

A Lifeline for Patients in Need: Our Ongoing Partnership with CancerCare

Since 1998, the Hirshberg Foundation has proudly partnered with CancerCare, a national nonprofit organization that provides free, professional support services to anyone affected by cancer. Together, we work to address the often-overlooked challenges that come with a cancer diagnosis, especially for patients facing financial hardship. Through this long-standing collaboration, the Foundation provides bi-annual grants that enable CancerCare to offer one-time financial assistance to low-income pancreatic cancer patients. In addition to these grants, patients have access to CancerCare's full range of emotional, educational, and practical support services, creating a comprehensive safety net during one of life's most difficult journeys.

The Financial Burden of Cancer Treatment For Low-Income Households

A pancreatic cancer diagnosis can turn a family's world upside down, not only emotionally but financially. Even with insurance, the cost of treatment, transportation, and time away from work can become overwhelming. CancerCare shares that financial stress continues to be a major barrier to cancer treatment adherence. What you need to know: many patients have made treatment trade-offs due to finances; 1 in 5 delayed cancer treatment due to cost; and 1 in 20 discontinued treatments altogether.

The "financial toxicity" of cancer takes a toll on the quality

of life and survival rates. That's why programs like our CancerCare grant are so critical—they not only ease financial stress but also help patients stay on track with life-saving treatment. According to MD Anderson, the financial strain can extend well beyond active treatment:

- Patients who stop working may lose employer-provided health and life insurance
- The out-of-pocket expenses not covered by insurance often lead to lasting debt
- Insurance may not cover clinical trial treatments

Stories Of Strength: Real Patients, Real Impact

With the help of the Hirshberg Foundation's grant, CancerCare was able to offer more than just financial assistance – they offered reassurance, connection, and tangible support to individuals facing extraordinary challenges. Thanks to the unwavering support of our community, the Hirshberg Foundation continues to meet patients where they are, offering comfort, care, and crucial financial relief when it's needed most.

"The Hirshberg Foundation for Pancreatic Cancer Research and CancerCare have partnered since 1998, providing over \$1 million to assist pancreatic cancer patients. This funding helps with essential needs and patients know they have not only CancerCare's various services but also the Hirshberg Foundation providing crucial support. This collaboration illustrates the power of shared dedication in helping and providing hope in the fight against pancreatic cancer," shares Vilmarie Rodriguez, Vice President of Patient Assistance and Community Engagement, CancerCare.

Together with CancerCare, we're not just helping patients navigate cancer, we're reminding them they're not alone. Here are just a few of the individuals whose lives were touched by this program:

After receiving a life-changing pancreatic cancer diagnosis, one patient found herself overwhelmed not only by treatment but also by isolation and financial strain. With no income and limited support, she used her grant to cover home care and transportation and also began counseling and support services to help her cope with the emotional toll of cancer.

– *61-year-old woman in New York*

One gentleman, living alone and managing on a modest Social Security income, bravely took on part-time work to stay afloat during treatment. The financial assistance helped him cover travel costs to and from his appointments, allowing him to focus on recovery instead of financial stress.

– *70-year-old man in Kentucky*

Another recipient, a resilient woman determined to keep up with her care, was facing mounting expenses on a fixed income. Thanks to the grant, she was able to afford transportation and essential living costs while continuing her treatment and staying connected to her loved ones.

– *60-year-old woman in Alabama*

A determined patient facing long-distance travel for out-of-state care leaned on his wife for support, but still struggled with transportation and insurance costs. The grant provided vital relief, making it possible for him to continue treatment while managing the financial and emotional demands of his journey.

– *53-year-old man in Michigan*

2024 Program Impact

Thanks to our generous donors and the tireless support of our community, we brought much-needed relief to patients across the country and served 126 low-income pancreatic cancer patients in

2024. This grant continues to ease the financial strain that often accompanies a pancreatic cancer diagnosis, helping patients meet basic needs and focus on healing. CancerCare was once again able to serve a diverse population of individuals affected by this disease.

