

# THE JANET CANNING INITIATIVE FOR MERKEL CELL CARCINOMA RESEARCH AT UW MEDICINE

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**M**ERKEL CELL CARCINOMA (MCC) is an uncommon but often deadly skin cancer that can spread quickly and early in the disease process. Although 80 percent of MCCs contain a polyomavirus that is required for their growth, those that do not (virus-negative cases) appear to be different in several important ways.

At present, we know very little about virus-negative Merkel cell carcinoma, the sub-type of cancer that took Janet Canning's life. Researchers at UW Medicine suspect that this type of cancer may behave differently, be more resistant to radiation therapy, and require different management than standard Merkel cell carcinoma.

## *Working Toward a Cure*

Through the generosity of Janet's husband, Michael, and her extended family and friends, we have begun the Janet Canning Initiative for Merkel Cell Carcinoma Research to address these issues.

The central goal of our studies, which we will begin in late 2012, is to help identify patients with virus-negative cases of Merkel cell carcinoma when they are first diagnosed — and then to offer the best possible therapy.

## *Over a three-year period, and with sufficient funding, we aim to:*

- Assess the viral status of hundreds of our MCC patients' tumors using an antibody test;
- Determine whether viral status affects a patient's survival and/or their response to specific treatments such as radiation; and
- Sequence several dozen MCC tumors that are virus-positive and virus-negative to learn more about their genetic make-up.

## *These efforts will help us treat these cancers by:*

- Identifying virus-negative MCC when a patient is diagnosed;
- Determining optimal treatment for virus-negative MCC; and
- Gaining insight into how virus-negative MCC functions, and determining whether any FDA-approved drugs would work well against this sub-type of tumor.

Progress in this goal will serve as a lasting tribute to Janet's memory, and we would like you to join us in this important research.



Janet Canning  
1942–2012

### ***Tributes to Janet***

If you would like to support this initiative, please make out your check to “UW Foundation” and write “in memory of Janet Canning” in the memo line. Then mail your check to UW Medicine Advancement, Box 358045, Seattle, WA 98195-8045. Gifts also can be made online at [www.supportuwmedicine.org/janetc](http://www.supportuwmedicine.org/janetc).

All donations are tax deductible; 100 percent of your gift will be directed toward research. Thank you.

### ***Learn More***

For more information about our work, please contact James Policar, assistant director for philanthropy, at 206.221.7526 or [policar@uw.edu](mailto:policar@uw.edu).