

Grant to Support Software for Tailored Cancer Treatments

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A \$1.3 million grant from the National Cancer Institute will allow a University of Utah lab and a Salt Lake City startup company to create software to help doctors tailor cancer treatments to individual patients in the future.

“Where we’ve been for the last 20 years is we’ve had drugs that were broadly used for groups of patients,” said Dan Kadrmas, Ph.D., professor of radiology. “Now we’re trying to do personalized medicine.”

His lab has developed technologies to use PET (positron emission tomography) imaging to look at multiple aspects of tumor function simultaneously such as blood flow and growth rate. The goal is to use that technology to predict which drug therapies will work best in individual patients.

The technology is specifically designed for targeted cancer therapies, which work well in a small percentage of patients. The new imaging software will be used to guide targeted therapies and improve results for patients with a variety of cancers including breast, lung, pancreatic and brain tumors.

The four-year grant will allow Kadrmas and the company he founded, MultiFunctional

Imaging, to create software that can be used in clinical trials to generate data showing which treatment is more effective. This is a renewal of a previous grant from NCI.

It may take about four years to get the software to those trials. After several years of research, the software should then be available on a widespread basis.

As a technology startup company, MultiFunctional Imaging works to commercialize technologies developed and patented at the University of Utah.

“That’s what’s exciting for me,” Kadrmas said. “We do a lot of research that never reaches the patient. Now through this partnership we have a nice mechanism to deliver the technology to the patient.”

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