

SA 1000 Cancer Genome Project banking tumors of patients

By Wendy Rigby / KENS 5

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SAN ANTONIO -- A San Antonio cancer doctor is launching an ambitious new project. It's a unique tumor bank that will help unravel the genetic puzzle of a killer disease.

Lori Vanta of San Antonio has been fighting colorectal cancer since 2008. At age 41, she's already undergone treatment with surgery, radiation and chemotherapy.

"I have a lot of living to do," Vanta said. "I have two beautiful children and I'm not ready to give up. I'll never stop fighting and I'll never stop hoping and helping."

Vanta is helping by donating her tumor and blood to the San Antonio 1000 Cancer Genome Project which is gathering samples of the ten most common cancers in San Antonio.

It's the brainchild of Dr. Anthony Tolcher. He has enlisted the help of more than a hundred other San Antonio doctors as well as Rackspace to gather, process and upload data about thousands of tumors.

"It is a community effort to try to understand, fully understand, the genetic abnormalities that lead to cancer and what happens to those patients with those genetic abnormalities," Tolcher, an oncologist, explained.

That information yields a diagram showing the mutations of chromosomes in individual patients. Analysis will help doctors target therapies and come up with better treatments. Scientists from all over the world will have access to the information.

In three years, the group hopes to have a thousand tumors mapped this way.

"Once you explain what it's going to do and what's involved, I think people really want to participate because most patients want to see the scientific field move forward," Tolcher commented.

"It's all working toward helping us specifically, for my tumors and for my cancer to specifically help me," Vanta stated. "And it's amazing. It's mind-boggling."

It will take several million dollars to map the whole genome sequences of these tumors. Tolcher is raising money through a non-profit group. In just six weeks, the San Antonio 1000 Cancer Genome Project has already raised almost \$250,000.

<http://www.kens5.com/news/SA-1000-Cancer-Genome-Project-banking-tumors-of-local-patients-140343703.html>