Last year, the program supported patients in 31 states, with the highest number of recipients in Florida, New York, Georgia, North Carolina, and New Jersey. The majority of patients served were between the ages of 41-64 (78%) and 65 and older (45%). Grants were distributed across a wide range of communities, with 38% of recipients identifying as African American, 34% as White, and 15.5% as Hispanic.

Transportation assistance remained the most urgent need for clients, with 50% of grant funds used to cover the cost of traveling to and from treatment. Co-payments and medical expenses followed, accounting for 28% of the distributed funds. The remaining financial assistance grants were applied to home care services (22%) and other essential needs to help alleviate the burden of treatment and daily living.

Our CancerCare Grant

To date, the Hirshberg Foundation has provided nearly \$1.3 million for this patient program, which offers limited financial assistance associated with transportation to and from treatment, pain medication, childcare, home care, and beyond. Funds are provided to low-income patients, for whom it has been a vital resource over the years. Patients and families can learn more about eligibility and [program information today](#).

CancerCare also offers a wealth of [other resources](#) free of charge including support groups, educational workshops, co-payment assistance, and case management. Counseling is available

in English and Spanish and centers on the emotional and practical challenges that arise from cancer.

Patients and families are not alone in this journey. We are [here to help](#) guide you through the initial steps of educating yourself and your family about this disease.

Moving Beyond the Seed: Bridge to Breakthroughs

[Donate today](#)

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the Hirshberg Foundation's [Seed Grant Program](#), a milestone celebrating two decades of fueling discovery. These early investments have led to life-changing advancements in early detection, treatment, and patient care – but now, the future of pancreatic cancer research faces an urgent threat. That's why moving **Beyond the Seed: Bridge to Breakthroughs** is more crucial than ever.

Since 2005, we've awarded over 135 Seed Grants across 55 institutions, planting the first seeds of groundbreaking research at UCLA, Johns Hopkins, Mayo Clinic, MD Anderson, Memorial Sloan Kettering, and beyond. As we celebrate this legacy, we recognize that the fight to cure pancreatic cancer needs more than a strong beginning, it requires support every step of the way.

At a time when **federal research funding is shrinking, our work is more vital than ever**. The National Institutes of Health (NIH) and Department of Defense (DoD) have slashed pancreatic cancer-specific grants, leaving researchers scrambling for resources to

continue their work. Without funding, promising discoveries stall, postdocs lose support, and lifesaving progress is delayed.

Beyond the Seed is a bold new initiative that aims to bridge this funding gap and ensure research doesn't just begin, but continues and reaches patients. We cannot afford to let breakthroughs fade due to lack of funding. We know that **private research has helped these ideas bloom from seeds into progress**, it's crucial we ensure that research doesn't just begin – but continues, evolves, and reaches the patients who need it most.

The consequences of these funding cuts are already reverberating throughout the research community. "The total budget of CDMRP has been significantly cut for 2025," explains [Dr. Miklos Sahin-Toth](#), Chair of the Foundation's Scientific Advisory Board. "Pancreatic cancer-specific funding was eliminated this year, and while general cancer grants remain, the chances of securing them are far worse. This disruption threatens ongoing work and the future of postdocs and students counting on support."

As [Dr. Timothy Donahue](#), Director of the [UCLA Agi Hirshberg Center for Pancreatic Diseases](#) wrote us, "The recent federal budget cuts to pancreatic cancer research will significantly slow progress at UCLA and across the country. These reductions threaten our ability to develop new therapies, launch innovative clinical trials, and ultimately improve outcomes for patients facing this devastating disease."

Support Research: Donate Now

Your donation today will fuel the next phase of research, ensuring that promising studies reach the clinical stage and lead to real impact. Together, we can carry promising science from an early hypothesis to transformative discoveries. As we

celebrate 20 years of sowing the seeds of hope, help us take the next step: toward a future of breakthroughs where lives are saved.

[Donate today](#)

Advocate for Change: Contact Your Representatives

Beyond donating, you can make a lasting impact by [urging lawmakers](#) to prioritize pancreatic cancer research funding. Federal budget cuts are stalling critical advancements, jeopardizing promising studies, and limiting access to innovative treatments. By [reaching out](#) to your representatives and government officials, you can help restore and expand research funding, ensuring that scientists have the resources needed to continue their lifesaving work. Your voice matters, policymakers need to hear from constituents who care about this issue.

