
Focused Ultrasound Foundation Establishes Pioneering Research Initiative in London



The Focused Ultrasound Foundation and Royal Philips have entered into an innovative public-private collaboration with The Institute of Cancer Research, London, and The Royal Marsden NHS Foundation Trust. The partnership will create a focal point for ultrasound therapy research at The Institute of Cancer Research (ICR) and The Royal Marsden in London under the international Focused Ultrasound Foundation Centers of Excellence Program.

The new initiative will create a state-of-the-art resource for clinicians and scientists working on high intensity focused ultrasound therapy, developing clinical evidence in oncology and establishing best practices, treatment standards and protocols. Focused ultrasound concentrates ultrasound energy with high precision on target tissue in the body to thermally destroy tissue. The technology is coupled with image guidance to identify, target and track the treatment in real time. The initiative will launch this autumn with a clinical trial to evaluate treatment of bone metastases in cancer patients. A similar center was established at the University of Virginia in 2009 to advance the use of focused ultrasound, with an emphasis on brain disorders.

"High intensity focused ultrasound therapy has tremendous potential in oncology and many other key clinical areas," noted Gail ter Haar, DSc., coordinator of the initiative. "To achieve this, we need to collaborate in new ways, establish standards for consistent delivery of treatment and train those who will deliver that care. All of that will be happening here, thanks to the Focused Ultrasound Foundation. We are excited and honored to be a part of the network whose aim is to improve treatment outcomes for patients around the world."

The Focused Ultrasound Foundation is the catalyst for the collaboration and its leadership will actively engage with the ICR, The Royal Marsden and Philips to help guide progress towards standard-setting translational and clinical research, training and treatment. In establishing the Focused Ultrasound Centers of Excellence Program, the Foundation brings together the best people and resources at luminary research sites throughout the world in the dynamic multi-disciplinary environment necessary to foster those activities critical to accelerating progress towards better patient outcomes.

"The new initiative established at the ICR and The Royal Marsden under the Focused Ultrasound Foundation Centers of Excellence Program is an important step forward for the technology," noted Neal F. Kassell, M.D., founder and chairman of the Focused Ultrasound Foundation. "Our Centers of Excellence not only demonstrate exceptional technical and clinical expertise in the field of focused ultrasound, but also contribute to a synergistic network, leveraging expertise and sharing best practices."

"Our contribution to the center will help to bring focused ultrasound technology to a higher level of maturity and shape the standard of care for patients around the world," said Falko Busse, General Manager MR-Therapy at Philips Healthcare. "The ICR and The Royal Marsden are a perfect choice, being established global leaders in cancer research with an impressive track record of bringing new technologies and approaches to cancer care along with rigorous evidence-based standards. Prof. Ter Haar and her group are pioneers in focused ultrasound therapy and are particularly strong in the standardization necessary for widespread adoption."

The center will be led by Prof. Gail ter Haar and Prof. Nandita deSouza. Prof. Ter Haar heads the ICR's Therapy Ultrasound Team. She is a leading physicist in the field, having researched the basic science behind the technique, participating in early clinical trials and advancing device development. Prof. deSouza is the new initiative's clinical director. She is the lead academic radiologist at the ICR and The Royal Marsden, with an international reputation in MRI, and has run pilot clinical trials of MR-guided thermal therapies.

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