An Overview of the Updates to the NCCN Guidelines for Pancreatic Cancer

The National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN) works to improve cancer care through their vast collection of Guidelines for Patients. The latest version of the Guidelines for Patients: Pancreatic Cancer, sponsored by the Hirshberg Foundation, provides information to help patients and their families navigate a pancreatic cancer diagnosis in an empowered and informed way.

The extensive guidelines include care options, treatment protocols, quotes from patients, advice for how to discuss treatment with doctors, and much more. The Guidelines for Patients are based on the recommendations in the NCCN Clinical Practice Guidelines in Oncology available to physicians. One of the most recent updates included for patients is the addition of a new first-line therapeutic option, liposomal irinotecan + 5-FU + leucovorin + oxaliplatin (known as NALIRIFOX). This new drug regime has shown promise in early-stage trials conducted by Dr. Zev Wainberg, a member of the UCLA Agi Hirshberg Center for Pancreatic Diseases, Professor of Medicine at UCLA and co-director of the UCLA GI Oncology Program.

Another highlight of the updated version is the recommendation that all individuals diagnosed with pancreatic cancer have genetic testing for a range of inherited mutations. The advice is to screen beyond just *BRCA1* and *BRCA2* to look at an array of mutations that can assist with treatment planning. There is also an expanded section on biomarker profiling for advanced and metastatic pancreatic cancer which can provide a molecular

profile of small yet important features of the cancer. Biomarkers detect abnormal changes in cancer cells' genes that occurred during your lifetime and may also help with treatment planning.

An update that we are excited to focus on is the whole-body approach to treatment that is emphasized in the latest Patient Guidelines. The Hirshberg Foundation has long advocated for a holistic method of treatment that takes into consideration the mind-body connection. The newest updates include details on supportive care that is recommended from the point of diagnosis. Treatment options have also taken on the best-practice of a more individualized approach based on individual and cancer specific characteristics.

The Hirshberg Foundation is proud to support this great work to ensure that all patients and caregivers receive the most up-to-date information to assist them through their cancer journey. The NCCN Guidelines for Patients booklet is available for digital download or to purchase through Amazon.

The 2022 UCLA Activity Summary Report

The UCLA Agi Hirshberg Center for Pancreatic Diseases continues to be one of the nation's leading institutions for pancreatic cancer research, diagnosis, and treatment thanks to funding from the Hirshberg Foundation and our supporters. As we celebrated our 25 years of progress, we were elated to see the five-year survival rate for pancreatic cancer jump to 12 percent, a huge

increase from the five-percent five-year survival rate of 1997, when we began. It is thanks to our fundraising events and our donors that we have been able to advance research, improve patient outcomes, and take these crucial steps towards a cancer-free future.

Each year, UCLA provides the Hirshberg Foundation with a detailed report of the progress that is possible thanks to our partnership. Below are updates on the important work taking place at UCLA.

UCLA Agi Hirshberg Center for Pancreatic Diseases

The Hirshberg Center is moving to a brand-new space on the top floor of 100 Medical Plaza on the UCLA campus. With state-of-the-art accommodations for patients and their loved ones, this larger space will be optimized to provide the uncompromising care the center is known for. Overseeing the development of this incredible space as the new Director of the UCLA Agi Hirshberg Center for Pancreatic Diseases, Dr. Timothy Donahue. The new space will unite the Integrated Practice Unit's (IPU) team of specialists under one roof for enhanced collaboration among different departments and care areas. Currently all IPU pancreatic cancer patients undergo genetic testing, allowing the team to tailor treatment with new drugs that can target identified genetic alterations. Input from multiple disciplines on each patient's case allows clinicians to deliver exceptional comprehensive care that is disease- and patient-specific. This new location will provide a beautiful healing space for patients to receive world-class care.

