Oncogene Cancer Research continues to accelerate lung cancer research at The Institute of Cancer Research as London Marathon runner takes on fundraising challenge

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- OCR-part-funded oncogene lung cancer tissue bank central to FESTIVAL clinical trial, now actively recruiting patients
- London Marathon fundraising builds on the £100K+ raised in support of The Institute of Cancer Research's life-saving work

23 April 2026, LONDON – Oncogene Cancer Research (OCR) today announces further support for pioneering lung cancer research at The Institute of Cancer Research (ICR), including the FESTIVAL clinical trial. This comes as OCR supporter Mandy Tafler prepares to take on the 2026 TCS London Marathon on 26 April in support of the work at the ICR, the world-leading research institute and charity.

Mandy's challenge follows a setback last year, when injury forced her to withdraw from the London Marathon start line. Undeterred, she returns with renewed determination, inspired by her friend and OCR co-founder Yvonne Diaz, who is living with stage 4 ALK+ lung cancer, and other personal connections to cancer.

Mandy was originally due to run as part of a group of four OCR-supported runners in 2025. Despite her withdrawal, the remaining runners went on to raise £10,425 for the ICR, taking OCR's donations in recent years to the ICR to over £100,000. Alongside supporting ICR research infrastructure, OCR's fundraising has contributed to the development of an oncogene-driven lung cancer biobank, which forms a central component of the recently opened FESTIVAL clinical trial. This biobank collects and stores fresh samples of oncogene-driven lung cancers such as ALK, EGFR, KRAS and others. This is enabling researchers to better understand how these cancers evolve and develop resistance to treatment – a significant unmet need in the community.

Advancing precision lung cancer research through the FESTIVAL trial

The FESTIVAL clinical trial is an academic study which opened in June 2025 at The Royal Marsden NHS Foundation Trust, with sample analysis taking place at the ICR by Professor Paul Huang and team – and financial support from OCR. It is designed to improve understanding of how non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC) evolves and responds to treatment.

By studying matched tumour and blood samples collected over time, researchers are building a detailed picture of tumour evolution, with the aim of identifying resistance mechanisms and improving prediction of treatment response.

"The FESTIVAL trial will allow us to use tissue and blood-based analysis to better understand how oncogene-driven lung cancers evolve and develop resistance to treatment. This approach will be critical to identifying new strategies to predict and overcome resistance, and ultimately improve personalised therapies for patients. We are grateful for the support of Oncogene Cancer Research in enabling this work," said Professor Paul Huang, Professor of Translational Research and Group Leader in Molecular and Systems Oncology at the ICR.

The FESTIVAL trial is currently recruiting patients across multiple cohorts.

Mandy's London Marathon challenge

"On the day of the marathon, while I won't be running with our original crew of four, I will not feel alone. I'll carry with me the stories, the support, and the hope of everyone who would trade places with me if they could. Every step I take will be for them as much as it is for me," says **Mandy Tafler**, OCR supporter and third time marathoner.

From marathon fundraising to laboratory discovery, Oncogene Cancer Research continues to support work that brings patients and families better outcomes. Mandy's London Marathon challenge shows how one person can make a big difference.

Yvonne Diaz and Jan Clark, co-founders of Oncogene Cancer Research, added, "We're incredibly

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proud of Mandy for taking on this challenge in support of lung cancer research at The Institute of Cancer Research. As patients and families ourselves, we understand the urgent the need for more effective treatments. Supporting work like the FESTIVAL trial is about helping researchers address big unmet needs like treatment progression — and bringing us closer to more effective options for the future."

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About Oncogene Cancer Research

Oncogene Cancer Research's mission is to extend both the length and quality of life for people living with oncogene-driven lung cancers. We accelerate research by funding promising projects, advocating from trial design through to access, and pushing for more clinical trials to open in the UK. We empower patients and caregivers with knowledge and resources to support informed decision-making. And we champion advocacy to ensure the patient voice is heard at every level of care. Importantly, 100% of all donations go directly to supporting research. Find out more at: www.oncogeneresearch.org.

About The Institute of Cancer Research

The Institute of Cancer Research, London, is one of the world's most influential cancer research organisations. Scientists and clinicians at The Institute of Cancer Research (ICR) are working every day to make a real impact on cancer patients' lives. Through its unique partnership with The Royal Marsden NHS Foundation Trust and 'bench-to-bedside' approach, the ICR is able to create and deliver results in a way that other institutions cannot. Together the two organisations are rated in the top four centres for cancer research and treatment globally.

The ICR has an outstanding record of achievement dating back more than 100 years. It provided the first convincing evidence that DNA damage is the basic cause of cancer, laying the foundation for the now universally accepted idea that cancer is a genetic disease. Today it is a world leader at identifying cancer-related genes and discovering new targeted drugs for personalised cancer treatment.

The ICR is a charity and relies on support from partner organisations, funders and the general public. A member institution of the University of London, it is one of the UK's leading higher education institutions, placing first for biological sciences and second overall in the definitive 'REF2021' rankings of UK university research quality, impact and environment, and provides postgraduate higher education of international distinction.

The ICR's mission is to make the discoveries that defeat cancer.

For more information visit ICR.ac.uk

For any media queries or other requests, please contact us at: admin@oncogeneresearch.org.

Company Contact:

Oncogene Cancer Research

T. 07990560615
E. admin@oncogeneresearch.org
W. https://www.oncogeneresearch.org/

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