

MOVERS

Thomas Lynch, director, Yale Cancer Center, and physician-in-chief, Smilow Cancer Hospital, New Haven, Connecticut



1994–present: Assistant to full professor of medicine, Harvard Medical School, Boston, Massachusetts

2006–present: Chief, haematology and oncology, Massachusetts General Hospital Cancer Center, Boston, Massachusetts

Thomas Lynch has spent 23 years at the renowned Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH) Cancer Center pushing the boundaries of personalized treatments for lung cancer, the largest cause of cancer deaths. When he becomes director of the Yale Cancer Center in April, he plans to instil the culture that yielded such success at MGH.

Yale is where Lynch received his undergraduate degree in biology, and later his MD. His proclivity for finding life-saving treatments had come from watching his father, a haematologist, struggle to treat haematologic malignancy in patients. At Yale Cancer Center, he forged an interest in translational research, including using animal models to study the mechanisms of toxicity of the cancer drug bleomycin. "I wanted to do something important in medicine, and I don't think any event is more profound than receiving a diagnosis of a dreaded disease like cancer," says Lynch.

As an oncology fellow at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute in 1989, Lynch pursued drug treatments for lung cancer, as few treatments of value existed at the time. He helped pioneer personalized medicine, using molecular testing for genetic mutations to target lung-cancer therapies.

Happy at MGH, he had never answered enquiries from recruiters until the Yale position emerged last autumn. "Yale is one of the nation's great science cultures, yet its cancer centre is currently ranked 29th," says Lynch. But Yale administrators convinced him that the centre could foster a first-class clinical-research programme. Not only will the Smilow Cancer Hospital at Yale-New Haven Hospital open this October, but Lynch will also oversee a new institute for cancer biology at Yale's west campus.

Bruce Chabner, clinical director at MGH, is getting used to his colleagues leaving MGH to help build other centres. Lynch is the second to leave in the past year. "We've become a model for how new centres can effectively organize on a disease-specific basis across multiple departments," Chabner says. He predicts that Lynch will easily coordinate Yale's efforts.

To facilitate research in the face of an increasingly expensive regulatory environment, Lynch plans to streamline tumour-sample collection and novel tumour therapies. He says the hallmark of the Yale Cancer Center will be rapid genotyping of patients to guide therapies — the key, he says, to providing the best care possible.

"This is about recognizing the value of keeping patients at the centre of research," says Lynch. ■

Virginia Gewin

NETWORKS & SUPPORT

A mixed bag for UK universities

Administrators at the University of Cambridge are not pleased. They contend that the money they received from the UK Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), whose funding results for England were announced on 5 March, is not enough to pay for expansion of science faculty or research staff. "Is the UK going to abandon its world-class institutes?" asks Ian Leslie, the university's pro-vice chancellor for research.

The university will receive about £113.6 million (US\$159 million) in research funds next year, up 1.8% on the previous year, on the basis of its performance in the recent RAE (see *Nature* **457**, 624–625; 2009).

Leslie wonders whether the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), which conducts the RAE, has opted to support other universities at the expense of eminent research-intensive institutions.

"These funding levels are unlikely to cause new hirings," Leslie says. "The government has made noises about maintaining the budget for higher education, but we are concerned about a move to disperse funding more widely." Under HEFCE's allocation schedule, 113 institutes will receive a share of £1.572 billion in research funding, up 7.8% from the £1.458 billion in the current year.

The University of Oxford will receive about £118.9 million, the most of any recipient and an increase of more than 7%, yet Oxford also says this isn't enough. "The increase in this funding does not keep pace with the increase in our activity or our costs," says vice-chancellor John Hood.

Nor is University College London (UCL) pleased with its £104.5 million, up 0.3%. The university has actually lost money on a per-researcher basis, says president Malcolm Grant. "So even though you increase the quality of your research, you're punished," he says. UCL will still "invest in excellence when we can", Grant says.

Not everyone is disappointed. The University of Exeter — which will get some £18 million, up 24% from last year — will fill 29 science teaching and research posts, says Roger Kain, deputy vice-chancellor of research. "We're very satisfied," he adds.

At Queen Mary, University of London, (up 29% to £32 million), and at Durham University (up 5% to £25 million), new science hires are likely. And at the University of Leicester, which will receive about £22.1 million, up 17%, Ian Postlethwaite, pro-vice-chancellor for research, says he expects to fill 20 lectureships. "This represents a real triumph," he says. ■

Karen Kaplan

POSTDOC JOURNAL

How low can I go?

It's tiring to be in limbo as a postdoc, awaiting the right opportunity. Meanwhile, another cruel sort of limbo goes on: I feel like my lab bench is gradually lowering even as the bar for successful applicants rises higher and higher. Soon you may find me underneath it, sneaking a beer.

My latest job application did not lead to an interview. As a scientist, I hesitate to believe in fate, but my inner cheer squad shouts: "Everything's for a reason and the right job for you is just down the road!" My inner cynic then muses as to whether I took a wrong turn on that road, making the 'right job' hard to find.

So I've gained nothing — but neither have I lost anything. I'm planning to submit papers in the coming months, and to help with grant applications to ensure our lab's financial future. I'm also pursuing an independent research programme that I hope will lay the groundwork for my own science empire.

Still, contingency plans are at the fore of my frontal lobe as I note how often things fail to go as planned at the bench (PCR — ugh!). In fact, technical snags and the immediacy of grant deadlines seem to correlate tightly ($p < 0.001$). With our grant madness finally past, I will find time to network with some industry contacts. I'm curious about life-sciences consultancy opportunities. Perhaps that's where I'll be able to deftly dance my way to success. ■

Julia Boughner is a postdoc in evolutionary developmental biology at the University of Calgary, Canada.