

THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
REGENTS COMMUNICATION

Item for Information

Subject: Henry Russel Lecturer for 2019

I am pleased to inform you that the Henry Russel Awards Faculty Advisory Committee, chaired by Interim Dean Michael J. Solomon, met recently and selected Max Wicha, Madeline and Sidney Forbes Distinguished Professor of Oncology, as the Henry Russel Lecturer for 2019. The Russel Lecture will be delivered by Professor Wicha in the Winter Term of 2019.

The Henry Russel Lectureship is the highest honor that the University bestows upon a senior member of its faculty. A description of the contributions of this extraordinary faculty member is attached.

Respectfully submitted,



Mark S. Schlissel
President

June 2018

Attachment

Max S. Wicha

Professor Wicha earned his B.S. (1970) in biology from the State University of New York at Stony Brook, and his M.D. at the Stanford University School of Medicine. Before joining the University of Michigan in 1980 as an assistant professor in the Department of Internal Medicine, he was an intern and resident at the University of Chicago Hospitals and a postdoctoral research fellow at the National Cancer Institute. He was promoted to associate professor in 1983 and to professor in 1988. In 2016 he was named the first Madeline and Sidney Forbes Professor in Oncology.

Max S. Wicha, the Madeline and Sidney Forbes Distinguished Professor of Oncology, is a physician scientist recognized internationally as a leader in cancer stem cell research and immuno-oncology. He is among the most highly cited scientists in his field, with over 200 publications in leading journals. He was the founding director of the University of Michigan Rogel Cancer Center for over 25 years and oversaw its development into one of the top cancer research centers in the country. He directs a research group that has made an exceptional number of seminal contributions in understanding the pathways that regulate breast cancer stem cells and the role of cytokines, small proteins that are involved in cell signaling and affect the behavior of cells around them. His research helped identify cancer stem cells in human breast cancer, the first in any solid tumor, and developed the molecular markers and assays which are now widely used as tools to isolate and characterize cancer stem cells. He has demonstrated how the HER2 gene acts in the tumor microenvironment as a genetic regulator of cancer stem cells, and provided a molecular explanation of great clinical importance for understanding this signaling pathway. His recent research has also made key findings in understanding the fundamental role that cancer stem cells play in tumor metastasis. Professor Wicha's research has led directly to dozens of clinical trials of interventions designed to target cancer stem cells and other immuno-oncology mechanisms. He co-founded OncoMed Pharmaceuticals and is collaborating with other biotechnology companies to develop and test cancer stem cell inhibitors. He is the founding and current director of the Forbes Institute for Cancer Discovery, an interdisciplinary center established to stimulate innovative technology and new therapies by advancing cutting-edge science from the laboratory to the clinic. His research is supported by many grants from the National Institutes of Health, foundations, and industry, and he has served on numerous scientific advisory boards and study sections. Professor Wicha's honors are equally numerous. He has received the Stanford University J.E. Wallace Sterling Lifetime Achievement Award in Medicine and the American Association for Cancer Research Komen Award for the most significant contributions to breast cancer research, and is a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

Professor Wicha is an extraordinary mentor of young scientists who has served on 17 dissertation committees and supervised many postdoctoral fellows. He has chaired and served on numerous committees for the Medical School and for the University. His national service has been equally extensive, including his role as president of the Association of American Cancer Institutes, a member on the National Cancer Advisory Board, and the chair on many site visits for the National Cancer Institute.

As a leading scientist whose path-breaking discoveries have brought distinction to the University of Michigan and the Medical School, Professor Wicha is an exceptionally worthy selection as the 2019 Henry Russel Lecturer.