

Liu briefs Congress on importance of federal funding

In 2014, Dana-Farber investigators reported results from a phase 2 clinical trial that found a novel two-drug combination nearly doubled progression-free survival for many women with recurrent ovarian cancer. The study, which tested the PARP inhibitor olaparib in combination with the angiogenesis inhibitor cediranib, was hailed as a significant breakthrough in a disease that has been resistant to new therapies. The clinical trial report was ranked as the year's most influential by the Columbia Hospital for Women Research Foundation.

But this promising advance for

ovarian cancer patients would not have been possible without federal funding from the National Cancer Institute (NCI), according to Joyce Liu, MD, MPH, a medical oncologist in the Susan F. Smith Center for Women's Cancers at Dana-Farber. Liu, who led the study, briefed members of Congress and staff on Capitol Hill earlier this month.

"The success of this trial shows what we can do when we have the funding and resources available," Liu told attendees at the briefing, which was organized by the American Society of Clinical Oncology

to highlight the need for greater federal investment in clinical cancer research.

Federal dollars that support promising cancer research like Liu's clinical trial have declined by 25 percent since 2003. In inflation-adjusted dollars, National Institutes of Health (NIH) funding levels sit \$5 billion below the amounts appropriated by Congress 13 years ago. These cuts have had a crippling effect on biomedical research, with only one in six NIH research proposals receiving federal funding compared to one in three projects earning federal support 15 years ago.

The success of Liu's trial has led to two large-scale phase 3 clinical trials to further evaluate this promising treatment regimen. Both trials will be supported by the NCI.

But Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro of Connecticut, an ovarian cancer survivor, reminded briefing attendees that for every meritorious research idea like Liu's, many others will never even be tested in the lab. "Thousands of promising ideas will never see the light of day, and we miss opportunities for cures for cancers and other life-altering diseases due to a lack of funding," said DeLauro. [\[N\]](#)