

Wake Forest Baptist receives \$20 Million Donation for cancer research

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Fran Daniel / Winston-Salem Journal

An anonymous donor has given Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center \$20 million to study the effects of muscadine grape extract on prostate and breast cancers.

This is the largest gift ever received by the medical center.

Dr. John D. McConnell, chief executive officer of Wake Forest Baptist, said the gift is an example of how philanthropy makes a difference for an academic medical center, and not necessarily because of the amount involved.

"We are extremely grateful for this generous philanthropic support of our researchers, our medical center and our mission, to improve health," McConnell said. "This demonstrates the role of philanthropy plays for us. This gift is made by an individual who believes in our institution and has a passion for making a profound difference in the lives and health of others.

Patricia Gallagher and Ann Tallant, professors in the Hypertension and Vascular Research Center and the Department of Cancer Biology at Wake Forest Baptist, are the principal investigators of the study. The research will involve 26 faculty members from multiple disciplines, including hypertension and vascular research, hematology and oncology, cancer biology, urology, radiology, public health sciences, radiation biology and pathology.

The researchers will study a type of muscadine grape extract developed by Nature's Pearl Corp., based in Advance. The particular muscadine grape extract is a new formulation that is not commercially available.

The muscadine grape (*vitis rotundifolia* Michx.), which is native to the southeastern United States, has high levels of polyphenols, an antioxidant.

The gift is for five years and will fund three clinical trials. The phase I trial will determine toxicity of the extract in patients with solid tumors. Phase II consists of two trials – one in men with prostate cancer and one in women with triple negative breast cancer, to determine the effect of the extract on reducing metastatic growth and on quality of life issues.

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