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News of Note

Chowdhury receives Tina's Wish funding for ovarian cancer research


Dipanjan Chowdhury

Dana-Farber scientist **Dipanjan Chowdhury, PhD**, whose research aims to discover and validate early-detection biomarkers for ovarian cancer, has been chosen for funding in 2017 and 2018 by The Honorable Tina Brozman Foundation, also known as "Tina's Wish."

Chowdhury is one of eight investigators from major cancer centers who will share in the $1.6 million grant program announced in December by Tina's Wish, a charitable organization that focuses on early detection and prevention of ovarian cancer.

More than 70 percent of patients have advanced metastatic disease when they are diagnosed with ovarian cancer, creating an urgent need for strategies to detect the cancer when it may still be curable.

Chowdhury, a radiation oncology researcher, has identified a class of extremely small molecular regulators of gene expression called microRNAs, or miRNAs, that play an important role in how ovarian tumors respond to chemotherapy. The particular patterns of activity in these molecular regulators can form a "signature" – that is, an indicator of whether a tumor is benign, borderline cancerous, or cancerous. These miRNA signatures are present in the blood serum, and the investigators' goal is to develop a blood test that will make it possible to detect ovarian cancer when its cure rate is more than 90 percent, compared with 30 percent when detection is delayed.

"My lab and I aim to refine our microRNA signature for early detection of ovarian cancer and to validate this signature in an independent cohort of patient samples," Chowdhury explains. ITI