

Anthony Letai Sworn In as Director of the National Cancer Institute

Before helming the National Cancer Institute, Anthony Letai worked at Harvard Medical School and the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute.

September 29, 2025 By HHS Press Office

WASHINGTON—SEPT. 29, 2025—Anthony Letai, MD, PhD, was sworn in today as director of the National Cancer Institute (NCI), part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), by Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.

Dr. Letai takes the helm of the world's most prestigious cancer research agency after serving as professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School and medical oncologist at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute. He possesses decades of experience studying cell death in cancer, developing treatments, and identifying predictive biomarkers.

"For too long, federal research priorities neglected cancer and other chronic diseases," said Secretary Kennedy. "President Trump ended that neglect, and under Dr. Letai's leadership, NCI will drive American innovation by focusing squarely on the best science to find causes and cures."

"Dr. Letai has been immersed in the relevant science for decades and has been on the cutting edge of how we think about cancer treatment," said NIH Director Jay Bhattacharya. "His drive, integrity, and expertise make him the right leader to harness the resources and talent at NCI to reverse America's cancer crisis."

"It is a great honor to join Secretary Kennedy and [NIH director Jay] Bhattacharya at this watershed moment for our nation's public health," said Letai. "We will work around the clock to identify cancer's root causes, predictive biomarkers, and most effective treatments. Advances in understanding cell death and in directly studying human patient tumor tissue are essential to realizing President Trump's vision for a healthy America."

Dr. Letai's research has been central to bringing venetoclax, a BCL-2 inhibitor, from the laboratory to the clinic. His laboratory work has led to advancements in knowledge of both liquid and solid tumors, as well as a wide range of treatments, including cellular immunotherapies. Dr. Letai is a recipient of the European Cell Death Organization Career Award, the Smith Family Prize for Outstanding Scientific Contributions, and the National Cancer Institute Outstanding Investigator Award.

After graduating from Princeton University with a Bachelor of Arts in physics, Dr. Letai received his Doctor of Medicine and Doctor of Philosophy from the University of Chicago. He completed his Ph.D. on the molecular basis of heritable blistering diseases before residency in Internal Medicine at Brigham and Women's Hospital and a clinical fellowship in hematology and oncology at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute. Dr. Letai began his studies of programmed cell death in cancer in a post-doctoral fellowship before establishing his laboratory at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute to study how apoptosis can be evaded by cancer cells.

Dr. Letai and his wife, Jean, have three children. Their daughter Julie represented Team USA in short track speedskating at the 2022 Winter Olympics and is a member of U.S. Speedskating's Short Track World Tour Team as it prepares for the 2026 Games in Milan.

[This press release](#) was originally published September 29, 2025, by the Department of Health and Human Services.

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