Dana-Farber Cancer Institute has received a $5 million gift from the Benderson Family of Sarasota, Florida, that will accelerate research in triple-negative breast cancer (TNBC) and strengthen Dana-Farber’s capabilities for treating this disease. The gift establishes the Benderson Family Program for Triple-Negative Breast Cancer and represents the largest philanthropic donation to TNBC research at Dana-Farber. This gift will also provide powerful momentum toward the Institute’s comprehensive campaign, currently in the quiet phase. The $5 million commitment is the Benderson Family’s second major gift to Dana-Farber in support of TNBC research and treatment.

Under the direction of Eric P. Winer, MD, Chief of the Division of Breast Oncology in the Susan F. Smith Center for Women’s Cancers at Dana-Farber, Senior Vice President for Medical Affairs and Faculty Advancement, and Thompson Chair in Breast Cancer Research, the commitment by the Benderson Family provides the resources for Dana-Farber to expand a novel comprehensive TNBC registry and establish a new endowed fund, the Benderson Family Endowment for Triple-Negative Breast Cancer Research. The resulting robust TNBC cohort will provide the data and samples necessary to conduct vital laboratory experiments, identify potential drug targets, and design clinical trials for the more effective treatment and improved outcomes for TNBC patients. Additionally, the Bendersons’ gift will support capital projects and strategic initiatives under the leadership of Dana-Farber President and CEO Laurie H. Glimcher, MD.

“The Bendersons’ generous gift will allow Dr. Winer and Dana-Farber to continue to lead the way in TNBC research and patient care. It will also allow us to fund other initiatives at Dana-Farber that will make a difference in the way cancer is treated and benefit all patients at Dana-Farber,” said Glimcher.

Triple-negative breast cancer is one of the most challenging forms of breast cancer to treat. Despite recent advances forged by physician-scientists at Dana-Farber and elsewhere, new and novel treatment approaches for TNBC patients are needed. Currently, chemotherapy remains the backbone of treatment for TNBC, but with the ongoing clinical trials at Dana-Farber, supported by the Bendersons, new therapies including immunotherapies, antibody drug conjugates, and PARP inhibitors are being tested for the treatment of this type of cancer.

“We are confident that Dana-Farber will lead the way to a cure for this relentless disease.”

Lori and Randy Benderson’s $5 million gift to accelerate research and treatment of triple-negative breast cancer is the largest to the study of this disease in Dana-Farber history.

“We truly hope that our gift will accelerate triple-negative breast cancer research and bring better treatments to other women sooner. We are confident that Dana-Farber will lead the way to a cure for this relentless disease.”

— RANDY BENDERSON

Dana-Farber Cancer Institute has been the top-ranked cancer hospital in New England by U.S. News and World Report for 20 consecutive years, and is the only cancer center in the country ranked in the top 6 for both adult and pediatric cancer programs.
Dear Friends,

This community continues to inspire me! Despite the many challenges we've faced in recent months, our community of supporters continue to adapt, innovate, grow, and step forward in ways both familiar and new to support Dana-Farber. We are so fortunate to have loyal donors, participants, and partners who remain deeply committed to our patients—to making sure that all patients receive equitable care, and to relentlessly pursuing the progress that will make possible a better tomorrow.

As we stand at an inflection point in our nation's history and in the history of cancer, our firm position as a global leader in cancer medicine continues to garner exceptional philanthropic support. This generous giving includes extraordinary commitments of $30 million designated to expand our leadership in leveraging the power of data science; $5 million directed to advance crucial treatments for triple-negative breast cancer; and $5 million toward support of the Presidential Initiatives Fund, providing the Institute with the ability to pursue the most promising studies as they arise.

While some of our favorite events look different this year, our community is pivoting alongside us, undeterred, to raise crucial funds for our patients. Ever on the leading-edge, the PMC 2020 Reimagined successfully shifted to a phenomenal virtual experience in August. Now that fall is here, we're lacing up for these virtual events has been a great reminder that this is a time when we all must work with intentionality each and every day to address inequities; to not just hear, but to listen with the goal of understanding.

In the U.S., marginalized communities experience undue health care disparities. A growing field of research shows that BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of color) and those who identify as LGBTQ+ experience higher burdens of cancer and other diseases, as well as significant barriers to care. Inclusivity is inherently important to our mission: it saves lives. We are proud to share that the Human Rights Campaign Foundation has regularly recognized Dana-Farber as a Health Equity Index Top Performing Healthcare Facility based on our approach to, and practices for, the LGBTQ+ community. And through initiatives like the Cancer Care Equity Program (see page 9), we are committed to broadening Dana-Farber’s reach to local communities at high risk but with limited access to high-quality treatment.

But there is still work to be done. Dana-Farber must continue to be a safe harbor, a place of comfort for all. That means rejecting racism and inequality and embracing our entire community. It means not just decrying violence, but actively supporting our colleagues and patients who feel the impact of these events, and the frustration and injustice they represent, deeply.

And so, as we continue to learn and to listen, we thank all of our supporters for helping us move toward a more inclusive and equitable future for everyone.

Sincerely,

Melany N. Duval
Senior Vice President, Chief Philanthropy Officer

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**Our Commitment to Anti-Racism and our LGBTQ+ Community**

At Dana-Farber, we strive for an innovative, caring, and inclusive environment to create an equitable experience for all and to ensure each patient, family, and staff member feels they belong. This year’s events have further exposed the consequences of inequality and injustice, and reinforced that we all must work with intentionality each and every day to address inequities; to not just hear, but to listen with the goal of understanding.

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**Hyundai fuels creative approach to COVID-19 testing**

Hyundai Hope On Wheels’ support to Dana-Farber/Boston Children’s Cancer and Blood Disorders Center.

“Children who are diagnosed with cancer are particularly at higher risk for COVID-19,” said Zafar J. Brooks, executive director, Hyundai Hope On Wheels. “That’s why it was important to us to join forces with several children’s hospitals around the nation to combat this threat to the health and well-being of children.”

Hyundai Hope On Wheels’ support of drive-thru testing enabled Dana-Farber/Boston Children’s to enhance and expand testing protocols, and provide safe, efficient access to care for our youngest, most vulnerable patients.

“We are extremely grateful to Hyundai Hope On Wheels and Hyundai Motor America for supporting this critical work,” said Lisa Diller, MD, chief medical officer of Dana-Farber/Boston Children’s and medical director of Dana-Farber’s David B. Perini, Jr. Quality of Life Clinic. “Knowing who carries the virus is crucial to our goal of keeping patients, their families, and our staff as safe as possible during this pandemic.”

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**Helen Gurley Brown Presidential Summit on Women and Science**

This year’s Helen Gurley Brown Presidential Summit on Women and Science featured a panel of prominent leaders in biomedical research, technology, and grant-making who discussed how issues pertinent to women across STEM fields have converged with two of the biggest challenges facing the United States and the world—the COVID-19 pandemic and the groundswell of demands for racial justice. The online event attracted more than 500 registrants and featured panelists (clockwise, from top right) Sangeeta Bhatia, MD, PhD, the John J. and Dorothy Wilson Professor of Engineering at Massachusetts Institute of Technology; Martine Rothblatt, PhD, chairman and CEO of United Therapeutics; and Michele Cleary, PhD, CEO of The Mark Foundation for Cancer Research. Dana-Farber President and CEO Laurie H. Glimmcher, MD, (top left) moderated the panel.

The annual summit is part of The Helen Gurley Brown Presidential Initiative at Dana-Farber, which was launched in 2018 and is funded by a grant from The Pussycat Foundation.

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**Hyundai Hope On Wheels’ Helping Kids Fight Cancer**

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, people and organizations around the world have stepped up to lend a hand when and where they can. Throughout the spring and summer, Hyundai Hope On Wheels’ and Hyundai Motor America contributed more than $2.2 million to establish COVID-19 Drive-Thru Testing Centers at children’s hospitals throughout the U.S., including $200,000 to Dana-Farber/Boston Children’s Cancer and Blood Disorders Center.

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**It was important to us to … combat this threat to the health and well-being of children.**

— ZAFAR J. BROOKS, executive director, Hyundai Hope On Wheels
Dana-Farber and Jimmy Fund community contributes more than $11 million in funding to surmount the challenges of COVID-19

While COVID-19 has changed the way Dana-Farber operates, our doors have remained open throughout the pandemic to continue providing patients the treatments they so urgently need. Ensuring the safety of our patients, faculty, and staff in the face of this public health crisis engendered significant, unanticipated, and ongoing costs. To help meet this precipitous need, generous donors rose to the challenge with gifts totaling more than $11 million.