Nutrition for Safer Surgeries

Nutrition for Safer Surgeries is a new program at UCLA funded by the Hirshberg Foundation. Developed by Shelby Yaceczko, MS, RDN-AP, CNSC, CSSD, an advanced practice dietician at UCLA and speaker at our 17th Annual Hirshberg Symposium on Pancreatic Cancer, the program provides early nutrition assessment and intervention for any patient with a new or existing gastrointestinal cancer diagnosis, with a special focus on pancreatic cancer. Medical nutrition therapy services can prevent or correct nutritional deficiencies, enhance quality of life during cancer treatment, and minimize treatment's side effects. Research has shown that perioperative nutrition evaluation and optimization are essential to the success of pancreatic cancer surgery and result in decreased morbidities and mortalities. A member of the IPU, Yaceczko consults with patients before surgery to improve surgical outcomes.

Robotic Surgery at UCLA

A 2016 Seed Grant recipient, Mark Girgis, MD, continues to advance robotic surgery at UCLA. Dr. Girgis, Director of Robotic Surgery and Assistant Professor of Surgery, David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA, has helped robotic surgery gain momentum in the treatment of pancreatic disease. The minimally invasive technique improves long-term recovery prospects due to decreased healing time which allows patients to begin post-surgery chemotherapy sooner. The robotic surgery expertise of Dr. Girgis and his team enables them to expand patient populations eligible for surgery, regardless of complications and disease stage. The popularity of robotic surgery is on the rise with both patients and surgeons, and we are optimistic that this treatment option will improve patient care.

Clinical Trials for Treatment

Clinical trials are a crucial step in the development of effective therapies for pancreatic cancer. Many patients also benefit from participation in a clinical trial as part of the treatment. Patients seen through the Hirshberg Center's IPU have access to an array of treatment options including the 19 clinical trials currently in progress at UCLA. Plus, the UC Pancreatic Cancer Consortium is currently running over 46 clinical trials focused on pancreatic cancer. These clinical trials not only help advance understanding of this disease, but they also offer patients and their families hope for better treatment options. The Hirshberg Center's vast offerings of clinical trials for promising treatments put it at the forefront of pioneering translational research.

The Hirshberg Foundation's partnership with UCLA has created a premiere pancreatic cancer center with cutting-edge research and world-class care that draws patients from across the country. Together we are making progress toward improved treatments, outcomes, and quality of life for patients with pancreatic cancer. We are hopeful that we can watch research progress accelerate towards a cancer-free future.

Read the full summary here →

Exciting Changes to the

Hirshberg Center for Pancreatic Diseases

We are seeing the seeds we planted 25 years ago with the creation of the Foundation come to full bloom. A pillar of our Foundation mission was "*to create premier Pancreatic Cancer Center where all needs of pancreatic cancer patients can be met in one location with the most advanced treatment options.*" That dream is now the UCLA Agi Hirshberg Center for Pancreatic Diseases and it is moving to a beautiful new space. We've had a celebratory sneak peek and look forward to sharing more when the Center opens this summer. This gorgeous new space will offer patients and loved ones world-class integrative care in one convenient location.

As we prepare for the new space, we are honored to welcome Dr. Timothy Donahue as the new Director of the UCLA Agi Hirshberg Center for Pancreatic Diseases. Dr. Donahue is the Garry Shandling Chair of Pancreatic Cancer Surgery, Chief of the Division of Surgical Oncology, and Program Director of the General Surgery Residency at UCLA. He is an expert in the treatment of pancreatic disease and oversees a NIH funded research program focused on pancreatic cancer. With Dr. Donahue as the Director and Dr. Joe Hines as Chair and Executive Medical Director of the Department of Surgery, our pancreatic cancer program at UCLA is in the most capable hands so that all patients can receive best in class care.

Taking the helm of our Scientific Advisory Board will be esteemed researcher, Dr. Miklos Sahin-Toth. Dr. Sahin-Toth has lead his namesake lab at UCLA since 2019. A world-renowned expert in the area of the pancreas disorders with a focus on genetic risk factors in chronic pancreatitis, Dr. Sahin-Toth

brings a fresh perspective and talent as Chair of the board, particularly as we look towards the future. For the past 25 years we have invested in progress. Now, we look toward the next 25 years filled with hope for all that is to come.

