

# **Symposium Speaker Spotlight: Dr. Jenny Tran to discuss managing cancer related anxiety**

The Hirshberg Foundation is excited to announce Jenny Tran, PhD will be joining us at the 17th Annual Symposium on Pancreatic Cancer to discuss turning down the volume on worry to manage cancer related anxiety.

Cancer is a significant life stressor often accompanied by an increase in worry and anxiety. This presentation focuses on understanding how these responses can manifest themselves and impact patients. It will also offer patients and families a range of strategies to lessen the burden of worry and anxiety when it no longer serves us.

Jenny shares, “As the Clinical Psychology Postdoctoral Fellow, I have the privilege of providing comprehensive assessment and psychosocial care to patients and family members touched by cancer, in addition to providing multidisciplinary consultation in medical settings to other members of the healthcare team. Through an integration of evidence-based interventions and a human-centered approach, I attempt to meet patients where they are, to provide them with extra tools to navigate the cancer experience, and to create a space that integrates their strengths and values so that they feel genuinely seen and heard throughout their cancer care.”

Dr. Tran works at the Simms/Mann Center, in addition to providing support within the UCLA Alhambra Cancer care clinic, and co-manages the psychosocial care within the UCLA Advanced GI

Cancer Program. She provides a monthly online orientation for patients and family members to learn about the supportive care services available to them, including information about the Simms/Mann Center, Palliative Care, and Nutrition Oncology.

After receiving a B.A. in psychology from University of California, San Diego, Dr. Tran worked for two years as a behavioral interventionist with children and adolescents with neurodevelopmental disorders. Through this role, she cultivated an interest in working with family members and caregivers who are actively involved in the care of their loved ones. Dr. Tran received extensive clinical training through several pre-internships including a life-changing year providing psychosocial care to patients with cancer here at the Simms/Mann Center. Her experience working with complex medical conditions highlighted the importance of understanding patient's needs through a biopsychosocial lens and the advantages of working with other members in a care team. Dr. Tran shares, "It is an immense honor to be invited into the lives of our patients and family, and to walk alongside them in this journey."

Providing patient with emotional support tools throughout treatment is an important piece to overall health and we are happy to have Dr. Jenny Tran present **Turning Down the Volume on Worry: Managing Cancer Related Anxiety.**

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# The 5-Year Survival Rate

# Continues an Upward Trajectory to 12%

The ACS statistics released today show an increase in the 5-year survival rate for all stages, revealing it to be 12% for the first time ever. The 5-year survival rate for pancreatic cancer survivors remained in the single digits for far too long but for the first time since 2017, we've seen survival rates increase two years in a row. Thanks to the [American Cancer Society's \(ACS\) Annual Cancer Facts & Figures Report](#), we're beginning to witness a shift. The results demonstrate something our Founder, Agi Hirshberg, has shared time and again, **"Never Give Up: The journey continues but an end is in sight."**

As the first Foundation to ever fund pancreatic cancer research, we offer a positive and hopeful message rather than focusing on statistics. There is value in understanding this important data, however, we've also seen survivors beat the odds and that is equally important to keep patients and families hopeful. As part of our [Patient Support Programs](#), our 2021 webinar, [Celebrate and Learn from 10, 20 and 30-year Survivors of Pancreatic Cancer](#), proved to be an extraordinary learning experience as these survivors, who continue to thrive today, shared their unique and personal journeys.

On the research front, Executive Director, Lisa Manheim, shares, **"We have the brightest in the world focusing on the disease and the change in these statistics reflects all of our hard work as a community. Witnessing this change in the statistics will hopefully be gratifying for our supporters who continue to fight for a cure and our patients who deserve to live a long and healthy life."** Our recent funding of [8 new Seed Grants](#) continues to drive research and advance our understanding of this disease.

With projects focused on therapy and immunotherapy, early detection, and cancer biology, our teams of researchers in leading medical institutions are striving to improve patient outcomes. Learn more about these Seed Grant projects in the most recent edition of our [Momentum Newsletter](#).

Pancreatic cancer remains the third-leading cause of cancer-related deaths and the ACS Facts & Figures report shows us that an estimated 64,050 Americans will be diagnosed with pancreatic cancer this year, an increase of nearly 3% since 2022. However, there is hope and we are a community that Never Gives Up. It is important for each of us to [take action today](#). Make 2023 the year to establish a personal cancer prevention plan by learning the [risk factors](#). If you or someone you know has been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer, [contact us](#) today.

