



**Dr. Gary Hammer leads the UM endocrine oncology program and holds the Millie Schembechler Professorship in Adrenal Cancer, the only endowed professorship for the disease in the United States**

***“Our goal is to collaborate nationally and internationally to translate discoveries as quickly as possible into clinical trials that may improve and save lives. For rare diseases, and particularly extremely rare cancers, grateful patients and empowered families are increasingly changing the landscape of medical discovery.”***  
—Gary Hammer, MD, PhD

## **Michigan Researchers Take Another Step Forward in Tackling Rare and Unforgiving Disease**

In early 2015, researchers at the University of Michigan Comprehensive Cancer Center moved closer to uncovering the devastating secrets of adrenal diseases with receipt of a \$1.65 million gift from the **Hirair and Anna Hovnanian Foundation**. The gift will further the work of **Gary D. Hammer, MD, PhD**, and **Shruti Jolly, MD**, who, along with their colleagues, continue to search for clues in unlocking this one-in-a-million disease; a disease which steals the lives of newborns to centenarians alike—taking the heaviest toll on adults in their prime where symptoms appear so late that patients succumb to the disease within months of receiving an adrenal cancer diagnosis.

The University of Michigan (UM) has been at the forefront of the study and treatment of adrenal tumors for more than six decades, establishing the first international randomized trial for adrenal cancer and the world’s largest adrenal tumor bank. The UM Medical Center is one of the few to be recognized as an international “Destination Program,” a Center of Excellence for adrenal cancer patients worldwide.

Collaborations with leading international researchers continues to hasten the understanding of adrenal diseases. Brazil, for example, has one of the highest concentrations of adrenal cancer in the world with 15 percent more prevalence than anywhere else. In 2008, the UM adrenal group developed a concept of collaboration with the University of São Paulo Medical School—the South American hub of activity in regard to adrenal cancer work—to build cooperative project teams. This partnership is currently creating combined data registries and continuing pilot work on The Cancer Genome Project in a comprehensive, concentrated effort to unravel the molecular basis of cancer through the application of genome analysis technologies.

The Hovnanian Foundation gift will allow Hammer and his team to establish the Hirair and Anna Hovnanian Adrenal Cancer Repository and Genomic Database, conduct the world’s most comprehensive genomic and genetic analysis of adrenal cancer, and accelerate the expansion of the adrenal tumor bank. Building a secure database of genetic data and patient data will allow researchers across the globe to access the information; the first step in identifying biomarkers, genetic markers, and genetic syndromes for these tumors.

In October 2015, the University will host the 5th International Adrenal Cancer Symposium bringing together scientists, patients, and advocates to discuss the current state of adrenal cancer research and to promote expansion of worldwide collaborations and tumor registries that facilitate research to impact adrenal cancer patient care. The symposium will also feature the launch of a Pan-American Australian Asian Adrenal Disorder Network, which will partner with European and other colleagues to greatly increase the ability to develop more effective therapies world-wide.