Ricardo C.T. Aguiar, M.D., Ph.D., is leading a project on diffuse large B cell lymphoma, which recently received support from the Cancer Prevention & Research Institute of Texas.

UT Health San Antonio received millions of dollars for cancer research in 2016 from the Cancer Prevention & Research Institute of Texas (CPRIT).
In November, the institute announced $5.8 million for research and training programs at the Cancer Therapy & Research Center, one of the state’s four National Cancer Institute-designated cancer centers.

The largest grant, $3.9 million, will fund five additional years of cancer research training for six postdoctoral fellows and six graduate students per year. In addition, the funding supports a summer program that brings a dozen undergraduate students from across the country annually to learn about cancer research.

“The cancer research training program at the health science center is a continuum from the undergraduate to the postdoctoral levels,” said the program’s director, Babatunde “Kay” Oyajobi, M.D., Ph.D., M.B.A., associate professor of cell systems and anatomy. “We are fortunate to have this support because it allows us to support more of our really promising trainees than is ordinarily possible. In this way, outstanding young scientists advance in their careers in cancer research, and more cutting-edge research is done in Texas on cancer.”

A second and third grant, each $900,000 over three years, will fund studies of mammary gland development with the goal of preventing breast cancer that is associated with the BRCA1 gene mutation, led by Yanfen Hu, Ph.D., associate professor of molecular medicine, and studies of a type of cancer called diffuse large B cell lymphoma, with Ricardo C.T. Aguiar, M.D., Ph.D., professor of medicine, leading that project.

This latest funding announcement follows the largest grant ever made by the organization to the university, $10.9 million, received in May. That funding included $5 million to develop animal models that can be used...
to test new therapies in children whose cancer has relapsed or who are from minority groups that typically have not responded well to current treatments. It was awarded to Peter Houghton, Ph.D., professor of molecular biology and director of the Greehey Children’s Cancer Research Institute.

Another $3.6 million was awarded to Yidong Chen, Ph.D., professor of epidemiology and biostatistics, to update and expand existing infrastructure to establish a Cancer Genome Sequencing and Computational Core. CPRIT also awarded $2 million for the recruitment of Myron Ignatius, Ph.D., from Massachusetts General Hospital/Harvard Medical School. Finally, $200,000 was awarded to Yuzuru Shiio, M.D., Ph.D., associate professor of biochemistry, to develop a strategy to target EWS-FL1-L1, a fusion oncoprotein that causes Ewing sarcoma, a bone and soft tissue cancer in children.

And in August, CPRIT awarded nearly $4.6 million to the Center for Innovative Drug Discovery, a joint program of UT Health San Antonio and The University of Texas at San Antonio, to design more-effective cancer drugs through small-molecule drug discovery.

The state agency also awarded $1.3 million for a prevention grant to UT Health San Antonio’s Daisy Morales-Campos, Ph.D., to promote HPV vaccination among Hispanic adolescents. Dr. Morales-Campos works at the Institute for Health Promotion Research.