While the ACS report confirms that we are headed in the right direction, it reaffirms the critical need for our work to continue. As this new data is reviewed, we encourage you to be proactive and utilize the many resources available to our community. [Read more on the ACS report →](#)

### **Resources for Patients, Preventions, and Education**

[One-on-One Support](#)

[Patient & Family Webinars](#)

[Genetic Testing](#)

[Clinical Trials](#)

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# **Momentum Newsletter: Winter**

# 2022

From returning to a full roster of in-person events to commemorating 25 years of progress towards a cure, the year has filled us with hope and gratitude. It is thanks to our community and your unwavering support that we can celebrate research advancements, improved patient care and support for all those facing pancreatic cancer. This year, we renew our passion to find a cure and are filled with gratitude for the robust community that supports us.

## 25 Years of Progress

We have spent much of this year reflecting on the progress we have made over the past 25 year. As we look towards the future, our motto guides the path ahead: “Never Give Up! Finding a cure is worth fight for!” It is thanks to the support of our community that we have fulfilled four of our five mission pillars and have made tangible improvements for patients and families. While our journey towards a cure continues, it is with hope and gratitude that we look toward a cancer-free future for all.

[Learn more about our 25 years →](#)

## A New Roster of Seed Grants Brings Promise

Our commitment to fund innovative pancreatic cancer research continues with a new roster of Seed Grant Awardees. These eight outstanding projects range from investigating how a digestive enzyme could be used as an early detection screening tool, to

better understanding the immune systems of long-term survivors for clues to help with treatment, to targeting iron to create an anti-tumor response. These impressive researchers will deepen our knowledge of pancreatic cancer, create new treatment avenues, and improve patient outcomes. We are optimistic for the advances that will come from these bright minds!

[Read About Our Seed Grant Awardees →](#)

## **Our Partnership with the APA**

Each November, we begin Pancreatic Cancer Awareness Month at the American Pancreatic Association (APA) meeting. The annual APA meeting brings together an international group of scientists and clinicians to identify the best course of treatment and discuss the most up-to-date research results for pancreatic diseases. The Hirshberg Opening Symposium at the APA meeting has allowed us to bring crucial topics such as the importance of nutrition and psychosocial care to an international stage. Our longstanding relationship with the APA has helped foster the scientific research needed to drive us towards a cure for pancreatic cancer and improve patient outcomes across the globe.

[Learn more about the APA →](#)

## **25th LA Cancer Challenge 5K Walk/Run held at UCLA**

Our 25th walk/run was held on the beautiful campus of UCLA where we celebrated 25 years of progress and patient care! The LA Cancer Challenge was filled with warm embraces, incredible milestones and the joy of working to make a difference for our pancreatic cancer community. To date, the LACC has raised over

\$10.1 million for pancreatic cancer research and programs. Thank you to all our walkers, runners, donors, volunteers, and sponsors who reminded us to “Never Give Up: Let’s Fight to the Finish!”

[Support our LACC participants →](#)

## **Training is Underway for the 2023 LA Marathon**

The Hirshberg Training Team offers an exciting fitness challenge for runners of all levels (couch-potatoes included) who are passionate about the pancreatic cancer community. With the Hirshberg Training Team you get personalized training, one-on-one access to our amazing coaches who have helped thousands cross the finish line, a pre-race luxury suite (with clean, warm bathrooms) and a post-race celebration dinner. Running a marathon is an extraordinary achievement; running to fight pancreatic cancer is life changing.

[Join the Hirshberg Training Team →](#)

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## **25 Years of Progress**

For 25 years, the Hirshberg Foundation has set out to fulfill our five mission pillars; each represents a critical milestone that has had a ripple effect for patients and families around the world. Thanks to our fundraising efforts, community participation and generous donors, our hard work has resulted in extraordinary scientific discoveries and patient programs that

help guide survivors. To date, we have committed millions of dollars to pancreatic cancer research and have seen improved treatments, outcomes, and quality of life for patients. One final piece of the puzzle remains: **finding a cure**. We celebrate 25 years of progress as our mantra guides the path ahead: “Never Give Up! Finding a Cure is Worth Fighting for.”

## Pillar 1:

To create a premier Pancreatic Cancer Center where all needs of pancreatic cancer patients can be met in one location with the most advanced treatment options.

We have made this a reality through our UCLA Labs and the UCLA Agi Hirshberg Center for Pancreatic Cancer Diseases. Comprised of 3 laboratories, tissue bank and an Integrated Practice Unit where patients are seen by a team of experts united in their care, our UCLA Center has influenced pancreas-focused institutions across the globe.

[Watch more about the UCLA Labs →](#)

## Pillar 2:

To fund projects and programs designed to improve patient care, treatment and, ultimately, pancreatic cancer survival rates.