**Emergency Response Fund**

Established in March as the Institute drastically enhanced safety procedures, the Emergency Response Fund (ERF) launched with significant commitments from Dana-Farber Trustees and an extraordinary $4 million gift from the Pan-Mass Challenge (PMC).

“Our mission to support Dana-Farber in the fight against cancer has never changed, and in these extraordinary times, had to accelerate,” said PMC Founder and Executive Director Billy Starr, also a Dana-Farber Trustee. “The PMC community understands the critical needs of those battling cancer during this health crisis and wanted to help the fastest way we could, with funding that would make an immediate impact.”

The ERF also attracted gifts of all sizes from more than 3,200 loyal supporters nationwide, through initiatives like our first-ever online Giving Day in May.

“Our family supported the Emergency Response Fund to ensure that Dana-Farber doesn’t lose a step in delivering on its research mission,” said Institute Trustee Phyll Gross and her husband, Liz. “We were especially happy that our gift encouraged others to give through the Giving Day event.”

Funds from the ERF made an immediate and powerful difference to our patients, many of whom are immunocompromised and at greater risk of infection. Lobbies, waiting rooms, the Lavine Family Dining Pavilion, and other spaces were reconfigured to ensure that everyone can maintain social distancing. Each day a team of 140 people meticulously sanitizes exam rooms after each use and disinfects elevators, handrails, sanitizes exam rooms after each use and disinfects elevators, handrails, doorknobs, restrooms, and other surfaces, ensuring every “point of touch” is covered.

The ERF has helped to defray the cost of the dramatic increase in needs for personal protective equipment (PPE) and supplies for our dedicated clinical staff, and additional personnel to help keep clinical areas open. When it became apparent that there would be a nationwide shortage of PPE, a team of Dana-Farber staff developed a novel decontamination program—one of only a few such programs in the country—enabling valuable PPE to be sterilized and reused multiple times.

To keep our patients and providers safe by reducing the number of people gathering in our clinic spaces, the ERF enabled Dana-Farber to rapidly launch a telehealth program for patients whose visits with their doctor didn’t need to be held in person. Using telephone, video, or online communications, patients have safely connected with their clinicians through more than 36,500 telehealth appointments since the pandemic began in March.

In addition, our investigators have gone to great lengths to keep current clinical trials running during the pandemic, arranging for lab tests and scans to be conducted at outside facilities and medicines to be shipped to patient homes, reducing the need for patients to come to the Institute. As a result, fewer than 10 out of thousands of patients enrolled in our clinical trials have had to drop out—a number unmatched anywhere else in the country.

“The battle to treat and cure cancer is never ending, and the patients at Dana-Farber deserve to always be treated with the most compassionate and best care possible,” said Karen Linde Packman, trustee of both the Linde Family Foundation and Dana-Farber. “Our family is proud to support the Emergency Response Fund to ensure that Dana-Farber continues to deliver world-class care throughout this unprecedented pandemic.”

**COVID-19 Patient Assistance**

Dana-Farber’s adult and pediatric Patient Assistance Programs have long been committed to easing the financial stress of cancer for our patients and their families. As more patients and their caregivers lose employment and incur increased costs of dependent care due to the pandemic, the financial strains have become even more pressing.

Patient assistance funds have been essential in helping vulnerable patient families put food on the table, keep a roof over their heads, and get safe to and from the hospital. Since March, gifts to the COVID-19 Patient Assistance Fund have provided support to 196 patients and their families, and will enable us to shore up our current clinical trials running during the pandemic.

**COVID-19 Support**

The following list includes gifts of $100,000 or more toward the ERF, USA, and other COVID initiatives received through July 31, 2020:

- Annenberg T
- Josh & Artika Balsahan T
- Harvey J. Berger, MD, & Christine C. Berger T
- Brosh-Wilson Family T
- The Case Family Charitable Foundation
- Crystal Family Charitable Foundation
- CSF for Kids
- Dearfield Foundation
- Karivere & Edward Pyne
- Glook Sciences, Inc.
- Giving | Brookfield Facilitator
- Phillip T. Dana & Elizabeth Carolyn Gross, PhD, T
- Christopher J. & Constance Hadley T
- Sigurd E. Heistand, Jr. Trust T
- Hyundai Motor America / Hyundai Hope on Wheels
- Michelle & Howard Kasier T
- Linde Family Foundation T
- Dennin & K. Martin T
- Pan-Mass Challenge
- Richard A. Smith T
- Beth F. Terrana T
- The Yawkey Foundations
- T indicates a gift from or made possible by an Institute Trustee

**Donations of vital PPE and more ensure safety and comfort for patients and staff**

When COVID-19 reached pandemic proportions last spring, among many priorities the first and foremost was the safety of our patients and of the clinicians and staff who care for them. Cancer patients are often immunocompromised and personal protective equipment (PPE) of various kinds is standard issue, to protect them from risks of infection. With the onset of COVID-19, our need for PPE in all situations suddenly and dramatically increased, along with the demand at health care facilities around the world. As Institute staff pulled out all the stops to purchase critical supplies in the face of growing shortages, generous organizations and individuals came forward to help fill the gap, donating hundreds of thousands of masks, gowns, gloves, and more, often from unexpected places.

“Last spring there was—and still is—so much fear and uncertainty around COVID,” said Peter Palandjian, CEO of Intercontinental Real Estate Corporation and a Dana-Farber Trustee. “It huffles me that we could get personal protective equipment from real estate property vendors when the best hospitals in the world were struggling to procure it. So it was an easy moral imperative to help this great Institute that helps all of us when it matters most.”

The largest of these donations came from the Tencent Charity Foundation of Shenzhen, China, which provided more than $500,000 worth of masks, gowns, gloves, and face shields in April, in its first-ever gift to Dana-Farber.

In a particularly unique and creative effort, the Jimmy Fund’s long-time partners, the Boston Red Sox

Continued on page 15

The Boston Red Sox’s ‘47 Brand, and Silva Nanotechnologies collaborated to donate innovative ‘Sox Shields.’
Grant funding from the American Association for Cancer Research (AACR) provides stellar scientists at all stages of their careers with the resources they need to explore critical questions in cancer research. This year, AACR awarded grant funding to six Dana-Farber investigators, totaling more than $1.8 million, to support diverse projects ranging from a digital smoking cessation program to exploring how cancer cells develop and evolve.

Mary Cooley, PhD, RN, FAAN, was awarded $1 million to co-lead a multi-institutional team that is developing digital tools to engage high-risk smokers in an innovative smoking cessation program. Research has found that adding lung cancer screening with low-dose computed tomography to smoking cessation programs can prevent significantly more lung cancer deaths than cessation programs alone. The intervention uses videos, personal stories, and decision aids to introduce screening as an option for study participants. Her project is supported through an AACR partnership with the Lung Cancer Initiative at Johnson & Johnson (LCI). Cooley is the first nurse-scientist to receive this prestigious LCI grant.

“Our hope is this program encourages behaviors that promote lung health and early lung cancer detection,” says Cooley. “This work would not be possible without the generosity of AACR and the LCI.”

Saheid Hormoz, PhD, received a $400,000 grant from the AACR-MPM Oncology Charitable Foundation Transformative Cancer Research Grants program to study why patients with a form of blood cancer called myeloproliferative neoplasms (MPN) can have cancers possessing the same disease-causing mutations, yet have dramatically different clinical outcomes.

“This study seeks to answer some of the fundamental outstanding questions about where MPN originates and how it manifests in each patient,” says Hormoz. “I am grateful to AACR and MPM for their vital support of my research, which may hold broad clinical implications in the future.”

Neel Shah, PhD, is using his AACR-AstraZeneca Stimulating Therapeutic Advances through Research Training (START) grant to study drug sensitivity in advanced prostate cancer. Shah’s research explores the role of a specific cellular process, called DNA damage response, and how this process may affect the impact of treatments on cancer cells. “Ultimately, the project will help inform the development of better treatments and combination therapies for patients with advanced prostate cancer,” says Shah.

Other awardees include Sarah Hill, MD, PhD, who is studying gene mutations in ovarian cancer with an AACR-AstraZeneca Ovarian Cancer Research Fellowship; Julia Frede, PhD, who is exploring the cellular mechanisms that drive multiple myeloma with an AACR-AMGEN Fellowship in Clinical/Translational Cancer Research; and Ankur Nagaraja, MD, who is defining new therapeutic strategies to treat gastric cancer with the support of a Debbie’s Dream Foundation-Stupid-AACR Gastric Cancer Research Fellowship, in Memory of Candice Netzer.

