

Gift Launches \$200M Initiative for the Weill Cancer Hub West

Matching grant from Weill family creates collaborative research hub, uniting scientists from UCSF and Stanford Medicine to transform cancer care within a decade. [VIDEO]

July 25, 2025 By Kristen Bole and University of California San Francisco

A visionary \$100 million matching grant from the Weill Family Foundation is bringing together two leading cancer centers to launch the Weill Cancer Hub West — an innovative collaboration among some of the nation’s most talented scientists that will transform cancer research and care in the next decade.

The initiative will harness the expertise and resources of two world-class institutions —University of California, San Francisco’s Helen Diller Family Comprehensive Cancer Center and the Stanford Cancer Institute — to lead cross-specialty collaborations that accelerate new discoveries and speed the development of innovative new treatments for patients.

The new hub is supported by funding from Joan and Sanford I. Weill via the Weill Family Foundation. The two partner institutions have committed to raising \$50 million apiece in matching gifts, bringing the total support to \$200 million over 10 years. The initiative will launch with more than \$25 million* in philanthropy already in place toward the matching goal.

Despite decades of advances in research and therapies, cancer is still on the rise, with nearly 20 million new cases and approximately 10 million deaths worldwide each year. Yet many scientists believe we are at a turning point, as revolutions in biology and immunology converge with advances in artificial intelligence technology and data science. The result is an unprecedented chance to drive real changes for patients.

“Good things happen when people collaborate,” Sandy Weill said. “UCSF and Stanford have long been engines of innovation and biotechnology, and today they are poised to shape the future. With the combined power of the brightest scientific minds and AI capabilities, the Weill Cancer Hub West will develop new ways to detect cancers at their very earliest stages, create advanced new treatments, and help patients live longer and better lives. Joan and I could not be more excited about the possibilities of this initiative.”

“Joan and Sandy Weill have a unique ability to see beyond what currently exists in a single institution or scientific program and support collaborations that will fundamentally reshape the

way we treat the most devastating diseases of our time,” said [Sam Hawgood](#), MBBS, chancellor and the Arthur and Toni Rembe Rock Distinguished Professor at UCSF. “Their generosity and vision for collaborative science will accelerate revolutions in health that will help patients everywhere.”

The groundbreaking value of collaborative science

The Weill family and their foundation are long-time champions of exceptional science and medicine, with a particular focus on the power of philanthropy to forge scientific collaborations at multiple top-tier institutions.

The Weill Cancer Hub West is the culmination of several years of planning between the Weills and the two founding institutions and is expected to transform the field of cancer research. By unifying the research within a collaborative hub, the initiative will forge partnerships that break down silos and foster collaboration among innovative scientific leaders.

It also will set up a sustainable model of collaborative research between the two institutions, using the hub’s scientific advances to inspire additional philanthropic support and competitive grant funding, generate new patents and intellectual property to support the universities’ research enterprises, and spin out companies to help bring those advances to market.

“The fight against cancer is one of the defining health challenges of our time,” said Stanford President Jonathan Levin, PhD. “Stanford and UCSF are well positioned to advance the collaborative, next-generation research that will make a meaningful difference in the lives of countless people in America and around the world. We are grateful to Joan and Sandy Weill for their vision and commitment to this important cause.”

This is the second cancer hub of its kind, following the March announcement of Weill Cancer Hub East with four institutions on the East Coast: Weill Cornell Medicine, Princeton University, The Rockefeller University, and the Ludwig Institute for Cancer Research.

Both hubs are modeled on the success of the [Weill Neurohub](#). Launched in 2019, it is now a vibrant network of researchers and clinicians from UCSF, UC Berkeley, the University of Washington, and the Allen Institute that is focused on accelerating new treatments for neurological and psychiatric diseases.

In total, the Weill family and their foundation have contributed more than \$400 million to groundbreaking scientific research and patient care in the San Francisco Bay Area, and more than \$1 billion to nonprofits in the United States and around the globe.

“This collaboration exemplifies the power of philanthropy in advancing science and health care,” said Lloyd Minor, MD, the Carl and Elizabeth Naumann Dean of the School of Medicine and vice president for medical affairs at Stanford University. “Establishing the Weill Cancer Hub West will accelerate our ability to develop targeted therapies and transform our fight against cancer. We are immensely grateful to Joan and Sandy Weill for enabling us to continue to bring the most

promising therapies to patients.”

