The University of Minnesota College of Veterinary Medicine, in conjunction with the University's Masonic Cancer Center, has established a new Animal Cancer Care and Research (ACCR) program.

This collaboration is unique in the United States because it incorporates the ACCR program into the Masonic Cancer Center, one of only 41 National Cancer Institute-designated Comprehensive Cancer Centers in the United States.

"We believe it will become the premier model for animal cancer care and research," says Dr. Trevor Ames, dean of the College of Veterinary Medicine.

Within five years Ames says he expects the University of Minnesota to be recognized as the best institution in the country for conducting research in comparative oncology and providing care for companion animals with cancer.

"ACCR scientists have already made significant discoveries," says Ames. "One particularly noteworthy finding is that many cancers in the dog are caused by the same genetic abnormalities found in humans."

The mission of the ACCR program is ambitious: To advance knowledge in cancer biology that can be translated and implemented into treatment that will reduce the incidence of cancer and improve the outcome for animal and human cancer patients.

“The ACCR program is a key part of our Comparative Medicine Signature Program at the University,” says Dr. Robert Washabau, who chairs the Department of Veterinary Clinical Sciences. “Cancer claims the lives of animals as well as humans, and research into the causes and treatments of cancer is often applicable across species.”

The ACCR program draws its expertise primarily from scientists in the College of Veterinary Medicine and the Masonic Cancer Center, but ACCR scientists also work closely with the Medical School, School of Pharmacy, and School of Public Health.

“Great synergies can be achieved when veterinarians, physicians, and scientists with complementary expertise join forces to tackle the types of cancer shared by dogs and humans,” says Dr. Jaime Modiano, director of the ACCR program. “ACCR researchers are currently working to define breed- and disease-specific ‘Achilles’ heels’ in dogs. These findings could then be translated into more effective and less toxic cancer treatments. The implications could reach far beyond dogs and veterinary medicine.”

Modiano’s laboratory is one of three research labs involved in the program. Modiano holds the Alvin S. and June Perlman Endowed Chair in Animal Oncology and is a member of the Masonic

Cancer Center's Genetic Mechanisms of Cancer and Immunology research programs.

ACCR scientists work on research in genetics, cancer prevention, stem cells, metastasis, and cell signaling. Many of these basic research findings are readily translated into cancer care including diagnostics, treatments, and quality of life.

"We can learn more about cancer by working together," says Douglas Yee, M.D., director, Masonic Cancer Center. "This program will advance our understanding of cancer in both animals and people."

For more information on the Animal Cancer Care and Research program or to download a PDF of the ACCR newsletter, Synergy, go to www.cvm.umn.edu/accr .