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## ACHIEVEMENT IN CLINICAL RESEARCH AWARD

### **Laurence H. Baker, D.O.**

*Professor of Internal Medicine, Division of Hematology/Oncology*

*Professor of Pharmacology*

*Chair, Southwest Oncology Group*



In 1994, the University of Michigan recruited Laurence H. Baker to lead cancer clinical research. In the intervening 12 years, Dr. Baker has improved the cancer clinical trials environment at the University of Michigan, and the practice of oncology nationally and internationally.

Dr. Baker has been instrumental in creating a cancer clinical trials research infrastructure, expanding the faculty roster, recruiting new faculty and improving cancer clinical trials research to the point that the national medical community recognizes the U-M cancer clinical research group as one of the premier research

groups in the country.

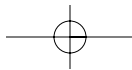
Dr. Baker's leadership of two major organizations also has had a tremendous impact.

In 2005, under Dr. Baker's direction, the Southwest Oncology Group – the largest cancer clinical trials consortium in the world – moved its organizational headquarters to the University of Michigan. SWOG's network of more than 5,000 physicians who work at 550 U.S. medical institutions includes 17 of the National Cancer Institute's 61 designated cancer centers. With National Cancer Institute support since 1958, SWOG's importance in advancing state-of-the-art cancer care cannot be overestimated. More than 150,000 patients have participated in SWOG clinical trials, and the results of the trials have influenced Food and Drug Administration approval of 10 new cancer therapies in the past decade.

Dr. Baker spearheaded the development of the Sarcoma Alliance for Research through Collaboration, a cooperative of clinical investigators with interest and expertise in sarcoma research at multiple sites around the world. Under his leadership, SARC has grown to 17 participating institutions, including the Mayo Clinic, MD Anderson, Dana Farber and Memorial Sloan-Kettering, as well as the University of Michigan. One colleague states, "It is through Dr. Baker's dynamic leadership that SARC has been able to position itself to bring together key physician-scientists at major centers involved in the treatment of sarcomas – and provide treatment options and clinical trials for patients with sarcoma."

Recognizing the benefit of international collaboration to advance the study of sarcomas and related cancers, Dr. Baker was a founding member of the Connective Tissue Oncology Society, an international organization of clinicians and scientists with an interest in this disease. By design, this international society includes: pediatric and medical oncologists; orthopaedic and surgical oncologists; radiation oncologists; sarcoma pathologists; and musculoskeletal radiologists.





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In addition, Baker is one of the founding members of the National Comprehensive Cancer Network, a national organization of 20 leading cancer centers whose mission is to improve the quality and effectiveness of cancer care in the United States. NCCN now defines the standard of care for the cancer community.

As another colleague says, "It is clear that Dr. Baker has developed a very effective model for fostering collaboration between leading medical centers involved in the treatment of various types of cancers that will be emulated by individuals and groups interested in clinical trials for other types of cancer."

Baker has dedicated his life to developing new treatments for cancer, and he has done this on the individual patient level as well. The principal investigator of several cutting-edge clinical trials in sarcoma, he is widely credited with being one of the first investigators to use specific targeted agents for sarcoma based on molecular alterations. Baker also led an effort to dose chemotherapy based on a "breathalyzer" test to determine P450 drug metabolism – one of the first examples of pharmacogenomics actually applied to cancer care.

*Dr. Baker says, "Playing with my grandchildren, Emily and Jacob, is the best 'role' I have ever had. I'm an avid fan of Detroit sports teams, especially the Lions, and like to read mysteries.*

*"I have enjoyed a great deal of support during my career, beginning with my mentors, Jack Stanzler and Vanitus Vaitkevicius. I am appreciative of Rob Todd and Marc Lippman for this nomination and continued support; Allen Lichter for facilitating the move of the Southwest Oncology Group to Ann Arbor; and Max Wicha for helping recruit me to the University of Michigan. My family and especially Maxine, Mindy and Jennifer have always made my career easy. I especially appreciate my colleagues, my patients and their families for their inspiration and motivation. Modern, thoughtful clinical trials research will make a difference."*

