Susan G. Komen
Research Grants – Fiscal Year 2014

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Multidisciplinary training in the biology of breast cancer disparities

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Lead Organization: Wayne State University
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Public Abstract:
There are multiple disciplines in science and medicine that each use their own methods to try to understand the reasons for differences in diagnosis and survival between women with breast cancer. These differences are often described by race and ethnicity. For example, African American women are at lower risk of breast cancer, but are more likely to die from the disease once diagnosed, compared to white women. Disparities in breast cancer survival have been well-documented by epidemiologists—researchers who try to identify and understand risk factors for disease in people, but the biological basis for these differences in breast cancer are not understood. Basic scientists, who usually work with cell lines and animal models, have a different approach to understand disparities. At Wayne State University, we propose to recruit PhD students who are interested in cross-training in both basic science and epidemiology. By providing a solid foundation consisting of cellular and molecular biology, epidemiology, and laboratory research, our trainees will be uniquely prepared to build careers focused on ending breast cancer disparities. Another unique part of this program is our inclusion of a Komen advocate, who will serve on student research committees to help the trainees recognize the impact of their work in women. Located in the Midtown area of Detroit, Michigan, Wayne State University and the Karmanos Cancer Institute are well-situated to prepare the next generation of scientists who share the goal of eliminating breast cancer disparities. We have been highly successful recruiting students from various backgrounds, including underserved minority populations, and providing support to ensure they graduate from our program with the skills necessary to become highly sought after scientists.