Suggested Message:

"As a member of the pancreatic cancer community, I am deeply concerned about the federal cuts to cancer research funding and fear for the lives of patients and families facing this disease in the future. I urge you to support increased funding for pancreatic cancer research to ensure progress continues toward earlier detection, better treatments, and ultimately, a cure."

Contact your representatives today and be a champion for pancreatic cancer research!

Spread Awareness: Share the Facts

Show you care about advancing research by forwarding this

information to friends and family. [Our Awareness Resources](#) (available in both English and Spanish) make it easier to share the facts. By spreading awareness and encouraging others to give, you're not just supporting research – you're giving hope to patients and families who are counting on progress. Every voice raised and every dollar donated helps move us closer to a cure.

Dr. Andrea Bullock: Advancing Clinical Trials and Translational Research

Since 2005, our Seed Grant Program has fostered an environment for research to bloom. As we mark 20 years since our first cohort of grantees, it is more exciting than ever to look back and see all that is being accomplished.



Andrea Bullock, MD, MPH, received a 2011 [Seed Grant](#), a pivotal milestone that helped shape her career as an investigator dedicated to pancreatic cancer research. Now, as an Assistant Professor of Medicine at Harvard Medical School and a medical oncologist at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, Dr. Bullock continues her work as an academic medical oncologist and clinical investigator.

Thanks to early funding from her Seed Grant award, Dr. Bullock was able to focus on pancreaticobiliary cancers, spearheading collaborations that continue to this day on translational early detection efforts. Her work contributed to significant clinical advancements, including the routine use of germline and somatic genetic testing, the integration of PARP inhibitors into treatment strategies, and an increased focus on homologous recombination deficiency (HRD) in pancreatic cancer. These efforts have directly influenced patient care and the development of targeted therapies.

Dr. Bullock is committed to understanding cancer pathogenesis and developing therapeutic strategies that can be rapidly translated into clinical practice. Her research explores the intersection of DNA repair mechanisms and mitogenetic signaling in pancreatic cancer, including the role of somatic BRCA mutations and receptor tyrosine kinase growth factor signaling in the EGFR and PI3K pathways. She oversees multiple phase 1 and phase 2 clinical trials exploring novel targeted and immune therapies for pancreatic cancer. As a medical oncologist and clinical translational investigator, Dr. Bullock is dedicated to advancing research that enhances outcomes for pancreatic cancer patients.

Dr. Bullock envisions a future where early detection efforts are prioritized and immuno-oncology breakthroughs lead to durable responses for pancreatic cancer patients. Thanks to early-career funding from the Hirshberg Foundation's Seed Grant Program, she continues to drive transformative research that brings hope to those affected by pancreatic cancer.

Thanks to your support, we've been planting seeds of hope through our Seed Grant Program for 20 years. It's a delight to watch research grow from the lab to the clinic and bloom into clinical trials and new treatment options.

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Dr. Ken Herrmann: Advancing Theranostics and Pancreatic Cancer Research

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Ken Herrmann, MD, MBA, is a global leader in oncologic nuclear medicine with a career dedicated to advancing theranostics, an innovative field that combines diagnostics with targeted therapies.

Dr. Herrmann completed his residency in nuclear medicine at TU Munich, where he focused on PET imaging in oncology. He then completed a fellowship at Hokkaido University and earned an executive MBA from the University of Zürich. In 2015, as an Associate Professor in the Ahmanson Translational Imaging Division, he was awarded a [Seed Grant](#) that helped create the theranostic program at UCLA. Dr. Herrmann's Seed Grant helped advance his career and laid the foundation for UCLA's

theranostic program, which is now recognized as one of the world's leading centers for research and clinical application.

Theranostics is a fusion of therapeutics and diagnostics, representing a precision medicine approach that combines targeted diagnostic imaging with precise therapeutic interventions. This often involves using radiopharmaceuticals designed to identify and treat cancer cells. For example, a radioactive compound that detects cancer cells via positron emission tomography (PET) imaging techniques is used. Subsequently, a therapeutic radioactive agent targets and destroys these identified cancer cells. This method allows for precise treatment delivery, minimizing damage to healthy tissues and enhancing treatment efficacy.

