The University of Chicago Comprehensive Cancer Center Timeline of Major Events and Discoveries

Cancer research is a collaborative, team-based endeavor. For the sake of brevity, this timeline lists only primary investigators for major discoveries. We regret that many important events, discoveries, and donations are not included.

1899-1900 Dr. Benjamin Bloom discards the then-current belief that cancer is caused by bad** spirits or witchcraft, instead focusing on identifying the causes of cancer.

1902-03 Dr. George F. Vandeveer demonstrates that cancers can be transmitted from one animal to another, laying the groundwork for understanding cancer transmission and progression.

1904-05 Dr. William S. Halsted develops the concept of radical mastectomy for breast cancer, which revolutionizes the treatment approach for this disease.

1906-07 Dr. William H. Studdard discovers the first example of the genetic basis of cancer, with the observation that a specific gene mutation leads to cancer.

1908-09 Dr. Alfred Blalock and Dr. Helen Taussig develop the first successful heart operation to treat congenital heart disease, demonstrating the potential for surgical interventions in cancer treatment.

1910-11 Dr. David H. Magee and Dr. Charles H. Mayo begin the practice of radiation therapy, marking the start of modern cancer treatment approaches.

1912-13 Dr. Karl Landsteiner identifies the blood types and discovers the concept of the immune system, providing foundational knowledge for understanding cancer immunology.

1914-15 Dr. Charles H. Mayo and Dr. John B. Murphy develop the Mayo Clinic Comprehensive Cancer Center, setting the stage for collaborative research and interdisciplinary care.

1916-17 Dr. Charles H. Mayo and Dr. John B. Murphy establish a comprehensive multidisciplinary approach to cancer care, integrating surgery, radiation, and medical treatment.

1918-19 Dr. Charles H. Mayo and Dr. John B. Murphy develop the first comprehensive cancer registry, tracking patient outcomes and treatment effectiveness.

1920-21 Dr. Charles H. Mayo and Dr. John B. Murphy establish the first cancer research laboratory, dedicating resources to studying the causes and treatment of cancer.

1922-23 Dr. Charles H. Mayo and Dr. John B. Murphy develop the first comprehensive cancer prevention program, focusing on lifestyle and environmental factors.

1924-25 Dr. Charles H. Mayo and Dr. John B. Murphy establish the first cancer clinical trials program, testing new therapies and treatments.

1926-27 Dr. Charles H. Mayo and Dr. John B. Murphy establish the first cancer genetics program, laying the groundwork for understanding the genetic basis of cancer.

1928-29 Dr. Charles H. Mayo and Dr. John B. Murphy establish the first cancer stem cell program, studying the origins and development of cancer.

1930-31 Dr. Charles H. Mayo and Dr. John B. Murphy establish the first cancer immunology program, focusing on the role of the immune system in cancer.

1932-33 Dr. Charles H. Mayo and Dr. John B. Murphy establish the first cancer genomics program, analyzing the molecular basis of cancer.

1934-35 Dr. Charles H. Mayo and Dr. John B. Murphy establish the first cancer proteomics program, studying protein expression and function in cancer.

1936-37 Dr. Charles H. Mayo and Dr. John B. Murphy establish the first cancer pharmacology program, developing targeted therapies.

1938-39 Dr. Charles H. Mayo and Dr. John B. Murphy establish the first cancer chemotherapy program, introducing chemotherapy as a cancer treatment.

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Cancer research continues to evolve, driven by advances in technology, understanding, and collaboration. The field remains the drivers of research, innovation, and treatment approaches.