# Experts set strategic priorities for lymphoma research

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A committee of lymphoma experts today unveiled a strategic roadmap identifying key priority areas in both infrastructure and research that will be critical for advancing treatments for people with lymphoma. The report is meant to inform future research directions as well as funding decisions by strategic partners that could include government agencies and the private sector. The strategic recommendations were developed after a review of the state of the science in lymphoma conducted at a special ASH Meeting on Lymphoma Biology held in August 2014. This meeting, part of a two-meeting pilot, was held in response to the lymphoma community's need for a forum focused on basic and translational science relevant to lymphoma.

Nearly half of all blood cancer cases are lymphomas, or cancers of the lymphatic system, of which there are numerous unique disease subtypes. While the disease can take many forms, recent advances have better characterized how lymphoma cells proliferate and interact with other cells and tissues, leading to the development of powerful, targeted therapies with fewer side effects than traditional approaches. Despite this advancement, the authors of the lymphoma roadmap write in a Letter to the Editor of *Blood* that limitations in research infrastructure, funding, and collaborative approaches across research centers present potential challenges on the road to developing life-saving treatments for this disease. In order to overcome these bottlenecks, this strategic document outlines key priorities for research and infrastructure to improve the understanding of lymphoma biology across its diverse subtypes.

"The Roadmap for Discovery and Translation in Lymphoma draws focus to our most pressing needs, which, if unaddressed, will prevent transformative changes to how we study and treat these diseases," said David M. Weinstock, MD, co-chair of the ASH Meeting on Lymphoma Biology Steering Committee that led the development of the lymphoma research agenda. "Directing our collaborative efforts toward the most high-impact areas will enable us to more rapidly bring life-saving treatments to our patients."

The Roadmap for Discovery and Translation in Lymphoma specifically outlines the following priority areas in both infrastructure and research:

## Infrastructure

- Develop an adequate number of disease models for each lymphoma subtype
- Establish a central repository of biospecimens, cell lines, and in vivo models with open access
- Organize patient advocacy to support research

## Research

- Catalogue how lymphoma cells differ across disease subtypes
- Better define and identify mutations and other abnormalities associated with the disease
- Develop strategies to identify high-risk patients who may benefit most from clinical trials
- Enhance efforts to use immune therapies to cure lymphoma
- Better understand how lymphoma cells communicate with normal cells

"When so many leaders in this field can reach a consensus around key

priorities, it suggests that the limitations we face affect the entire research community, reinforcing the need to address them as quickly as possible," said Dr. Weinstock. "Moving forward, we invite clinicians, scientists, advocates, and patients to weigh in on this strategic roadmap so that it reflects the input of everyone in the community. We will share these priorities with funding agencies, advocacy groups, and others who can help us address the challenges we have identified, and thereby accelerate the development of new approaches to understand and eradicate lymphoma."

**More information:** Interested parties may weigh in on the Roadmap for Discovery and Translation in Lymphoma at www.hematology.org/lymphoma-roadmap. A second ASH Meeting on Lymphoma Biology is planned for Summer 2016.

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