“AACR grants support researchers at every stage of their careers, representing a global commitment to cancer prevention, early detection, interception, and cure,” says Yixian (John) Zhang, PhD, senior director of AACR’s Scientific Review and Grants Administration Department. “We are very happy to work with investors at Dana-Farber and at institutions across the United States and around the world.”

Gilboards’ gift establishes first-of-its-kind care pilot

When Bruce Gilboard received a diagnosis of EGFR-mutant lung cancer in 2015, his wife, Bethany, immediately requested a social worker. As a health care executive, Bethany was aware that psychosocial resources were available and anticipated a difficult road ahead for her family.

Recognizing the benefit of these services and the barriers that patients may face in accessing them, Bethany and Bruce made a generous gift to Dana-Farber and charged Bruce’s care team with designing a novel way to integrate psychosocial and palliative care with medical oncology to provide extra layers of support.

Those who have had cancer touch their lives know that it affects not only a patient’s physical health, but also their emotional well-being,” said Bethany. “We recognized Dana-Farber’s commitment to providing ‘total patient care,’ and wanted to be sure that others could have access without having to ask for it.”

With this support, Kate Lally, MD, clinical director of Ambulatory Palliative Care—in collaboration with Michelle Jacobo, PhD, director of Psychology Services; and Suzanne O’Regan, MSW, LICSW, in Dana-Farber’s Chen-Huang Center for EGFR Mutant Lung Cancers—will lead a pilot study to pair all patients in the Chen-Huang Center with a multidisciplinary team of supportive care specialists from palliative care, psychology, and social work.

“We are grateful to the Gilboards for their foresight and generosity, and believe we have designed a program that will make a difference in the mental and physical well-being of our patients,” said Lally. “Bruce and Bethany have helped make this possible.”

Mary Cooley, PhD, RN, FAAN, will co-lead a multi-institutional team that is developing an innovative smoking cessation program with a $1 million grant from AACR.
Diana Reardon was a wife, mother, and successful CFO who valued tenacity, hard work, and honesty. So, it was no surprise that when she was paired for her cancer treatment with Beth Overmoyer, MD, director of the Inflammatory Breast Cancer Program at Dana-Farber’s Susan F. Smith Center for Women’s Cancers, the two formed a special relationship that transcended that of patient and doctor.

“The relationship Diana shared with Dr. O was incredibly special and very supportive,” said Diana’s husband, Thomas. “Dr. O truly was a guiding light in Diana’s journey, and we’re so grateful for the care she provided to Diana and the work she is pursuing to find new treatments for patients.”

Sadly, Diana passed away in November 2019, but not before she ensured that her family could help the important work being done by Overmoyer and her team. Even with a grim prognosis, Diana’s tenacity never failed as she worked with her husband to commit $700,000 from the Reardon Family Gift Fund at Morgan Stanley to support the work of Overmoyer and her team.

“My mom was a successful businesswoman who recognized the amazing ability of Dr. O to make things happen, even with limited resources and a lack of government funding,” said Diana’s daughter, Christina. “We hope this gift will allow Dr. O to increase her focus on groundbreaking research, while continuing to provide excellent care to patients, like my mom.”

The crucial funds provided by the Reardon Family will help accelerate discoveries that may lead us toward new treatments for inflammatory breast cancer, as well as other types of breast cancers. This gift will also enable Overmoyer and her team to investigate several promising combination and immunotherapies here, at Dana-Farber, and in multiple consortium locations.

“Diana was a remarkable woman and there is a void without her here,” said Overmoyer. “I am grateful for the bond we shared, and her generosity, and I am committed to making a difference in the world in her memory.”

Grants advance insight into pediatric brain tumors

Generous grants totaling $750,000 from the Michael Mosier Defeat DIPG Foundation and The ChadTough Foundation will support Dana-Farber research into new therapeutic targets for diffuse intrinsic pontine gliomas (DIPG), aggressive and difficult-to-treat brainstem tumors diagnosed in children and adolescents. With the foundations’ support, this important work will be spearheaded by Daphne Haas-Kogan, MD, chair of Radiation Oncology, and postdoctoral fellow Eshini Panditharatna, PhD.

“Traditional combination treatment approaches of chemotherapy and radiation have shown limited efficacy for DIPGs and, as such, a novel approach is urgently needed,” Haas-Kogan said. “With the Defeat DIPG ChadTough Research Grant, we can explore a promising new therapeutic target: the alternate end-joining (alt-EJ) DNA repair pathway.”

Haas-Kogan’s work has shown that DIPG’s reliance on the alt-EJ DNA repair pathway allows cells to repair DNA damage and evade cell death, which makes radiation ineffective. Additionally, this alt-EJ reliance is enhanced by a mutation found in most DIPGs. By targeting alt-EJ, Haas-Kogan and co-principal investigators Brendan Price, PhD, and Sharmistha Pal, PhD, hope to make radiation a more effective treatment for DIPGs.

“By working together, Defeat DIPG and ChadTough are amplifying our capacity to make significant investments in DIPG-specific research,” said Defeat DIPG Executive Director Jenny Mosier. “We’re proud to further Dana-Farber’s DIPG research and propel our shared mission of finding a cure for this devastating disease.”

Defeat DIPG was founded in honor of Michael Mosier, late son of Jenny and Mark Mosier, who bravely faced DIPG at 6 years old. ChadTough was founded to honor the strength of courageous Chad Carr, son of Jason and Tammie Carr, who passed at age 5 from DIPG.

Dana-Farber fellow Panditharatna’s work will also focus on new potential targets in DIPG, with additional support from the SoSo Strong Pediatric Brain Tumor Foundation. Funding researchers at the beginning of their careers is an important aspect of this grant program.

“Our grant program is designed to push the field forward by investing in research that is likely to fuel progress and add to our understanding of this disease, while also ensuring we empower the next generation of researchers to bring this over the finish line for our children,” said Jason Carr, president of ChadTough.
Gateway for Cancer Research fuels innovative clinical trials

"We are proud to support Dana-Farber’s groundbreaking clinical trials, which have the potential to change standard of care. By funding these two important studies in partnership with Dana-Farber, we’re helping to drive transformational breakthroughs that could make a meaningful difference in the lives of countless patients.”

— MICHAEL BURTON, president and CEO, Gateway for Cancer Research

ASH supports early career scientists’ research into blood disorders and cancers

"I couldn’t do such important work without philanthropy, and I am so grateful for Gateway’s belief in my research,” said Freedman. “With their generosity, we are building the evidence base for this growing patient population. I hope that we can ultimately improve the way in which we treat these women.”

With his award, Romee is exploring ways to leverage the power of the body’s immune system to treat recurrent or advanced head and neck cancer. A tumor’s immune environment is highly complex, so immune therapies designed to target specific cancer cell receptors are not always effective. In his clinical trial, Romee will study first “priming” the tumor environment for treatment before administering memory-like natural killer (NK) cells, a type of immune cell discovered by Romee and colleagues and trained to attack tumors. After receiving the memory-like NK cells, patients will be treated with another type of protein whose role is to help NK cells stay healthy and active. Along with studying the safety and efficacy of this regimen, Romee and his team will obtain samples to try and better understand how this treatment functions.

“This grant immensely helps our efforts to advance highly innovative immunotherapy approaches for patients with very limited treatment options,” said Romee. “I cannot thank Gateway enough for supporting our NK cell program, which will help propel cutting-edge treatment options for patients with otherwise extremely poor prognosis.”

For more than six decades, the American Society of Hematology (ASH) has worked to further the understanding of hematologic disorders by promoting research, clinical care, education, training, and advocacy. Recently, ASH awarded nearly $300,000 in grants to Dana-Farber physician-scientists Annamaria Gulla, MD; Hojun Li, MD, PhD; and Peter Miller, MD, PhD, to further that mission.

Gulla is working to optimize immunotherapies for multiple myeloma, specifically examining the mechanisms behind resistance to induction of immunogenic cell death to increase the longevity and viability of immunotherapy.

Miller is analyzing how clonal hematopoesis of indeterminate potential (CHIP), a condition in which blood-forming cells carrying genetic mutations grow over time, increases a person’s risk for developing blood cancers and inflammatory diseases. Understanding the role CHIP plays will inform new strategies for disease prevention and treatment.

