



**MEDIA CONTACT: Patricia A. Ellis, 313-576-8629 or cell, 313-410-3417**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
September 22, 2011**

## **Karmanos Cancer Institute to Create Better Therapies for Triple Negative Breast Cancer thanks to \$3.5 million Komen Promise Grant**

DETROIT – Researchers at the Barbara Ann Karmanos Cancer Institute will focus on creating better therapies to treat triple negative breast cancer thanks to a \$3.5 million grant from Susan G. Komen for the Cure®.

Triple negative breast cancer, an aggressive form of the disease, is often resistant to standard breast cancer treatments and has a particularly high incidence rate among African-Americans. About 26 percent of African-American women with breast cancer are triple-negative, compared with 15 percent of Caucasian women.

“Women affected by this disease often do not receive benefit from currently approved therapies,” said Patricia LoRusso, D.O., director of the Karmanos Phase 1 Clinical Trials program and professor of Hematology and Oncology at Wayne State University (WSU) School of Medicine. “We are convinced that learning more about the role of cancer stem cells will allow us to define better treatments for patients who have this type of aggressive breast cancer.” Cancer stem cells are thought to fuel a tumor’s growth and spread.

She added that she and her team will “develop clinical trial designs using combinations of investigational drugs to design better therapies by uncovering the genetic profile of tumors and stem cells involved in the disease.”

According to Dr. LoRusso, this research is part of a collaboration with three institutions each leading an important aspect of the investigation. The clinical trials will be led by Karmanos Cancer Institute; the genetic profiling by Van Andel Research Institute/Translational Genomics Research Institute (TGen); and the cancer stem cell analysis by the University of Michigan Comprehensive Cancer Center.

Jeffrey Trent, Ph.D., president and research director at Van Andel and TGen; and Max S. Wicha, M.D., distinguished professor of Oncology and director of the U-M Comprehensive Cancer Center; will serve along with Dr. LoRusso as principal investigators of the grant.

Funding this investigation is a \$3.5 million Promise Grant from Komen. Promise Grants are multi-million dollar, multi-year, collaborative grants aimed at answering difficult questions in breast cancer and translating their findings into outcomes that will impact patient care.

“This Komen grant will give us an outstanding opportunity to challenge the existing paradigm and move the science of cancer stem cells from the lab into the clinic to better understand their role,” said Dr. LoRusso.

### **About the Barbara Ann Karmanos Cancer Institute**

*Located in mid-town Detroit, Michigan, the Barbara Ann Karmanos Cancer Institute is one of 40 National Cancer Institute-designated comprehensive cancer centers in the United States. Caring for nearly 6,000 new patients annually on a budget of \$216 million, conducting more than 700 cancer-specific scientific investigation programs and clinical trials, Karmanos is among the nation’s best cancer centers. Through the commitment of 1,000 staff, including nearly 300 physicians and researchers on faculty at the Wayne State University School of Medicine, and supported by thousands of volunteer and financial donors, Karmanos strives to prevent, detect and eradicate all forms of cancer. Its long-term partnership with the WSU School of Medicine enhances the collaboration of critical research and academics related to cancer care. Gerold Bepler, M.D., Ph.D., is the Institute’s president and chief executive officer. Karmanos is southeastern Michigan’s most preferred hospital for cancer care according to annual surveys conducted by the National Research Corporation. For more information call 1-800-KARMANOS or go to [www.karmanos.org](http://www.karmanos.org).*