Currently, Dr. Herrmann serves as Chair of the Department of Nuclear Medicine at Universitätsklinikum Essen in Germany, leading groundbreaking research and clinical applications. His influence extends across the field as a past Chair of the European Association of Nuclear Medicine (EANM) Oncology & Theranostics Committee and as a Section Editor for the *Journal of Nuclear Medicine*. He is actively involved in European Innovative Health Initiative (IHI) grants, securing over €25 million (\$27 million) in funding. These projects aim to foster national and international alliances in pancreatic cancer research, with the goal of curing metastatic pancreatic cancer.

Dr. Herrmann's pioneering work in theranostics has significantly influenced research and clinical practices, offering hope for more effective and personalized treatments for patients with challenging cancers, such as metastatic pancreatic cancer.

Dr. Herrmann envisions establishing a theranostic approach for treating metastatic pancreatic ductal adenocarcinomas (PDACs), integrating diagnostics and therapeutics to enhance patient

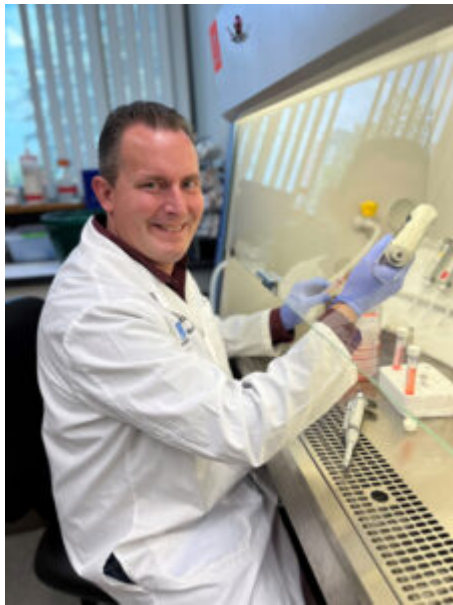
outcomes.

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Dr. Ethan Abel: Advancing Pancreatic Cancer Research with a Focus on Therapeutic Resistance

Since 2005, our Seed Grant Program has fostered an environment for research to bloom. As we mark 20 years since our first cohort of grantees, it is more exciting than ever to look back and see all that is being accomplished.



Dr. Ethan Abel, a 2021 Hirshberg Foundation [Seed Grant recipient](#), has continued to make significant strides in pancreatic cancer research. Now in his sixth year as an Assistant Professor at Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center, Dr. Abel leads a dedicated research lab focused on uncovering new mechanisms of therapeutic resistance in pancreatic ductal adenocarcinoma (PDAC).

The Hirshberg Foundation's Seed Grant was crucial in launching Dr. Abel's independent research career. His early work understanding how the [HNF1A protein impacts drug resistance](#) in pancreatic cancer led to a prestigious National Institutes of Health (NIH) R37 grant. This grant supports his work in understanding the novel roles of **HNF1A**, a transcription factor in pancreatic cancer, and new proteins of interest with underappreciated roles in pancreatic cancer.

Dr. Abel's lab is preparing two research manuscripts, one of which is [under review](#), based on findings supported by the Seed Grant and R37 funding. His team includes a technician and two Ph.D. students, one of whom will defend her thesis this summer, an exciting milestone for the next generation of pancreatic cancer researchers.

With his R37 grant, Dr. Abel is investigating how **HNF1A contributes to resistance against KRAS-targeted therapies**. Once deemed "undruggable," KRAS has now become a viable target, opening the door to new treatment strategies. However, as with many targeted therapies, resistance remains a challenge. Dr. Abel's research aims to uncover how HNF1A interacts with BRD4 and BET inhibitors to drive resistance, with the goal of

identifying ways to overcome these barriers.

Beyond drug resistance, his lab is also exploring the potential role of **HNF1A in pancreatic cancer metastasis**, illustrating how this protein may contribute to disease progression. These discoveries could open new avenues for therapeutic intervention, potentially improving outcomes for patients with advanced pancreatic cancer.