These exciting changes are possible thanks to those equally invested in our motto, “Never Give Up: Finding a Cure is Worth Fighting For.”

New insights into pancreatic cancer drug resistance and metastasis

Ethan V. Abel, PhD, a 2021 Seed Grant recipient at Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center, has provided an update on his research in deciphering the role of the HNF1A-SKP2 axis in therapeutic response in pancreatic ductal adenocarcinoma (PDAC). After receiving his award, Dr. Abel wrote that he hoped the grant would “allow [his] lab to explore how a poorly understood protein, called HNF1A, prevents drugs from working in pancreatic cancer, which is one of the largest challenges to treating this disease.”

Through funding from the Seed Grant, Dr. Abel has found that the pancreas transcription factor (a type of protein that controls gene expression) HNF1A directly upregulates SKP2. This known cancer-driving protein controls the process of cell proliferation. Dr. Abel has found that HNF1A can push up the levels of SKP2, even in the presence of drugs that normally

decrease SKP2 levels and cause cancer cells to stop growing. It is through this interaction that HNF1A is able to drive resistance of pancreatic cancer cells to a number of drugs. In addition to SKP2, other cancer-driving proteins have been identified as potential targets of HNF1A, including c-MYC and EGFR, and the contributions of these proteins to HNF1A-mediated drug resistance is an ongoing effort in the lab. These findings are highly significant, if not surprising, as HNF1A has long been regarded as a tumor suppressor protein, leading to an underappreciation of HNF1A as a potential therapeutic target in pancreatic cancer.

In addition to these discoveries, funding from the Seed Grant has allowed the Abel lab to make additional exciting and unexpected discoveries, including the discovery that HNF1A may promote the metastatic spread of pancreatic cancer cells. As aggressive metastasis is a hallmark of pancreatic cancer and leads to the majority of patient deaths from the disease, understanding what drives metastasis and how to potentially stop cancer from spreading could sharply affect the mortality of the disease. Dr. Abel's graduate student, Ms. Katherine Crawford, is conducting ongoing work exploring the role of HNF1A in metastasis.

These groundbreaking findings have already been shared with the scientific community. Ms. Crawford presented research posters at the 2022 AACR Pancreatic Cancer Special Conference, while Dr. Abel presented at the American Pancreatic Association's 2022 annual meeting. A research manuscript summarizing this study is currently being prepared.

Dr. Abel wrote to us to say, "I would like to express my extreme gratitude to the Hirshberg Pancreatic Cancer Research Foundation, the scientific advisory board, the volunteers, and the donors for my Seed Grant Award. I am truly honored and

excited! Research funding is scarce, especially in these trying times, and grants such as the Seed Grant Award are absolutely essential to foster young scientists like myself and enable us to establish research labs that will make impactful discoveries to help patients with pancreatic cancer. I am hopeful that the discoveries we make with support from this award will expand our understanding of drug resistance in pancreatic cancer and bring us a big step closer to finding ways to treat it better. Thank you again!"

Further underscoring the impact of this research, Dr. Abel leveraged data from his Seed Grant-funded study to secure an R01 grant from the National Cancer Institute/National Institutes of Health. This grant, entitled "Targeting HNF1A-mediated therapeutic resistance in pancreatic ductal adenocarcinoma," will provide over $1.8 million in direct research funding over the next five years. This funding will support continued exploration of the role of HNF1A in both response and resistance to targeted therapies such as BET-inhibitors and KRAS-inhibitors.

By investing in early-stage research, the Hirshberg Foundation's Seed Grant Program continues to accelerate discoveries that pave the way for new treatments. Dr. Abel's work is a testament to the program's impact in driving innovation in pancreatic cancer research and the importance of early-stage funding.