Supporting fellows and early career faculty has been a core part of ASH’s mission for decades,” said 2020 ASH President Stephanie Lee, MD, MPH, of Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center. “We are pleased to support these Dana-Farber scientists, who are poised to make important discoveries in hematologic research.”

Gateways for Cancer Research is dedicated to accelerating practice-changing discoveries in cancer care by harnessing the passion of the research community and empowering informed patients to triumph over their disease. Gateway supports phase 1 and phase 2 clinical trials, and recently awarded two grants totaling more than $1 million to Dana-Farber’s Rachel Freedman, MD, MPH, medical director of the Dana-Farber Cancer Care Collaborative, and Rizwan Romee, MD, director of the Haploidentical Donor Transplantation Program.

“We are proud to support Dana-Farber’s groundbreaking clinical trials, which have the potential to change standard of care,” said Michael Burton, Gateway’s president and chief executive officer. “By funding these two important studies in partnership with Dana-Farber, we’re helping to drive transformational breakthroughs that could make a meaningful difference in the lives of countless patients.”

With her award, Freedman is studying alternative treatment options for women over the age of 60 with HER2-positive breast cancer who are historically underrepresented in clinical trials. As a result, researchers have much to learn about the effects of current treatment regimens on these women, and Freedman is determined to fill this gap. Through her study—the first prospective, postoperative clinical trial for this specific population—Freedman will study the efficacy and toxicity of the antibody-drug conjugate T-DM1, as well as its impact on quality of life. T-DM1 targets HER2-positive breast cancer cells directly, limiting exposure of chemotherapy toxins to the rest of the body.

"I couldn’t do such important work without philanthropy, and I am so grateful for Gateway’s belief in my research,” said Freedman. “With their generosity, we are building the evidence base for this growing patient population. I hope that we can ultimately improve the way in which we treat these women.”

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10% of all designated gifts supports our Faculty Research Fund to advance Dana-Farber’s research mission
ADA grants $1.625 million to support groundbreaking diabetes research at Dana-Farber

The American Diabetes Association (ADA) has awarded Dana-Farber’s Judith Agudo, PhD, more than $1.6 million to support her diabetes research.

The five-year grant was awarded through the ADA’s Pathway to Stop Diabetes—a program dedicated to transforming diabetes research by funding and mentoring outstanding scientists who are pursuing investigations in this field. Now in its seventh year, the Pathway program has awarded grants to 34 scientists so far, with an ultimate goal of funding 100 investigators with different backgrounds and experience. Pathway awardees are nominated by their institution and selected by eminent scientists on the ADA’s Mentor Advisory Group, who also provide awardees with scientific and professional guidance during and after the completion of their grants. Agudo was chosen to receive the Pathway Accelerator Award, which supports diabetes researchers early in their independent careers.

Diabetes is a chronic condition affecting more than 34 million people in the U.S. Type 1 diabetes arises when the immune system attacks and destroys insulin-producing cells in the body. Without insulin, patients with type 1 diabetes cannot control their blood glucose levels, and this can lead to a host of serious health problems. Although the condition can often be managed with insulin injections, there is no cure, and some patients fare poorly even with treatment.

Transplanting new insulin-producing cells into patients with type 1 diabetes could cure the disease if researchers could find a way to prevent the immune system from attacking the newly transplanted cells. Agudo may have found a way to accomplish this. By studying cells that have a natural ability to avoid immune detection, she has discovered a molecular cloaking circuit that renders cells invisible to the immune system. She plans to activate this cloaking circuit in transplanted stem cell-derived insulin-producing cells to determine whether it can restore normal insulin production and stabilize blood glucose levels in animal models of type 1 diabetes. If successful, the work could set the stage for clinical studies of this treatment strategy in patients.

“The ADA Pathway to Stop Diabetes grant will allow me to move forward with this project, which has the potential to change the way we treat type 1 diabetes,” said Agudo. “I am extremely grateful and honored to receive this award.”

The ADA is the nation’s leading voluntary health organization fighting to bend the curve on the diabetes epidemic and help people living with diabetes thrive. For nearly 80 years, the ADA has been driving discovery and research to treat, manage, and prevent diabetes, while working relentlessly for a cure.

“Research is in our DNA, and it is our foundation,” said the association’s CEO Tracey Brown. “The Pathway program allows us to continue our mission through the great minds of young and talented researchers who will one day find a cure and end this diabetes epidemic.”

The Terri Brodeur Breast Cancer Foundation continues steadfast support of Dana-Farber researchers

Since 2007, the Terri Brodeur Breast Cancer Foundation (TBBCF) has generously supported researchers at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute. This year, TBBCF awarded $200,000 in grants to two Dana-Farber investigators seeking more effective and innovative ways to treat breast cancer.

Jennifer Guerriero, PhD, director of the Breast Immunology Laboratory, and Shehyay Kabraji, BM, BCh, were two of only four physician-scientists selected to receive funding from TBBCF in 2020. According to TBBCF’s President and Co-Chair of the Scientific Advisory Board John LaMattina, PhD, this year’s selection process was ultracompetitive.

“We reviewed more than 20 applications and conducted interviews with six finalists,” said LaMattina.

Guerriero seeks to determine whether tumor-associated macrophages (TAMs) can shrink tumors in drug resistant triple-negative breast cancer. This study, if successful, will increase understanding of how TAMs contribute to therapy resistance and will reveal novel strategies to target TAMs for immunotherapy.

Using his research grant, Kabraji will investigate how to eliminate minimal residual disease (MRD), which can cause relapse and recurrence in HER2-positive breast cancer. His research aims to find new ways to activate the anti-tumor immune response by targeting dormant cancer cells. If successful, Kabraji hopes to develop a novel treatment for the prevention of relapse and recurrence in patients with the disease.

Rubenstein Foundation gift expands palliative care training

Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, conversations with patients about their goals of care have increased tenfold at Dana-Farber, bringing into high relief the importance of capturing a patient’s wishes regarding their care.

When having these important conversations, Dana-Farber palliative care providers are able to easily enter them into a patient’s medical record and track them using tools developed at the Institute with previous funding from the Lawrence J. and Anne Rubenstein Charitable Foundation. Now, with its most recent gift of $380,300, the Rubenstein Foundation is helping to expand the use of this electronic Advance Care Planning (ACP) module to oncologists across Dana-Farber’s disease centers and outpatient clinics.

“When a patient wants to talk about their wishes for care moving forward, their oncologist should be able to help them immediately,” said Steven Perlmuter, Esq., a longtime trustee of both the Rubenstein Foundation and Dana Farber. “The Rubenstein Foundation is proud to build on its foundational work by funding training for all Dana-Farber oncologists in the use of ACP.”

ACP education dovetails with an Institute-wide goals-of-care communication skills training program for oncologists led by James Tulsky, MD, chair of the Department of Psychosocial Oncology and Palliative Care. Oncologists will participate in immersive day-long workshops that feature realistic role-playing exercises with actors playing the part of patients.

“We are grateful for the Rubenstein Foundation’s longstanding support of our efforts to ensure that patients receive the right care at the right time,” said Tulsky.

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Martins fund health equity projects to reduce disparities

A 10% of all designated gifts supports our Faculty Research Fund to advance Dana-Farber’s research mission. In memory of Demond’s sister, Tonia—whose cancer was detected too late, though she continuously sought care in rural Kansas—the Martins established the Tonia Taylor Fund for Health Equity with a gift of $200,000 to support two pilot projects aimed at reducing disparities in cancer prevention, early detection, and treatment.

Christopher Lathan, MD, MS, MPH, faculty director for Cancer Care Equity at Dana-Farber, is connecting medically underserved patients in Boston to Dana-Farber’s precision medicine capabilities—including molecular tumor sequencing and clinical trials.

Timothy Rebbeck, PhD, director of the Center for Cancer Equity and Engagement in the Dana-Farber/ Harvard Cancer Center, is developing new screening guidelines to benefit men at high risk for prostate cancer, which disproportionately affects African American men.

Both projects leverage partnerships with health centers throughout Boston to best reach predominantly African American and Latino communities.

“My sister was the most giving person I have ever known. She lived a life dedicated to helping others. But in her time of need, due to structural inequities, she was not met with the same excellent care many of us receive,” said Martin, who is a Dana-Farber Trustee. “It is our honor to cherish the spirit of her life by making life better for others.”

Brown Foundation advances test for early detection of multiple myeloma

Support from the Brown Foundation has been crucial to our work in understanding the biology of multiple myeloma,” said Ghobrial. “Our study will not only uncover important information for early detection, but will also guide us in pinpointing the patients who are more likely to have rapid disease progression, making them prime candidates for early therapeutic intervention.”

