

M.D. Anderson receives \$150 million gift

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The [University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center](#) is receiving \$150 million from the president of the United Arab Emirates, the largest donation ever given to an institution in the Texas Medical Center.

The gift, announced Tuesday by the [Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan Foundation](#), will fund [M.D. Anderson's](#) Institute for Personalized Cancer Therapy — both research and a building. Outgoing hospital President Dr. [John Mendelsohn](#) will co-lead the institute once he leaves office this summer.

"The generosity of this family will help our efforts to realize the long-standing dream of treating a patient's tumor based on its specific genetic abnormality rather than the experience of other patients," said Mendelsohn. "It's our hope that five years from now, thanks to research sponsored by this gift, we will be able to offer such personalized therapy as standard treatment for our patients."

No one in the Al Nahyan family was available for comment about the gift.

Mendelsohn said the gift was a response to M.D. Anderson's treatment of many patients from the United Arab Emirates over the years. The donation honors Sheikh Zayed bin

Sultan Al Nahyan, president of the United Arab Emirates for more than 30 years, who died in 2004. He was succeeded by his eldest son, Sheikh [Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan](#).

M.D. Anderson will name the personalized cancer therapy institute building after the late president and the institute itself after the current president. It will name a pancreatic cancer research center to be created with the gift after another son, Sheikh Ahmed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan.

The gift, to be paid in four installments, breaks the previous medical center philanthropic record by \$50 million. [Baylor College of Medicine](#) twice received \$100 million gifts - from oil executive [Dan Duncan](#) in 2006 and from [Houston Texans owner Bob McNair](#) in 2007.

The only bigger gifts to Texas academic institutions are a bequest to UT-Austin valued at \$245 million and a \$200 million bequest to [Baylor University](#) in Waco.

How gift will be spent

Some \$100 million of the [Khalifa Foundation](#) donation will fund the construction of a state-of-the-art, 600,000 square-foot facility on five acres of M.D. Anderson's main campus. No such facility was planned when M.D. Anderson announced in December it would create the personalized cancer therapy institute. The institute is the brainchild of Mendelsohn, who has worked in targeted therapy for 30 years.

The remaining \$50 million will be split between the funding of pancreatic cancer research, institute equipment and clinical trials. Three endowed chairs funded from the gift will be named for the three Al Nahyan family members.

Mendelsohn said he's optimistic that personalized cancer therapy, much touted but still a goal, will become a reality as a result of the center and gift. He noted that M.D. Anderson will be sequencing the tumors of each of its 30,000 new patients a year, and that searching for a tumor's likely genetic abnormalities will become cheaper than doing a CT scan.

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Mendelsohn returned to Houston on Tuesday following a ceremonial signing of the gift agreement at the Khalifa Foundation in Abu Dhabi Monday. As a condition of the gift, he said, M.D. Anderson will provide to the foundation periodic financial reports.

Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, president of the United Arab Emirates from 1972 until 2004, is credited as the architect behind the federation's creation. He was ruler of Abu Dhabi, the largest of the federation's seven emirates.

Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan is the world's fifth- richest monarch, with \$15 billion, according to [Forbes magazine](#).

In 2007, Al Nahyan gave an undisclosed "transformational" sum in honor of his late father to [Johns Hopkins Medicine](#) to support construction of a new cardiovascular and critical care tower at the school's hospital and for cardiovascular and AIDS research.

M.D. Anderson's previous biggest gift, from oil executive [T. Boone Pickens](#), was \$50 million.

todd.ackerman@chron.com

Written By

TODD ACKERMAN