Update: In early 2023, Dr. Abel received an R01 research grant from the National Cancer Institute for his work targeting HNF1A-mediated therapeutic resistance in pancreatic ductal adenocarcinoma.

A few months later, his grant was selected to receive additional support through the prestigious Method to Extend Research in Time (MERIT) (R37) Award. The MERIT awards "provide long-term

support to outstanding, experienced investigators.” R37 MERIT awards are very rare, and an individual only has one opportunity to receive one in their career. We congratulate Dr. Abel on his groundbreaking work and all he is doing to advance research towards a cure!

Marathon Goddess, Julie Weiss Raises One Million Dollars for Pancreatic Cancer Research

Ten years ago, Julie Weiss finished her journey of 52 marathons in 52 weeks, in a quest to raise one million dollars for pancreatic cancer research and became known as the *Marathon Goddess*. On Sunday, March 19th, Weiss will be celebrated by pancreatic cancer survivors and supporters everywhere as she crosses the Los Angeles Marathon finish line yet again, and at the Hirshberg Foundation’s Purple People Party Cheer Station near Mile 21. The celebration will commemorate Weiss raising more than one million dollars for pancreatic cancer research over the past decade, and helping raise awareness about the disease that has the highest mortality rate of all major cancers.

MY BIGGEST FAN & INSPIRATION…

In 2010, following the death of her father to pancreatic cancer, Julie remained determined to make a difference, and running gave her a purpose. Just one week after he passed, she fulfilled their dream for her to qualify and run the Boston Marathon. He

was, after all, her biggest fan. “I know he was there with me. He was the wind at my back and had the best seat in the house my heart after I ran the Boston Marathon in 2011,” Julie shared. From there, she decided to turn her passion into a purpose and embarked on an incredible endeavor to raise hope, money and awareness for pancreatic cancer. In time, Julie chose the name Marathon Goddess, but is quick to point out its true meaning that it is not about her, it’s a name that allows her to encourage others to embrace their passion and let it shine.

A $1 MILLION DOLLAR GOAL…

Since 2010, Julie has made many ties in the pancreatic cancer community. She has witnessed the ups and downs of statistics and gotten to know the faces and journeys of countless survivors whom she has run in honor of. Through the ups and downs, her focus hasn’t waivered: “When I began this journey, my objective was to raise a million dollars to find a cure for pancreatic cancer, the disease that took my father away from me, and to help others affected by this insidious disease,” said Weiss.“Julie set out to achieve a lofty goal, at the grass roots level, and never wavered in her commitment to see it through,” said Lisa Manheim, Executive Director of the Hirshberg Foundation. “In addition to being our partner in helping spotlight pancreatic cancer, the awareness and money she raised has helped fund much-needed research bringing us one step closer to finding a cure.” Throughout the years, Weiss has received support and donations from corporate sponsors and running organizations, however, the majority of her fundraising has come from individuals and families that have been impacted by the disease and those she has inspired through her running.

PHILANTHROPIST & AMBASSADOR…

As a marathon runner, author, philanthropist, ambassador and advocate, Weiss keeps busy by sharing enduring stories of hope, empowerment, loss and resilience from patients and families fighting for their lives and the lives of their loved ones. She has remained a fervent supporter of the Hirshberg Foundation throughout her journey, motivating fellow runners on the Hirshberg Training Team each year, running the LA Cancer Challenge 5K and receiving the Never Give Up Award, leading a team at Tour de Pier, and inspiring communities across the country to Never Give Up hope. She has been a spokesperson for the Hirshberg Foundation's successful fundraising campaign, *52 Races for 52 Faces*, a year-long, philanthropic crusade in which she competitively ran in marathons, half marathons, 10Ks and 5Ks in 52 cities throughout the U.S., and across the Pacific Ocean to shine a light on pancreatic cancer. The campaign started and ended with Weiss running the Los Angeles Marathon which also included the foundation's signature Halloween fundraiser, the L.A. Cancer Challenge.