For decades, the Brown Foundation has sought to alleviate human suffering through thoughtful and systematic support of areas including health care. Ghobrial’s integrative blood biopsy research exemplifies this mission.

“Modern medical management of disease requires ultra-deep comprehension of the biology involved,” said Ronald Spencer, MD, health and scientific program officer at the Brown Foundation. “Elegant treatments or cures often reside hidden within the framework of this biology. We have only to uncover them.”

Creating hope for pediatric DIPG patients

Each year, approximately 300 children are diagnosed with diffuse intrinsic pontine glioma (DIPG). This rare type of brain tumor, typically found in pediatric patients between 5 and 10 years old, is highly aggressive and survival rates are dismal. But, thanks to the generosity of John and Pam Cuming, there is new hope on the horizon.

The Cumings made a gift of $100,000, through their donor-advised fund at the Boston Foundation, to establish the Cuming Family Fund for Pediatric Brain Tumor Research. This critical investment supports the work of Mariella Filbin, MD, PhD, and her team as they lead studies to find promising new treatment options for DIPG patients.

“Our philanthropic efforts have been focused on pediatric brain cancer research for many years now, and we hope that the Cuming Family Fund for Pediatric Brain Tumor Research at Dana-Farber can play some small part in finding a cure for this terrible disease,” said John Cuming.

About the Cancer Care Equity Program

Established in January 2012 through a partnership with the Whittier Street Health Center and the Dimock Center in Roxbury, Mass., the Cancer Care Equity Program (CCEP) aims to broaden access to Dana-Farber’s high-quality care for vulnerable and disenfranchised patient populations.

As more and more studies link socioeconomic factors to not only the healthcare gap, but heightened risk for developing cancer, a hallmark of the program is its clinical outreach initiative: expanding access to Dana-Farber to where patients are and providing support for every step of the process. The CCEP team, via nurse navigation, links patients to cancer screenings, preventive education, cancer genetic risk assessments, and diagnostic services.

For those patients who require specialized procedures or appointments that are not available at the center, the program helps to address any barriers to timely care such as transportation.

The CCEP also serves as a bridge between research and outreach efforts, functioning as a conduit between laboratory-based researchers, health services researchers, community-based researchers, and clinical trialists who focus on disparities research, with the goal of ensuring that the Whittier Street model can be sustainably and successfully replicated nationwide.

10% of all designated gifts supports our Faculty Research Fund to advance Dana-Farber’s research mission
Poignant loss renews determination of Cancer Couch

Rebecca Timlin-Scalera, PhD, a neuropsychologist, published author, and founder of The Cancer Couch Foundation, sadly passed away from metastatic breast cancer (MBC) in December 2019. Inspired by Rebecca’s incredible journey, the foundation recently made a heartfelt and generous $305,000 gift, which was matched by an anonymous donor, to support MBC research led by Nikhil Wagle, MD, at Dana-Farber. In 2015, on the heels of a Paris vacation with her husband and two young children, Rebecca, then 43 years old, was initially diagnosed with stage III MBC, which was later upgraded to stage IV. After discovering few organizations have an exclusive focus on supporting MBC research, Rebecca launched The Cancer Couch Foundation in 2016 to raise money to accelerate research to treat, and some day cure, MBC. Over the years, the volunteer-run organization, whose operating expenses are covered by the Scalera family, has made a tremendous impact on MBC research. To honor Rebecca’s incredible legacy, her husband will soon transition from his role as CFO of JTT to president of The Cancer Couch Foundation. Along with Rebecca’s sisters, he will lead and uphold its critical mission.

At Dana-Farber, Wagle’s laboratory studies the genetic mechanisms of drug resistance in estrogen receptor positive breast cancer, and $800,000 in total research support from The Cancer Couch Foundation, plus the anonymous matching of these funds, has been a driving force behind his progress. “I am deeply grateful for Rebecca’s partnership over the years,” said Wagle. “She was a true champion for patients with metastatic breast cancer, and as a lab, we’re committed to honoring her legacy by urgently pushing forward to develop new treatment options for patients with MBC.”

Steadfast support to help shape the future of melanoma care

Karen O’Connor first met Rizwan Haq, MD, PhD, under less than ideal circumstances: Karen had been diagnosed with metastatic melanoma. And yet, she and her husband, Bruce MacGregor, immediately felt a connection with Haq. His calm attitude and expert knowledge of personalized therapies gave them hope, and that is a feeling that they want to give countless more patients with this disease.

In 2018, Karen and Bruce established the O’Connor-MacGregor Fund for Melanoma Research to support Haq’s research into why certain individuals develop treatment resistances while others respond favorably much longer. The following year, a scientific paper by Haq appeared in the prestigious journal Nature Communications, detailing a new clinical trial that combines targeted therapies with immunotherapies to achieve more long-lasting results than either can attain alone. This promising study was strengthened by Karen and Bruce’s previous giving, and they are very proud to invest in Haq’s leading-edge work again with a new $100,000 gift.

“I know firsthand how important research breakthroughs are for instilling hope in melanoma patients and their families,” said Karen. “Not only will their philanthropy accelerate studies to better inform treatment options, but this gift also provides powerful momentum toward the Institute’s comprehensive campaign, currently in the quiet phase.”

A ‘super’ gift for neuroblastoma research

In summer 2012, 4-year-old Sammy Nahorny was diagnosed with stage IV high-risk neuroblastoma, an often devastating pediatric cancer. When his family sought cancer centers for a second opinion, they were shocked to learn how few clinical trials existed for this disease, and how little research was being done in the area. To increase awareness of neuroblastoma as a disease that can take a chance to receive the treatment they need, the family, together with their friends and community, formed Sammy’s Superheroes to support childhood cancer research across the United States. This year, to honor the treatment Sammy received from Dana-Farber Cancer Institute in 2013, the foundation made a $100,000 gift to support the research of Natalie Collins, MD, PhD, and Suzanne Shusterman, MD. Collins, Shusterman, and their team are testing a combination of a vaccine and an immune checkpoint inhibitor to treat patients with relapsed high-risk neuroblastoma that is refractory (resistant to treatment)—the same disease Sammy was diagnosed with. By studying how the immune system responds to neuroblastoma and to this combination therapy, they aim to identify new ways to harness the immune system to fight neuroblastoma.

“We know from Sammy’s disease that there are not many options for neuroblastoma when it is deemed refractory,” says Erin Nahorny, Sammy’s mother and president of Sammy’s Superheroes. “When we look at Dr. Collins’ work, we see hope for better treatments and cures for our children.”

3000 Miles to a Cure narrows gap between GBM patients and human clinical trials

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3000 Miles to a Cure

Much like in the infamous Race Across America (RAAM), people fighting cancer face a long, grueling, and sometimes hopeless road. That is why world record-holding endurance cyclist Maria Parker chose the non-stop 3,000-mile bicycle race as a platform to raise funds for research when her sister, Jenny, was diagnosed with brain cancer in October 2012. After finishing first in what was called “the greatest comeback in the history of the race” and raising over $70,000, Parker and her team, dubbed “3000 Miles to a Cure,” knew they couldn’t stop racing for those affected by brain cancer. 3000 Miles to a Cure has continued to raise funds and most recently awarded $100,000 to Dana-Farber Cancer Institute. Parker and her team support the groundbreaking Dana-Farber-led ALLELE Consortium that uses biomarker research to create more effective clinical trials for glioblastoma, an aggressive form of brain cancer. Keith Ligon, MD, PhD, in the Department of Oncologic Pathology, formed the ALLELE consortium with several other leading brain tumor centers in the country to help patients access innovative clinical trials comparing targeted molecular therapy and immunotherapies to the more standard radiochemotherapy for glioblastoma patients. Such trials increasingly require advanced biomarker testing and doctors in the ALLELE Consortium are making sure that leading-edge sequencing and other diagnostics are available to patients for participation in innovative human trials now found in brain tumor treatment.

“We fundraise in the hope that this research and improvement to brain tumor treatments will help people like Jenny and their families. We race for her, and we race for a cure,” said Parker.
10% of all designated gifts supports our Faculty Research Fund to advance Dana-Farber’s research mission

V Foundation funds highly promising people and projects

Grants totaling $800,000 from the V Foundation for Cancer Research have been awarded to Zuzana Tothova, MD, PhD, and Adam Bass, MD, Dana-Farber investigators who are paving the way forward in cancer medicine.