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Four initial projects at the edge of medical research

Weill Cancer Hub West will drive innovations in three key areas: human cells and tissues to better understand how cancer develops and affects each individual patient; data science to drive early detection, diagnoses and effective treatments; and new therapies to overcome drug resistance and inadequate responses.

It will launch with four cross-functional projects that will bring together scientists, including a Nobel laureate, at the pinnacle of their fields. Each project has a 10-year target impact:

- Project VITAL, to create a new generation of cellular therapies, using CRISPR technology to engineer immune cells inside the body;
- Project PROMISE, leveraging artificial intelligence and cellular engineering to safely and precisely destroy the most treatment-resistant solid tumors;
- Project FEAST, to identify and optimize diet and drug interventions to reduce cancer development, progression and metastasis; and
- Project IMPACT to build artificial intelligence systems that integrate clinical and biological data for precise, personalized cancer treatments.

The first two projects will focus on radically increasing the availability and success of cellular therapies such as CAR-T, which is already improving the lives of many patients with blood cancers. But those cellular therapies are expensive and challenging to manufacture and deliver to patients.

Project VITAL is linking UCSF and Stanford researchers with Nobel-prize winning techniques to develop the next generation of immune cells that can be generated inside the patient’s body, creating a flexible and personalized therapy.

Project PROMISE will address the 90% of cancers that are solid tumors, which are notorious for evading immune therapies. Researchers at both UCSF and Stanford are creating cellular therapies that can overcome those obstacles. Over the next decade, they aim to use AI to analyze millions of immune cells from patients who have received cellular therapies to identify changes that make these therapies more effective — and then use that knowledge to produce immune cells that can destroy solid tumors anywhere in the body.

Precision therapies from cell engineering to nutrition

“UCSF and Stanford are leaders in developing cellular therapies that are already transforming the way we treat blood cancers,” said [Alan Ashworth](#), PhD, FRS, president of the [UCSF Helen Diller Family Cancer Center](#) and the E. Dixon Heise Distinguished Professor in Oncology at UCSF. “This collaboration will be a major step in helping our teams advance those therapeutics to safely treat tumors.”

The teams will also be studying how the new diabetes drugs impact cancer and which foods slow cancer’s progression or reduce the chance of getting it in the first place. Early data suggests that people who use the newly available GLP-1 medications like Ozempic and Mounjaro show reduced rates of cancer. Scientists suspect this benefit is due to more than just the effects of weight loss, but it’s still unknown how that occurs, why obesity raises the risk of developing cancer, or what cancer patients should eat to make their treatments more effective.

Project FEAST will connect researchers at both institutions who are advancing a new field of precision nutrition to answer those questions, studying how diet works at the molecular level to influence the development, progression and treatment of pancreatic cancer, one of the deadliest forms of cancer.

The use of big data and machine learning is expected to transform cancer research and care in the next decade. The combined strengths of UCSF’s and Stanford’s data infrastructure and analysis capabilities will provide a new level of understanding of the diagnoses, outcomes, demographics, and cancer burden of the communities we serve.

Project IMPACT will use data sets from the University of California’s Bakar Computational Health Sciences Institute and the UC Cancer Consortium — along with Stanford’s Human-Centered Artificial Intelligence Initiative — to find ways to personalize cancer treatment.

“By uniting the innovative research efforts of UCSF and Stanford Medicine, the Weill Cancer Hub West stands to accelerate cancer care and treatment,” said Steven Artandi, MD, PhD, the Laurie Kraus Lacob Director of the Stanford Cancer Institute. “By fostering a vibrant ecosystem of shared knowledge and resources and drawing from the lessons of past successes, we can propel toward a future where cancer is no longer a formidable foe.”

About UCSF: The University of California, San Francisco (UCSF) is exclusively focused on the health

sciences and is dedicated to promoting health worldwide through advanced biomedical research, graduate-level education in the life sciences and health professions, and excellence in patient care. It includes [UCSF Health](#), which comprises three top-ranked hospitals, as well as affiliations throughout the Bay Area. Visit [ucsf.edu](#), or see our [Fact Sheet](#).

About Stanford Medicine: [Stanford Medicine](#) is an integrated academic health system comprising the [Stanford School of Medicine](#) and adult and pediatric health care delivery systems. Together, they harness the full potential of biomedicine through collaborative research, education and clinical care for patients. For more information, please visit [med.stanford.edu](#).

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