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# Impact

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## First endowed chair for gynecologic cancer recognizes Ursula Matulonis, MD

A chair is the highest honor that Dana-Farber can bestow upon a physician or scientist. In 2017, Institute Trustee Jane Brock-Wilson endowed the Brock-Wilson Family Chair at Dana-Farber with a gift of \$2.5 million to provide a permanent fund to bolster gynecologic cancer research. The Brock-Wilson Chair is the first at Dana-Farber to support this category of women's cancers, and the first incumbent of the chair is Ursula Matulonis, MD, director of Gynecologic Oncology at Dana-Farber's Susan F. Smith Center for Women's Cancers. The Smith Center comprises four programs: breast cancer, gynecologic cancer, basic research, and genetics and prevention.

Brock-Wilson is a longtime supporter of the Smith Center, having first become involved through the Susan F. Smith Center for Women's Cancers Executive Council. She is also co-chair of the Susan F. Smith Center Presidential Visiting Committee. "The work being done by the team in the Susan F. Smith Center is nothing short of extraordinary," said Brock-Wilson. "Ursula and her colleagues are making important progress against gynecologic cancers. I was delighted to establish this chair to help enable the exceptional research and care offered at the Smith Center in the long term, while also supporting the career of an extremely talented and dedicated senior faculty member like Ursula Matulonis."

Under Matulonis' leadership, the Gynecologic Oncology disease center at Dana-Farber is at the forefront of research in this field, using laboratory findings to inform the next stages of clinical investigation. Recently, Matulonis was instrumental in developing the first PARP inhibitor approved by the FDA for women with recurrent ovarian cancer who have *BRCA* mutations. Matulonis led the North American arm of a phase 3 clinical trial testing a PARP inhibitor in patients with recurrent ovarian cancer with and without *BRCA* mutations. It was the first clinical trial to explore whether this class of drugs can extend progression-free survival after a patient has responded to initial treatment. This study led to the FDA approval of a PARP inhibitor for maintenance therapy, which had never before been an option. Matulonis and Joyce Liu, MD, developed the combination of the PARP inhibitor olaparib and the anti-angiogenic drug cediranib, which is in phase 3 testing for recurrent ovarian cancer patients.

Despite this and other recent successes, there remains a tremendous need to advance aspects of gynecologic cancer care including early detection, resistance, clinical trials, and immunotherapy. The Brock-Wilson Family Chair provides a perpetual source of funding to help undertake this critical research and improve the outcomes for women with gynecologic cancers.



Ursula Matulonis, MD, is the first incumbent of the new Brock-Wilson Family Chair, the first chair at Dana-Farber dedicated to gynecologic cancer.

"This is a critical time for those of us engaged in research and patient care for gynecologic cancers," said Matulonis. "As we've learned more about these cancers—their early formation, molecular machinery, and the body's defenses against them—we've also come to understand their potentially exploitable weaknesses. I am truly grateful and honored to be named as the Brock-Wilson Family Chair. Jane's remarkable and generous gift will fuel new research into combination therapies, immunotherapies, and early detection, ultimately offering greater hope to patients with gynecologic cancers." ■