V Foundation support for Tothova’s research enables her to further explore the biology and therapeutic targeting of myelodysplastic syndromes and acute myeloid leukemia, and to determine how DNA changes mediated by mutations in a protein complex called the cohesin complex play a role in disease progression. The impact of this work is far reaching and may extend to patients with other blood cancers. Tothova’s proposal earned her the highest rating by the V Foundation Scientific Advisory Committee and a two-year V Scholar Grant.

“This is an incredibly high-risk, high-reward project, and we are at the very beginning stages of pursuing this new line of research,” said Tothova. “This kind of funding is absolutely critical to enable new investigators like me to get into new fields of investigation.” Bass is known for his formative role in defining subtypes of stomach cancers and has been instrumental in identifying types prevalent in different racial groups. Bass received a three-year Translational Grant from the foundation supporting his ongoing work in diffuse gastric cancer.

“It makes up approximately a third of stomach cancers, but is an especially lethal and difficult to treat subclass,” said Bass. “Given the lack of funding for work in these cancers, this award is critical to allow us to build upon our work and bring the most promising new therapeutic approaches to patients, including underrepresented minorities whose cancers are often not adequately studied.”

Founded in 1993 by ESPN and legendary basketball coach Jim Valvano, the V Foundation continues to fund highly promising people and projects.

“We are grateful for incredible collaborators like the researchers at Dana-Farber,” said Carole Wegner, PhD, HCLD, V Foundation senior vice president of Research and Grants Administration. “With them, we can continue to build on past momentum, fund the innovative cancer research of today, and bring hope to others now and in the future.”

Pew grants open new avenues of research

Two Dana-Farber scientists have received grants totaling $500,000 from the Pew Charitable Trusts Scholars Program in the Biomedical Sciences, which funds young scientific investigators who show outstanding promise in the advancement of human health, to further their research.

Philip Kranzusch, PhD, received a Pew Biomedical Scholars grant to study how small RNA molecules can activate an immune response to cancer. Alexander Gimelbrant, PhD, who was a 2010 Pew Biomedical Scholar, received an Innovation Fund grant, which encourages collaboration among biomedical scientists. In his lab, Kranzusch studies an enzyme known as cGAS. Using a variety of techniques, his research is clarifying how cGAS-related enzymes affect the immune response of cells and could lead to novel treatments for cancer.

“I am honored to be part of the Pew Biomedical Scholars Program,” said Kranzusch. “This support is enabling our lab to begin a new line of research into innate immune signaling, and interaction with other faculty in the program has already allowed us to establish new collaborations.”

Gimelbrant is leading a collaborative study with Fernando Camargo, PhD, of Boston Children’s Hospital to explore how genetically identical organisms can look and function differently, which may lead to more personalized cancer treatments. Gimelbrant’s lab studies how cell identity can be determined by which specific form of a gene is expressed in cells.

“I am excited by the collaboration fostered by this grant, as Dr. Camargo and I explore the epigenetic mechanisms that can cause patients with the same disease to respond differently to treatment,” said Gimelbrant.

Founded in 1948, the Pew Charitable Trusts is an independent, nonprofit, non-governmental organization that encourages responsive government and supports scientific research on a wide range of issues.

“We know that investing in promising scientists and cutting-edge research will pay enormous dividends for human health over time,” said Molly Irwin, Pew’s vice president of research and science. “The investigators at Dana-Farber are taking risks and pursuing breakthroughs that will build critical knowledge to use in the battle against cancer.”

Rally Foundation catalyzes innovations in pediatric cancer treatment

In 2005, a boy named William was being treated for his second brain tumor in two years. When asked what could be done for him, William’s mother offered a simple directive: “Raise money for childhood cancer research and fund the best research wherever it may be.” Her friend Dean Crowe founded the Rally Foundation for Childhood Cancer Research based on that advice.

Since 2018, the foundation has awarded $665,000 in grants to 10 Dana-Farber researchers: Brian Crompton, MD, for his work on a new targeted therapy in Ewing sarcoma; Adam Durbin, MD, PhD, for developing epigenetic treatment approaches for rhabdomyosarcoma; and Angela Feraco, MD, MMSc, who is exploring how collaborative teamwork contributes to quality of life among children with cancer.

“I am deeply grateful for the Rally Foundation’s support,” said Feraco. “Their ongoing partnership has been instrumental in coordinating this multidisciplinary psychosocial research effort to reduce suffering and enhance quality of life for our youngest patients.”

The foundation is also funding Lillian Guenther, MD, for identifying new treatment strategies for osteosarcoma; Allison O’Neill, MD, to study the immune environment of malignant Ewing sarcoma; Joelle Straehla, MD, who is improving drug delivery to high grade gliomas; Srinivas Viswanathan, MD, PhD, to develop a novel precision therapy for renal cell carcinoma; and Malgorzata Krajewska, PhD, Satyaki Sengupta, PhD, and Ting Tao, PhD, for various efforts to bring novel therapeutics to patients with neuroblastoma.

“At Rally, we see ourselves as philanthropic seed investors in the next great discovery,” said Dean Crowe, founder and CEO of the Rally Foundation. “We are thrilled to partner with some of the most brilliant childhood cancer research physicians and scientists, from fellows to senior investigators, here at Dana-Farber. We like to invest early and stick with the researchers as they make progress. From novel ideas to translational research to palliative care, we are thankful for the variety of projects that we are able to fund at Dana-Farber to bring better treatments with fewer long-term side effects and ultimately cures for kids battling cancer.” Since 2012, the Rally Foundation has provided funding totaling nearly $1.3 million to drive discovery at Dana-Farber.
Dana-Farber receives 11 LLS grants to pursue novel studies on blood cancers

The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society (LLS) continued its 40-year support of Dana-Farber in 2019, awarding several Institute investigators grants to spur groundbreaking research into blood cancers.

“As a global leader in the fight against cancer, LLS is committed to fueling the next generation of research to accelerate treatments and cures for the 1.4 million people in the United States living with a blood cancer,” said Lee Greenberger, PhD, LLS chief scientific officer. “Our long-term collaboration with Dana-Farber has yielded significant progress for patients with blood cancers, and the research we invest in today could lead to the next cure tomorrow.”

LLS Translational Research Program grants, which fund innovative projects that accelerate bench-to-bedside treatments for leukemia, lymphoma, and myeloma were awarded to: Scott Armstrong, MD, PhD, chair of the Department of Pediatric Oncology and the David G. Nathan, MD, Professor of Pediatrics; Rizwan Romee, MD, director of the Haploidentical Donor Transplantation Program; Margaret Shipp, MD, chief of the Division of Hematologic Neoplasia and the Douglas S. Miller Chair in Hodgkin Lymphoma; and Baoshung Zhang, MD, PhD.

With his grant, Romee is leading efforts to harness the enhanced anti-tumor effect of immune cells known as natural killer, or NK, cells to treat patients with advanced blood cancers. NK cells normally do not have the immunological “memory” that enables them to repeatedly target cancer cells. In a previous study, however, Romee found that the memory capacity of NK cells can be enhanced by exposing them to proteins called cytokines that boost the body’s immune response.

Romee is testing this approach in a clinical trial that combines these NK cells with a cytokine in patients with advanced acute myeloid leukemia (AML) following stem cell transplantation.

“NK cells have produced impressive results in some patients with AML,” says Romee, “and we’re hoping they will perform at least as well in patients who have relapsed after a transplant.”

Loren Walensky, MD, PhD, principal investigator in the Linde Family Program in Cancer Chemical Biology at Dana-Farber, received an LLS Pediatrics Translational Research Program grant to investigate a new strategy to overcome treatment resistance in pediatric patients with leukemia by targeting two regulatory proteins that drive malignant cell growth.

“LLS is fueling the translational research that is essential to transforming our basic science discoveries into new therapies for children with cancer,” says Walensky. “The impact of this financial support is profound and so appreciated.”

To help build the pipeline of young investigators at Dana-Farber, LLS awarded six early career scientists with LLS Career Development Program grants to encourage them to embark on academic careers involving clinical or basic research in blood cancers. The researchers are Anit Biran, PhD, Juliet Bouyssou, PhD; Sondra Downey-Kopyscinski, PhD; Annamaria Gulla, MD; Shan Lin, PhD; and Gongwei Wu, PhD.

