

# Dana-Farber Launches Center for RAS Therapeutics to Target RAS Oncogene

The first-of-its-kind Center aims to advance new treatment approaches for patients with RAS mutant cancers.

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Dana-Farber Cancer Institute will launch the Center for RAS Therapeutics, a multidisciplinary initiative to advance scientific investigation, translational research, and clinical care approaches for patients with RAS-driven cancers, the institution announced today. The new Center brings Dana-Farber scientists and clinicians together with industry partners and other academic centers to accelerate drug development to improve outcomes for patients with RAS mutant cancers.

RAS is the most commonly mutated oncogene in human cancer and is found in 20% of all cancers, accounting for an estimated 260,000 cases per year in the U.S. and 3.4 million cases globally. RAS mutations are especially prevalent in certain cancer types: lung (32% of tumors), pancreatic (92%), and colorectal (54%). Cancers with RAS mutations typically have lower survival rates compared to those without RAS mutations.

The Center will be co-directed by [Alice Shaw, MD, PhD](#), and [Andrew Aguirre, MD, PhD](#). Shaw is a thoracic medical oncologist and also the newly appointed Chief of Strategic Partnerships at Dana-Farber. She has studied RAS signaling in the lab and also brings firsthand experience developing numerous targeted therapies in lung cancer, including RAS inhibitors. Aguirre is a gastrointestinal medical oncologist and physician-scientist at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute and the Broad Institute of Harvard and MIT, who leads a research laboratory that studies RAS biology and therapeutics in pancreatic cancer and other tumor types. His group previously published several seminal investigations on resistance to RAS inhibitors in patient samples and laboratory models.

“RAS is a major driver of some of our most challenging cancers, including lung, pancreatic, colorectal, and endometrial cancers, among others,” said Shaw. “Recently, there has been an explosion of new therapies targeting RAS-driven cancers, which has created unprecedented opportunities to help patients but has also revealed important challenges. This new Center will enable coordinated efforts among Dana-Farber researchers to advance the most promising new therapies to patients as rapidly as possible.”

“While RAS-targeting therapies hold tremendous promise, treatment resistance remains a significant problem that will require innovative combination therapy approaches,” Aguirre added.

“The landscape of new RAS inhibitors is highly complex, and centralized expertise is necessary to determine the right drug or combination of drugs for every patient. We will work closely with other academic and industry partners with the goal to improve our understanding of treatment resistance across tumor types, to discover new vulnerabilities in RAS-driven cancers, and to conduct the most efficient clinical trials of new therapies.”

The Center’s work will support pre-clinical studies and clinical trials of RAS-directed therapies. A large pipeline of newly developed RAS inhibitors is already in clinical trials or in late preclinical development. Currently, Dana-Farber has many clinical trials open focused on promising new therapies to address RAS-driven cancers. For more information on the Center for RAS Therapeutics at Dana-Farber, visit: [www.dana-farber.org/ras](http://www.dana-farber.org/ras)

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