

# SCOTTSDALE REPUBLIC

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## OUR VIEW

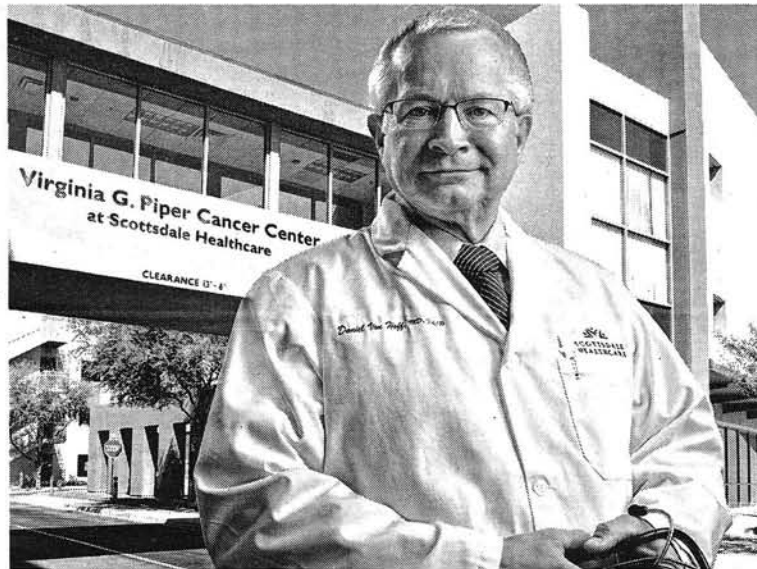
# Von Hoff's team does Scottsdale proud

When patients come to see Dr. Daniel Von Hoff, they've exhausted all the standard cancer treatments. They generally have 12 weeks to live. There isn't time for the trial and error of traditional cancer care.

That's what led Von Hoff and his Scottsdale-based team to what he calls the "target now" approach, which in turn is lifting a collaboration among Scottsdale Healthcare, Mayo Clinic and TGen to national prominence.

Stand Up 2 Cancer named Von Hoff (who holds positions with all three partners) and his group the nation's dream team for pancreatic cancer. They're partnering with some of the best-known names in health-care research. The latest, announced Tuesday at a council-mayor breakfast program, is with Cedars-Sinai's Samuel Oschin Comprehensive Cancer Institute.

"Our program is very young, but in five years we are now one of the top early drug trial programs," said Mark Slater,



Dr. Daniel Von Hoff and team have taken a "target now" approach to cancer treatment that is winning national acclaim. SCOTTSDALE HEALTHCARE

Scottsdale Healthcare's vice president of research. "We're to the point that Cedars-Sinai, the Salk Institute and Johns Hopkins want to work with us."

There's heady stuff going on along Shea Boulevard. This is good for patients, good for medi-

cine and good for the local economy.

Von Hoff's "target now" approach begins with the premise that each patient and cancer is different. Using molecular and genetic profiling, Von Hoff searches along the "hedgehog

signal pathway" to find a cancer's source. With late-stage pancreatic cancer, this technique sparked a novel idea: combine gemcitabine, a traditional drug for the disease, with breast cancer drug Abraxane.

The results surprised Von Hoff and his team. "It shrunk the tumor so drastically we didn't believe it ourselves," he said. Side effects were mild.

Pancreatic cancer is deadly, with only 18 percent of those in Stage IV surviving a year. Von Hoff's drug combination improved that to nearly 50 percent, and 25 percent survived two years.

Results are being published in the November issue of the Journal of Clinical Oncology. The trial is expanding to other cancer centers.

Speaking at the breakfast program, Hoff showed how the same technique helped people with basal-cell cancers. Before and after photos showed drastic reduction of tumors that had obliterated faces and covered chests or backs.

The approach helps get treat-

ment to patients more quickly. Development of a drug normally takes 15 years from first steps to FDA approval. Von Hoff's basal-cell treatment won FDA approval in four years, Slater said.

"The key is rather than throwing a drug at a broad spectrum, we can more finely target it. It's much more likely to be effective with fewer side effects."

This is good for patients. It's also good for Scottsdale. In four years, Piper center clinical trials brought people from 47 states and three countries. They bring their families. With 39 drugs undergoing clinical trials, cancer research is creating an additional niche for tourism.

Researchers also come, attracted by the unique collaboration that has Scottsdale Healthcare and the Mayo Clinic working together instead of competing. "They see us as an institution without walls," Slater said.

It's a story of success that isn't told often enough. Scottsdale has much to be proud of in the strides its health researchers are making.