Cannonball Kids’ cancer propels high-caliber research

Michael and Melissa Wiggins know firsthand the devastation that comes with a pediatric cancer diagnosis. At just 20 months old, their son Cannon was diagnosed with stage IV high-risk neuroblastoma and given a 50% chance of survival. Cannon’s treatment plan included surgeries, a stem-cell transplant, and chemical therapies designed for adults and diluted to treat children. The side effects were severe, with lifelong complications. While Cannon is now cancer-free, the Wiggins are determined that no child should suffer the way their son had. In 2014, they founded Cannonball Kids’ cancer Foundation (CKc).

CKc strives to support a wide range of pediatric cancer research, focusing on innovative, out-of-the-box approaches. The foundation recently gave $100,000 to support pediatric kidney cancer research by Dana-Farber’s Jared Rowe, MD, PhD, which focuses on identifying the fundamental features of the immune system in response to cancer. By understanding the immune response in a model of Wilms tumor, the most common type of kidney tumor affecting children, Rowe hopes to pave the way for therapeutic immunotherapies for a variety of pediatric sarcomas and increase survivorship while limiting side effects.

“We are proud to support Dr. Rowe’s efforts to understand the role of immunotherapy in pediatric cancer treatment,” said CKc Executive Director Karen Revels. “We know that typical approaches to treating many childhood cancers are both woefully ineffective and toxic. Dr. Rowe’s research is a step toward children not just surviving, but thriving, in life after cancer.”

Jimmy Fund Golf is honored to celebrate and thank Bob Beach, pictured above with his junior golfers, for an incredible 45 years of generous support for the patients and families of Dana-Farber. In 1976, Bob, who recently retired as a golf professional, has donated the proceeds of his junior golf programs to the Jimmy Fund since 1976, as a way to give back to his local community through the sport he loves. The Jimmy Fund remains grateful for Bob’s leadership and longstanding commitment to fighting cancer from the fairways. Jimmy Fund Golf presented by Mohegan Sun, the nation’s oldest and largest charity golf program, raises millions of dollars each year thanks to the passion, dedication, and generosity of people like Bob, nationwide.

Celebrating 45 years of giving back through Jimmy Fund Golf

“Dr. Rowe’s research is a step toward children not just surviving, but thriving, in life after cancer.”

— KAREN REVELS, CKc Executive Director
Hamptons inspired to give back

When Susan Hampton was diagnosed with melanoma, she sought a second opinion at Dana-Farber. Not only did she receive more information about her diagnosis, she also found a care team that helped make the process less daunting while charting the right course of treatment. Susan was treated by Patrick Ott, MD, PhD, clinical director of the Melanoma Center and the Center for Immuno-Oncology. She said, “The level of compassion, you just feel it at Dana-Farber.”

Susan and her husband, Bruce, have always been active, playing tennis and golf often, so facing cancer was a big adjustment. Happily, Susan successfully completed treatment and has been given an excellent prognosis. “I am one of the lucky ones. I’m truly grateful.”

After recovery, Susan read an article about a Dana-Farber donor that inspired her to explore a gift to support melanoma research led by Ott. “I know it costs a lot for the science that enables melanoma research,” said Ott, “I am moved by the Hamptons’ generosity, which accelerates progress toward vital new therapies.”

Smith Family Award paves the way for promising early career scientists

**RICHARD AND SUSAN Smith Family Foundation**

Joining the ranks of nearly 200 other early career biomedical researchers to be recognized by the Richard and Susan Smith Family Foundation for their exceptional promise is Judith Agudo, PhD, an investigator in Dana-Farber’s Department of Cancer Immunology and Virology.

Agudo received a three-year, $300,000 grant through the Smith Family Awards Program for Excellence in Biomedical Research, a program launched in 1992 to allow early career researchers to focus on their scientific research before they may be eligible for major federal grant support. The program makes five to seven grants annually.

“We are proud to support someone of Dr. Agudo’s caliber and potential,” said Richard Smith, chair emeritus of the Smith Family Foundation and Dana-Farber Trustee, who passed away in September. “Our foundation’s intent is to pave the way for our region’s most promising early career scientists.”

The grant will allow Agudo to use novel technology to study dendritic cells, the cells in the immune system that “train” T cells to launch or withhold an immune attack. Her findings could have valuable implications for immunono- oncology.

Over the years, 11 other Dana-Farber investigators have received grants from the Smith Family Awards Program, all of whom have gone on to successful careers in biomedicine. Through their other personal and Smith Foundation giving, the Smith Family has made an exceptional contribution to science and patient care at Dana-Farber, a partnership that dates back to Dana-Farber’s earliest days.

AICR supports study into effect of exercise on brain health during cancer treatment

For over three decades, the American Institute for Cancer Research (AICR) has helped transform how the scientific and medical communities think about cancer, with an emphasis on lifestyle and nutrition. AICR recently awarded a grant of more than $150,000 to support Dana-Farber’s Christina Dieli-Conwright, PhD, MPH, who is researching the use of exercise to improve brain health during and after chemotherapy.

At the center of Dieli-Conwright’s study is a 16-week high intensity interval training (HIIT) program that was shown to improve brain health in older adults. Now, she will test the program in women undergoing chemotherapy for breast cancer, to determine whether exercise can alleviate the types of cognitive deficiencies brought on by treatment.

“I’m grateful to the AICR for all the work they’ve done to support cancer prevention research,” said Dieli-Conwright. “This study will provide valuable insights in not only lessening decline in brain health, but also preventing chronic brain conditions before they start.”

“Dr. Dieli-Conwright’s research aims to lessen the distressing cognitive impairments that may be experienced during and after chemotherapy,” said Nigel Brockton, PhD, vice president of research at AICR. “This is really important and potentially impactful research for survivors. AICR is proud to champion critical research that strengthens the evidence for cancer prevention and advances our understanding of how diet, nutrition, physical activity, and weight contribute to cancer prevention and enhanced survivorship.”

Cory’s Crusaders aids families of children facing brain tumors

Cory Gaudet was a fun-loving and caring teenager who enjoyed in-line skating and was fearless on the skateboard. Cory’s peers admired him for his skills, but also his warm personality—to Cory, everyone was his best friend.

When Cory was 16, he was diagnosed with a diffuse intrinsic pontine glioma (DIPG). DIPGs are highly aggressive and difficult-to-treat brain tumors found at the base of the brain. This news was devastating, but Cory faced DIPG with the same fight and determination as he did when trying to land a new trick on his skateboard. Throughout his treatment at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, his motto was “never give up.”

Cory succumbed to the disease shortly after his 18th birthday. In his honor, Cory’s parents, Teresa and Jim, founded Cory’s Crusaders. “We established Cory’s Crusaders to carry on Cory’s kind spirit and assist families with children battling brain tumors,” said Teresa.

Cory’s Crusaders established a $100,000 fund at Dana-Farber to help support families of pediatric neuro-oncology patients in need of treatment. Administered by the Pediatric Resource Program, which helps eligible families access a variety of resources, the fund will reduce financial burdens and allow families to focus on the health of their child. “We are honored by the Gaudet family’s gift,” said Scott Dicker, director of the Pediatric Resource Program.

“They know firsthand the incredible strength and support needed when your child has cancer. This fund will help a lot of families, and we cannot say thank you enough.”

Bruce and Susan Hampton are supporting melanoma research at Patrick Ott, MD, PhD, at Dana-Farber.

Cory’s Crusaders founders Teresa and Jim Gaudet (left) support the work of Joe Chabot (right), director of the Pediatric Resource Program.
A

rturo Borges had many things in his life that brought him joy—he was a jazz aficionado, a Frank Sinatra fan, a ham radio operator on the Queen Mary in Long Beach, a graphic artist for Sears, a Navy veteran. Above all, he was a family man, which led him to include Dana-Farber in his trust in honor of his beloved wife, Audrey, and cherished niece Mary “Murl” Vaillancourt, who both passed away from cancer.

“Murl always talked about how great everyone was to her at Dana-Farber,” said Susan Felici, Murl’s sister and executor of Arthur’s estate. “I told my uncle when he was estate planning that we would do whatever we could to honor his wishes, and it was his wish to honor his wife and niece.”

Arthur’s legacy gift of more than $219,000 supports sarcoma research, with a portion of the gift naming a private infusion room for Audrey and Murl in the Yawkey Center for Cancer Care—the very room where Murl received treatment for a rare synovial sarcoma.

“He was heartbroken when Murl passed away,” said Susan’s husband, John. “It was important to him to pay it forward and help others with this disease.”

“My colleagues and I are deeply grateful to Arthur for his generosity,” said George Demetri, MD, director of the Sarcoma Center, senior vice president for experimental therapeutics, and the Quick Family Chair in Medical Oncology. “This support will enable us to advance our understanding of rare sarcomas to develop better treatments for patients around the world.”