Through our Seed Grant program, the UC Pancreatic Cancer Consortium (UCPCC), our relationship with the [American Pancreatic Association \(APA\)](#), and an emphasis on collaboration, we have seen survival rates improve.

Our Seed Grant program funds innovative research in its early stages and has resulted in over \$130 million in National Institutes of Health (NIH) funding. The UCPCC brings together 5 cancer centers to share their work and collaborate towards a



cure. The annual APA meeting brings together an international group of scientists and clinicians to identify the best course of treatment and discuss the most up-to-date research results for pancreatic diseases. These partnerships are helping to accelerate the progress and impact of the research being done while translating that research into improved patient care.

[Learn more about the UCPCC →](#)

[Watch more about our partnership with the APA →](#)

[See our 2022-2023 Seed Grant Awardees →](#)

## **Pillar 3:**

To be recognized as a patient support reference source for pancreatic cancer patients and their families.

A cornerstone of the Hirshberg Foundation is helping patients and their families navigate a pancreatic cancer diagnosis. What began with Agi sharing her experiences with other families has evolved into a robust program that includes a dedicated Patient & Family Support Specialist, a wealth of online resources, our annual Symposium and more. Our relationships with doctors around the world mean that we can provide referrals and support, and that each call is answered by someone who has been through it. Our patient support program has always been a beacon of hope for patients and families facing this disease.

[Learn more about how we support patients & families →](#)

## **Pillar 4:**

To integrate and unite generations, young and old, through physical fitness participation, while creating public awareness and raising money to find a cure for pancreatic cancer.

In the spirit of Ron Hirshberg, our fundraising events have always centered around fitness activities for the whole family. After losing his father to pancreatic cancer, Jon Hirshberg began planning our first event, a 5K race to honor his father's memory. For the past 25 years, our fundraising events have given the pancreatic cancer community a chance to honor loved ones, celebrate and support survivors, and create awareness. Now, our three signature fundraising events, the LA Cancer Challenge, the Tour de Pier and the Hirshberg Training Team, have raised over \$20 million to date.

[Watch more about the LA Cancer Challenge, the event that started it all →](#)

## **Pillar 5:**

To find a cure for pancreatic cancer in honor of Ron Hirshberg and the thousands of people who are diagnosed with this disease each year.

The final pillar is yet to be accomplished, and we will not stop until our entire mission is complete. All of these accomplishments are steps towards our ultimate goal of finding a cure for pancreatic cancer. It is thanks to the support of our community that we commemorate 25 years of extraordinary scientific discoveries while providing support services for patients around the world.

[Join us and give today →](#)

[Watch more about our 25 years of progress →](#)

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# Honoring 25 Years Advancing Pancreatic-Cancer Research

Originally published in UCLA Health's [U Magazine](#)

Some of the most powerful changes in medicine have come about following a tragedy. In 1997, Ronald S. Hirshberg died from pancreatic cancer at the age of 54. That year, his wife, Agi Hirshberg, dedicated herself to advancing pancreatic-cancer research by establishing the Hirshberg Foundation for Pancreatic Cancer Research in memory of her late husband. As the first beneficiary of the foundation's giving, UCLA established the Ronald S. Hirshberg Translational Pancreatic Cancer Research Laboratory in 1998, and the Ronald S. Hirshberg Chair in Translational Pancreatic Cancer Research in 2000. The relationship was further solidified in 2015 following new philanthropic support from the Hirshberg Foundation, which launched the UCLA Agi Hirshberg Center for Pancreatic Diseases.

"The Hirshberg Foundation's generosity has helped elevate the UCLA Hirshberg Center to one of the nation's premier, comprehensive programs for pancreatic cancer and diseases," said Dr. O. Joe Hines (RES '97), director of the UCLA Agi Hirshberg Center for Pancreatic Diseases, interim chair of the Department of Surgery and Robert and Kelly Day Chair in General Surgery. "From the very beginning, Agi and her family and team at the foundation vowed to raise sorely needed funds for research to broaden treatment options and give hope to pancreatic-cancer patients. She continues to advocate for change and her dedication inspires physicians, researchers, patients and their families."

Twenty-five years ago, the Hirshberg Foundation was the only organization of its kind focused solely on finding a cure for

this devastating disease. Since then, the partnership between UCLA and the Hirshberg Foundation has driven advances in the understanding and treatment of pancreatic cancer for the benefit of thousands of patients and their families. Through a wide range of activities, including fund raising, education, advocacy and patient support, this remarkable collaboration has opened the door to countless discoveries and shaped the future of pancreatic cancer treatment.

In 2022, the American Cancer Society reported an increase in the five-year survival rate for pancreatic cancer to 11%, up from 6% just 10 years ago. This tremendous progress speaks to the vision and determination of the Hirshberg Foundation to provide funding for high-impact investigations, and of the UCLA faculty who pursue innovative avenues of research.