Through running, Weiss hopes to show the world that pancreatic cancer is much more than devastating statistics. There is a name and a face behind every survivor, and she is running for them. "Over a decade later, my mission to fight the good fight against pancreatic cancer has evolved to not only fundraise, but to be a voice for patients and to create awareness about the risks." She added, "Although we have seen progress, more needs to be done, and together, we can find a cure. We got this!"

AN EXTRAORDINARY FINISH…

Throughout this extraordinary journey, Julie has shared enduring stories of hope, empowerment, loss and resilience from patients

and families fighting for their lives and the lives of their loved ones. She has crossed over 1,000 finish lines, whether she was completing her 52 Races for 52 Faces campaign or her most recent 12 races in 12 months to raise awareness about the 5-year survival rate that has increased two years in a row. The stories she has helped share will never be forgotten and thanks to the one and only Marathon Goddess, we are $1 million dollars closer to a cure through research funding and patient programs. *"Running with a purpose to fight the good fight against pancreatic cancer has become my mission; I will not stop until we have found a cure."* We look forward to cheering her on as she leaps across her 116th marathon finish line!

National Cancer Prevention Month: How to Create Your Personal Cancer Prevention Plan

As the Hirshberg Foundation funds invaluable patient programs and research in prevention, early diagnosis, therapies and patient care, among these paths to eradicate pancreatic cancer, prevention is at the forefront. As shared by the CDC, preventative care options including blood tests, annual screenings, surveillance, and scans are all available for various cancers and diseases. The Hirshberg Foundation is eager to empower you and your loved ones with the tools you need to take control of your health and be proactive in your cancer prevention plan. As National Cancer Prevention Month comes to a

close, we encourage you and your loved ones, especially if you are at high risk, to use the resources we've provided to create a prevention plan that will allow you to thrive.

Begin your prevention journey by taking a personal inventory of your health. In 2021, the National Institutes for Health, discussed the importance of *Pancreatic cancer epidemiology: understanding the role of lifestyle and inherited risk factors*. Rethinking certain lifestyle choices, documenting your family history, and assessing your risk factors could help set a foundation for a healthier future. Tackling modifiable risk factors (smoking, obesity, diabetes and pancreatitis) are just that, *modifiable*. Making the decision to quit smoking, maintaining or losing weight, preventing type 2 diabetes or pancreatitis are significant steps. Speak with your doctor about how to begin addressing these important health issues.

Over time, we have found that some communities are disproportionately affected by pancreatic cancer while genetics play an important role for others. Both are at high-risk and raising awareness is only the first step in addressing the issue. Whether you are of Ashkenazi Jewish ancestry or have a family history of diabetes, pancreatitis, or pancreatic cancer, it's important that we address these diseases before they become life threatening. Progress continues to be made in the field of pancreatic cancer as diagnostic blood and saliva tests are in development, but our ultimate goal is to offer a cancer-free future. After 25 years of fighting this disease on many fronts and sharing the facts, we remain confident that we are getting closer and closer to reaching this goal.

Learn how you can support our efforts and make a donation for cancer prevention today!

PANCREATIC CANCER PREVENTION RESOURCES

MODIFIABLE RISK FACTORS

- Smoking
- Obesity, Nutrition and Exercise
- Stage-2 Diabetes
- High Risk Communities
- Risk Factors

GENETIC COUNSELING & TESTING

- Genetic Counseling
- Ashkenazi Jewish Ancestry
- BRCA1 & BRCA2 gene mutations
- Hereditary Pancreatitis

EDUCATIONAL VIDEOS

- Dr. Marcia Canto, Johns Hopkins: Pancreatic Cancer Screening and Surveillance in High-Risk Individuals
- Wendy Conlon, UCLA: Why Should I See a Genetic Counselor?
- Dr. Zhoaping Li, UCLA: Nutrition & Pancreatic Cancer – Food Matters!
- UCLA Center for Nutrition: Boosting your Immune System