The McKenna Claire Foundation recently gave $100,000 to Dana-Farber to support research, led by Katherine Warren, MD, into diffuse intrinsic pontine glioma (DIPG), a rare and inoperable pediatric brain tumor. Warren, who is the clinical director of Dana-Farber’s Pediatric Neuro-Oncology Program, is leading a nationwide research consortium meant to optimize clinical trials for DIPG.

The DIPG ALL-In Initiative, now centered at Dana-Farber, began when Warren worked at the National Institutes of Health. It supports pre-clinical studies that will optimize clinical trials by increasing the data used to inform these studies; increasing collaboration between scientists working on similar or interrelated research; and translating preclinical findings into clinical trials. The consortium consists of six hospitals across the U.S. led by investigators with particular expertise and research in DIPG.

The McKenna Claire Foundation was established by Dave and Kristine Wetzels in memory of their daughter McKenna, or “Macky.” A vivacious, healthy 7-year-old growing up in Huntington Beach, Calif., when she was diagnosed with DIPG, Macky passed away just six months later.

The outpouring of support from the family received from their friends, family, and community inspired Dave and Kristine to start the foundation, which works to cure pediatric brain cancer by raising awareness, increasing community involvement, and funding research.

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Donations of vital PPE continued from page 3

and ‘47 Brand, worked with Sila Nanotechnologies in Silicon Valley to retrofit 5,000 Red Sox baseball caps with custom-made face shields, helping to prevent disease transmission while lifting spirits and reminding us of our beloved hometown team.

“The Red Sox were proud to collaborate on this innovative PPE donation,” said Red Sox President and CEO Sam Kennedy, who is also a Dana-Farber Trustee. “This project is a wonderful example of what we can achieve in this community when we work together. I hope that these ‘Sox Shields’ do great service protecting patients and caregivers at Dana-Farber.”

PPE has not been the only critical need during the pandemic. Clinical staff, maintenance crews, security guards and greeters, cafeteria workers, parking attendants, and others have been working under exceptionally challenging circumstances. To help provide some comfort and sustenance to our frontline heroes and to our patients during this stressful time, our steadfast corporate partners and newfound friends have been making in-kind donations of coffee, water, snacks, gift cards, and other amenities.

These compassionate and generous in-kind donations have enabled Dana-Farber to provide our lifesaving treatments to our patients without pause, in the safest and most comfortable environment possible. “My last visit was during the COVID crisis and I was very impressed,” said one patient. “Excellent job in making the atmosphere caring and safe.”
Terry Sweet gave the world his song and his gift to the Lynch Syndrome Center

Terry Sweet, a successful accountant and gifted musician, espoused and exemplified the adage that “it is not the years in your life that count, but the life in your years.” Terry died of aggressive colon cancer in January 2019, but his family has many memories of his kindness and well-lived life. His legacy endures in the ongoing impact of his generous philanthropy.

Recently, Terry’s wife, Megan, fulfilled his wishes by making a pledge of $500,000 in support of Dana-Farber’s Lynch Syndrome Center—the first multidisciplinary center dedicated to the prevention, treatment, and study of Lynch syndrome, an inherited condition that greatly increases the lifetime risk of colorectal, endometrial, ovarian, stomach, and other cancers. The center provides comprehensive care; conducts innovative research to improve understanding, detection and prevention; educates care providers and the public; and trains future leaders in the field.

For patients like Terry, it can be a challenge to find the care and support they need, as Lynch syndrome is not well known and often underdiagnosed. The center, then, serves as an oasis of help and hope for patients and families by providing risk assessment, genetic testing, frequent screenings for related cancers, and personalized care plans. Terry was in home hospice when he learned about it from his brother, Dave, also a carrier of Lynch syndrome and an early donor to the center. Terry was really enthused about the center’s potential for helping patients with Lynch syndrome and was eager to support it.

“Terry’s gift will have a profound impact on patients and families now and for years to come,” Center Director Matthew Yungblun, MD, underscored the importance of Terry’s generosity in driving the center’s work. “The support of Terry and his family is sustaining our efforts to advance life-changing research and deliver the best care for people with Lynch syndrome,” he said. “Terry’s life inspires us all, and his philanthropy will make a meaningful difference to patients everywhere.”

Despite the challenges we currently face, we remain resolute in our mission to provide expert, compassionate care to our patients while we continue to advance the understanding, diagnosis, treatment, cure, and prevention of cancer and related diseases. Our extraordinary community of supporters is helping us meet these challenges head on, and we are grateful for your generosity.

Community contributes more than $11 million continued from page 3

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Terry Sweet left an inspiring legacy and made a lasting impact through his generous gift to support innovative research and personalized patient care at the Lynch Syndrome Center.
SUPPORT PMC 2020 REIMAGINED. There is still time to give! This summer, riders, volunteers, and supporters from the Pan-Mass Challenge (PMC) community celebrated the spirit of PMC weekend from their hometowns. Although this year’s PMC looked different, the commitment to Dana-Farber remains unwavering! 100% of every rider-raised dollar goes directly to Dana-Farber. Support a rider or make a general donation at PMC.org/Donate.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS
For more information on all Jimmy Fund and Dana-Farber events and programs, go to JimmyFund.org or Dana-Farber.org

OCTOBER 4
Boston Marathon® Jimmy Fund Walk: Your Way
Presented by Hyundai

Thank you to everyone involved in the 2020 Boston Marathon® Jimmy Fund Walk: Your Way! Learn more about how to participate or support the Walk at JimmyFundWalk.org or contact Mary Ferron at MaryC_Perron@dfci.harvard.edu.

OCTOBER 18
Toro Cooks for Jimmy
Join Toro Restaurant Executive Chef Josh Elliott and Island Creek Oysters’ Bill Weiss for a virtual, behind-the-scenes culinary experience in Toro’s kitchen. Follow along as Chef creates his most beloved recipes for autumn including a craft oyster dish. Register in advance to receive Chef’s recipes beforehand! Donations welcome. Contact Jillian Davis at Jillian_Davis@dfci.harvard.edu.

NOW–OCTOBER 31
Jimmy Fund Golf Challenge
Presented by Michter’s Sun
Support Dana-Farber from the fairways! Complete a golf challenge for the Jimmy Fund, raise money for cancer research and care this golf season, and win great prizes! Contact Victoria Fox at Victoria_Fox@dfci.harvard.edu or visit JimmyFundGolfChallenge.org

OCTOBER 31–NOVEMBER 1
Jimmy Fund Let’s Game℠ Streamer Weekend
Tune in to the Jimmy Fund Let’s Game Twitch channel and host your own charity stream to help fuel Dana-Farber’s lifesaving advances. To learn more, visit JimmyFundLet’sGame.org or contact Kenneth Chamberlain at JimmyFundLet’sGame@dfci.harvard.edu.

NOW–NOVEMBER 8
A Chance for Kids & Families®
Give $1 at checkout at participating Burger King® and Valvoline Instant Oil Change℠ locations across New England and receive a promotion card with a guaranteed prize, proving everyone’s a winner when you support the Jimmy Fund. Contact Mike O’Brien at MichaelT_Obrien@dfci.harvard.edu.

NOVEMBER 13
Jimmy’s Got Magic
Join the Jimmy Fund for a livestreamed magic show featuring the world’s most incredible magicians, illusionists, and mind readers—streamed right to the comfort of your home! Purchase your tickets for a fun-filled night, or donate for a Dana-Farber patient family to tune in for free. Contact Jillian Davis at Jillian_Davis@dfci.harvard.edu.

NOW–DECEMBER
Holiday Patient Assistance
Help brighten the holidays for patients in financial need. Your contribution helps to put a holiday meal on the table, buy gas to visit family, or purchase gifts for loved ones. Visit JimmyFund.org/HolidayGiving or contact Hannah McCoy at Holiday_Assistance@dfci.harvard.edu.

NOW–DECEMBER 31
Dana-Farber Holiday Cards
Presented by Amica Insurance
Embrace a holiday tradition that’s full of hope. Purchase cards to spread cheer while making a difference in the fight against cancer. View the complete collection and order online at Dana-FarberHoliday.org.

NOW–DECEMBER 31
Grand Slam Savings for a Great Cause
Give $1 at online checkout or order a Jimmy Fund Meal Deal to support the Jimmy Fund via Papa Gino’s and D’Angelo restaurants throughout New England. Contact Mike O’Brien at MichaelT_Obrien@dfci.harvard.edu.