Dr. Abel is optimistic about the future of pancreatic cancer research. With the recent breakthroughs in KRAS and pan-RAS inhibitors, he envisions a shift in treatment paradigms, potentially replacing or enhancing traditional chemotherapy. He anticipates that much of the field's focus will be on understanding and overcoming therapy resistance in the next five years, ensuring that these promising new treatments can benefit more patients.

His work exemplifies the impact of private funding in fostering innovative research that leads to major scientific advancements. As the Hirshberg Foundation celebrates **20 years of our Seed Grant program**, Dr. Abel's career stands as a testament to the power of early funding in accelerating progress toward a cure.

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Momentum Newsletter: Spring 2025

At the Hirshberg Foundation, we remain dedicated to funding groundbreaking research, supporting patients and caregivers, and rallying communities to raise awareness.

20 Years of Impact: Celebrating the Seed Grant Program

For two decades, the Hirshberg Foundation's Seed Grant Program has been a catalyst for innovation, providing early-stage funding to researchers pursuing promising ideas in pancreatic cancer. This year, we highlight remarkable career achievements and discoveries made by past awardees, from [Dr. Guido Eibl](#), a 2010 awardee who now leads the Hirshberg Translational Research Lab at UCLA, to Dr. Alexandra Demcsak, a researcher in the [Sahin-Toth Lab](#), advancing our understanding of pancreatitis and its genetic underpinnings. We are also incredibly proud of [Dr. Jami Saloman](#) for receiving an R01 grant from NCI based on her Seed Grant research and [Dr. Marina Pasca di Magliano's](#) exceptional career and her collaborative research program at the University of Michigan. Their groundbreaking findings are shedding light on disease mechanisms and potential therapies.

The Seed Grant Program's legacy extends beyond its initial funding—many recipients go on to secure major federal grants and drive life-changing discoveries. With your support, we can continue planting the seeds for the next wave of breakthroughs.

[Read more about the impact of our Seed Grant Program →](#)

Our Commitment to Patient Support Programs

The challenges pancreatic cancer patients face extend beyond medical treatment; a diagnosis can impact every aspect of life. The Hirshberg Foundation remains committed to deepening our investment in patient support services and resources to meet this need. We are proud to continue sponsoring the [NCCN Guidelines for Patients](#), an essential, expert-approved resource designed to help individuals and caregivers navigate pancreatic cancer with clarity and confidence. An updated version will be released later this year. In addition to providing educational resources, our long-standing partnership with [CancerCare](#) helps low-income patients navigating the hardest moments of their journey find a reprieve from a portion of their co-pay, transportation to treatment, essential medications, and unforeseen medical costs. We aim to ease the financial strain so patients can focus on healing. Your support helps patients access critical information to take control of their journey with knowledge and confidence.

[Provide hope to patients today →](#)

19th Annual Symposium on Pancreatic Cancer

Our 19th Annual Symposium on Pancreatic Cancer is right around the corner! This free, in-person, and virtual event is a cornerstone of our mission to educate and empower patients, caregivers, and the broader medical community. With expert-led sessions covering critical topics such as nutrition, movement, mindfulness, and medical cannabis for symptom management,

attendees will gain invaluable insights and practical strategies for navigating a pancreatic cancer diagnosis. We encourage everyone to join us for this empowering day of knowledge and support.

[Learn more and register today →](#)

Pedal for a Purpose at the Tour de Pier

The Tour de Pier is back for another inspiring year! On May 18, 2025, we will gather in Manhattan Beach for this one-of-a-kind stationary cycling event, bringing together fitness, fundraising, and community spirit. Every dollar raised fuels vital research and patient support programs, helping us move closer to a cure. Whether you ride, donate, or volunteer, your participation makes a difference.

[Sign up or support a team today →](#)

From research to education to fundraising, we are united in advancing pancreatic cancer research and supporting those affected. Whether you attend our Symposium, ride in the Tour de Pier, or learn more about our Seed Grant Program, you play a vital role in our progress.

Together, we can move closer to a future where proactive prevention, early detection, and new treatment options transform outcomes for pancreatic cancer patients. Thank you for being part of this journey!