center, the LMRC constructed a new state-of-the-art laboratory facility on the Lankenau Hospital Campus. This 53,000 sq. ft., three-story building consisting of 16 laboratories, shared equipment rooms, and several additional core laboratories, remains the current home of LIMR researchers. In 1998, Dr. Vincent J. Cristofalo, a leading researcher on aging, was recruited as President of LMRC and brought a number of new researchers to the Institute. Following his arrival the name of the Center was changed in 1999 to the Lankenau Institute for Medical Research (LIMR).

Today, under the leadership of Dr. George C. Prendergast, LIMR scientists are focusing their research on cancer and cardiovascular disease. This exciting work is expanding studies of disease modifier genes, pioneering nanotechnology-based gene therapies as well as new pharmacological agents to treat cancer, exploring cardiovascular disease focused on hypertension and cardiac arrhythmias, and using basic and preclinical findings to create new prognostic and therapeutic tools for clinical use. In addition to our research, LIMR also sponsors several educational initiatives that encourage both students and physicians to engage in research activities within our laboratories.

As we look ahead to the next ten years and as NIH funding enters a period of tighter federal budgets, our researchers are actively working to take LIMR's discoveries from bench to bedside through the creation of an exceptional environment where translational research has greater impact in both commercial and clinical settings.