A NCI-designated cancer center such as ours has two major goals: to make the basic biological discoveries that will reveal the causes of cancer, and to translate those findings into new, potent therapies. This issue of the Cancer Center Newsletter focuses on an area that exemplifies those dual efforts: epigenetics.

Epigenetics refers to the chemical “tags” on genes that dictate whether genes are turned on or not. A few years ago, AECC member Dr. John Greally developed a novel technology that can detect epigenetic abnormalities in the entire human genome. Since abnormal patterns of epigenetic tagging are associated with many types of cancer, the AECC brought together a group of talented scientists and gave them the resources to launch a research effort into the epigenetics of cancer. The studies investigate a broad spectrum of cancers, including leukemia, lymphoma and myelodysplastic syndrome.

The speed with which we initiated this research would not have been possible without the generosity of our many supporters. This research illustrates the critical role philanthropy plays in providing the “seed money” needed to launch new initiatives long before they are far enough along to compete for national funding. To our AECC supporters, we offer our sincere thanks.