The Hirshberg Foundation Seed Grant Program is one such area that has benefited from the foundation's funding. Directed by Dr. Vay Liang W. Go, Distinguished Professor of Medicine in the UCLA Vatche and Tamar Manoukian Division of Digestive Diseases and co-director of the UCLA Agi Hirshberg Center for Pancreatic Diseases, the program fosters leading-edge research on a global level by providing strategic investments in research that enable investigators to gather preliminary data that can then be used to apply for larger grants.

"Seed funding supports highly innovative research projects that are not usually funded by government agencies," said Dr. Go. "Agi understands this and is a valued partner in our work. Philanthropic support of this kind for early research is indispensable to investigations that have the potential to make a profound impact on this disease and create a roadmap toward better treatments and, one day, a cure."

Since 2005, 104 seed grants have been awarded to 40 medical-research institutions in the United States and internationally, resulting in myriad discoveries and approximately \$130 million in National Institutes of Health funding. UCLA is a partner in administering these grants and about 30 UCLA research projects have benefited from this support through the years.

The foundation also has invested in the UCLA Pancreatic Tissue Bank, a vital resource for pancreatic disease researchers at UCLA and the wider scientific community; an annual symposium that brings together patients and families with leading researchers; and psychosocial support to those impacted by cancer and their families at no cost to patients at the Simms/Mann-UCLA Center for Integrative Oncology. The Hirshberg Foundation's 25th Annual LA Cancer Challenge 5K walk/run, which to date has raised more than \$10.1\* million mostly directed to UCLA for pancreatic cancer research, was held at UCLA in October.

***"Since establishing the foundation 25 years ago, we have been unwavering in our mission to be relentless in finding new ways to address and heal pancreatic cancer. Our partnership with UCLA has amplified our ability to move the needle in research and ways to help pancreatic cancer patients."***

"Since establishing the foundation 25 years ago, we have been unwavering in our mission to be relentless in finding new ways to address and heal pancreatic cancer," said Hirshberg. "Our partnership with UCLA has amplified our ability to move the needle in research and ways to help pancreatic cancer patients."

The special collaboration between UCLA and the Hirshberg Foundation for Pancreatic Cancer Research has laid the groundwork for a model in which the needs of people with pancreatic cancer are met in one location with the most advanced

treatment options available. In addition to accelerating the pace of medical discovery, the foundation also has raised awareness of the disease and supports patients and their families at all stages of treatment and survivorship by disseminating information and providing resources. Construction of a new, state-of-the-art home for the UCLA Hirshberg Center in the Vatche and Tamar Manoukian Medical Building is in progress.

"My husband, Ron, always thought a problem was an invitation: 'No' meant 'maybe' and 'maybe' meant 'yes.' It is with this strong determination that he battled cancer, and it is still the way the foundation will continue Ron's fight to win the battle against pancreatic cancer," said Hirshberg. "I know the crucial role philanthropy plays in fueling pioneering thinking and research and I am so proud of what the foundation's partnership with UCLA has accomplished. With our shared purpose, I am certain this is only the beginning of what we can do together."

*\*Originally published with the pre-25th LA Cancer Challenge figure of \$9.6 million*

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## **A Pancreatic Cancer Awareness Month Tradition**

Reagan Ferris was just three years old when her father, Eric, passed away after a 2-year battle with pancreatic cancer at just 41 years old. Now a senior in high school, Reagan has grown up celebrating the holidays and milestones with her amazing mom, Jennifer and her two older brothers, Jackson and Carter, and inevitably, she thinks about her dad.

Service to others has always been a cornerstone for the Ferris family. A few years ago, Reagan decided that [Pancreatic Cancer Awareness Month](#) was the perfect time to do something on her own to help others. She created a [fundraiser with See's Candy](#) in honor of her dad, benefiting the Hirshberg Foundation. Reagan writes, "the Hirshberg Foundation and staff at UCLA were instrumental in helping my dad get the best care possible. Our family is forever grateful to everyone who helped my dad (healthcare workers, family, friends, colleagues, and even kind strangers) and those who continue to support our family and his memory."

She added, "I am blessed to do something special to honor my dad and all those who fight for and support this important cause. I hope to continue this tradition and to inspire others to find ways to give help where needed." To date, she has raised over \$4,400 and Reagan hopes to keep the tradition going.

As you prepare for the holidays, make them even sweeter with a gift that gives back – consider supporting Reagan and her See's Candy fundraiser.

[Reagan's See's Candy Fundraiser →](#)

[Donate to Reagan's Fund →](#)