

Training the Cancer Researchers of Tomorrow

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At the front of a ballroom full of researchers and medical professionals, 12-year-old Jaylen Galmore stood at the lectern to deliver his cancer research presentation.

“Two years ago, I had dreams of being a professional athlete,” Jaylen told the audience. “Now, I want to be a neurosurgeon because I want to learn more about the brain and spinal cord.”



Kevin Cullen, MD, director of the Marlene and Stewart Greenebaum Comprehensive Cancer Center (left), presents Jaylen Galmore with a research award.

Jaylen’s presentation on Sept. 18 was part of the second annual Cancer Research Day, a cancer network retreat put on by the [University of Maryland Marlene and Stewart Greenebaum Comprehensive Cancer Center](#) (UMGCCC). The daylong event allowed researchers of all age levels to network and exchange information through posters and oral presentations, highlighting the mission of UMGCCC: to train tomorrow’s cancer researchers.

Jaylen, who is part of the [University of Maryland, Baltimore](#) (UMB) [CURE Scholars Program](#), was not alone in presenting his research. He was joined by 16 of his fellow CURE Scholars who each exhibited their own cancer research posters.

(View a [photo gallery](#).)

“We think it’s very important for the students to develop a research project,” said **Kevin Cullen, MD**, director of the UMGCCC. “They should be able to present it in a setting where experts can listen to what they have to say, ask them questions, and give feedback.”

UMB’s CURE Scholars Program is an education enrichment program designed to create a pipeline for students - starting in middle school - toward a career in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) in order to reduce racial disparities in health care and research fields. The program provides hands-on learning experiences through professional mentorship and is supported by the National Cancer Institute’s (NCI) [Continuing Umbrella of Research Experiences](#) (CURE).

“We’re very grateful for this kind of exposure and support from the UMGCCC and the NCI,” said **Robin Saunders, EdD, MS**, the executive director of UMB’s CURE Scholars Program. “Cancer Research Day is just another great opportunity that gives the students a chance to shine. They’re gaining public speaking skills, confidence, and feedback from actual cancer researchers.”

This is the second year that the CURE scholars have participated in Cancer Research Day, joining the ranks of several other selective educational programs including the [Nathan Schnaper Internship Program](#) (NSIP), the [Science Training for Advancing Biomedical Research Postbaccalaureate Program](#) (STAR-PREP), and the [T32 Postdoctoral Fellowship Program](#). The convening of these programs brought forth a unique display of cancer research across generations through a series of scientific presentations from speakers ranging in education level from middle school to postdoctoral.

Jaylen was the first to take the stage with a presentation on prostate cancer in African-American men, and **Michele Vitolo, PhD**, assistant professor at the [University of Maryland School of Medicine](#), wrapped up the event with her presentation on transitioning from student to independent researcher.

“This was a nice way to see the progression of people from very early in their training to a junior faculty member who has now established herself as an independent investigator,” Cullen said.

Seeing this progression gave the CURE Scholars a glimpse into what they could accomplish as young researchers and scientists.

“Who knows?” Jaylen concluded. “I could find a cure for brain cancer someday.”