

Pancreatic Cancer: Our Goals and How to Achieve Them!

We are excited to have Dr. William H. Isacoff return to our [Patient & Family Webinar](#) series with a follow-up to his previous webinar [Chemotherapy for Pancreatic Cancer Patients: Less is More!](#) Dr. Isacoff is a fan-favorite and we are happy to have him share, once again, with our community.

Dr. William H. Isacoff, who leads the [Pancreatic Cancer Center of Los Angeles](#), has earned a reputation as one of the foremost gastrointestinal oncologists within the United States. He has developed treatment regimens which were not only more effective, but less toxic and extended the lives of pancreatic patients throughout the country. He continues to focus on the development of newer, more effective and less toxic treatments for patients with pancreatic cancer.

In July of 2020, Dr. Isacoff shared important information about his low dosage “metronomic” chemotherapy without radiation therapy. Dr. Isacoff and the Pancreatic Surgical Team at UCLA have down staged more than 60 patients who upon initial diagnosis were felt to be inoperable. After successful “metronomic” treatment with a combination of chemotherapies, the patients were then able to become surgical candidates. In addition, as a result of the prolonged use of effective chemotherapy, 75% of the patients had lymph nodes that did not show metastatic disease. Dr. Isacoff shared these promising results and looks forward to continuing the conversation with his latest presentation.

[William H. Isacoff, M.D.](#), currently holds an academic appointment within the Department of Medicine at the David Geffen-UCLA School of Medicine. He serves on the Board of

Directors of the Jonsson Comprehensive Cancer Foundation. He serves on the International Board of Governors of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and is a lifetime trustee of that university. He has designed clinical trials for and served as a consultant. He has worked for four decades to form better, safer and more effective treatments for patients battling pancreatic cancer and other gastrointestinal cancers.

Watch Webinar

The Financial Costs of Cancer

Cancer can be a very expensive illness. Even those with excellent insurance can face an array of new costs associated with their treatment. From transportation to hospital stays, prescriptions to medical devices, daily living expenses to holistic care, there are a multitude of expenses to consider. Being organized and understanding your rights can give you a sense of control while helping prioritize.

Through our longstanding partnership with [Cancer Care](#), patients are able to apply for a one-time grant to help cover the costs associated with cancer treatment. Cancer Care also provides an array of [financial assistance resources](#) to help cancer patients and their families better cope with financial concerns.

Below are some of the resources Cancer Care offers to help manage the financial costs of cancer.

- [Managing The Cost of Cancer](#) booklet. This guide will help

you navigate what is covered by health insurance and what is not, as well as tools to help handle the cost of cancer.

- [Tips for Managing the Cost of Cancer](#) is a great overview of things to consider as you begin navigating a cancer diagnosis.
- [Co-payment assistance](#) is a program to help cancer patients overcome the financial barriers to prescribed treatment through co-payment aid.
- [Understanding the Costs of Care and Your Health Care Coverage](#) is a workshop that addresses the medical and indirect costs of treatment, benefits and limitations to health care plans, as well as advanced health care directives, led by a panel of experts.
- In addition to finances, there are legal considerations when facing cancer and Cancer Care offers [legal assistance](#) as well.
- [A Helping Hand](#) is a resource guide to help cancer patients and their families take control of their finances. This booklet can help you understand your options, know your rights and know where to turn for help. It will introduce issues to consider such as government assistance, nonprofit hospitals and community programs near you that may help defer some of the costs.

>We are here to help, contact [Patient Support](#) today to receive additional information and resources.

Summertime Purple Ribbon Events are Making a Comeback!

Returning to in-person activities is becoming a reality for many across the country and we're excited about the countless reunions that await! As we begin dreaming up plans to re-unite with friends and family, we're inviting you to turn this reunion into a [Purple Ribbon Event](#). Start a new tradition marking the occasion of a post-pandemic world or celebrate a birthday, anniversary or an upcoming holiday while supporting the fight against pancreatic cancer!

We're providing Purple Ribbon Event [ideas and themes](#) to get you excited, a planning checklist and event tips to help you get creative. Follow 5 simple steps to get started: choose a virtual event idea, ask a friend to help plan & co-host, create a fundraising page, select a location or online video platform, follow our checklist. Contact us at sbanks@pancreatic.org if you have questions about hosting an event or fundraising- we're happy to assist.

The Hirshberg Foundation is eager to launch new research in 2021 and offer more programs to patients and you can be a huge part of that!

Host an In-Person Event



Our in-person Purple Ribbon Event [checklist](#) and [tips](#) will help you get started, show you how to make a plan and how to use this fun opportunity to fundraise for cancer research too!

- Birthday Dinner
- Backyard BBQ
- Golf Tournament
- MudRun

[...and more!](#)

Host a Virtual Event



[Connect virtually](#) for a socially distanced event and we'll provide ideas and tools & tips on how to take an event online or virtual.

- Game/trivia night
- At-home scavenger hunt
- Cocktail making party

- Remote Walk/run

[...and more!](#)

Clinical Trial Awareness

[Clinical trials](#) are a crucial tool for advancing medical knowledge and patients who participate can benefit from these new and emerging treatments. Understanding the clinical trial process and how to find a trial can empowers patients to make informed treatment choices from day one. Today, the NIH website lists more than [280 pancreatic cancer clinical trials](#) actively recruiting in the United States. Whether the trial is for adenocarcinoma (PDAC) or neuroendocrine tumors (NETs), the goal of a pancreatic cancer clinical trial is to improve patient outcomes and save lives.

The Clinical Trial Process

The complex nature of pancreatic cancer requires attacking the disease from all directions. Clinical trial research is designed to analyze and question the benefits and risks of a promising new treatment before it can be approved for patients. Emerging cancer treatments include, but are not limited to, new drugs, drug combinations, targeted therapy, immunotherapy, radiation and chemotherapy. Over the course of months or years, a promising pre-clinical study advances into a human clinical trial that builds from [phase I to phase IV](#). Trials are developed for all stages of pancreatic cancer and may recruit participants in phases I-IV. If each phase demonstrates success, the therapy is approved by the FDA and made available to public.

Clearing Up Misconceptions

Experimental treatments developed in clinical trials can offer a lifeline for patients and families. That is why it is critical that patients' concerns and questions are addressed. One common misconception is that clinical trials are a last resort. New drugs and treatments can actually be beneficial early-on in a treatment plan rather than waiting until options are exhausted.

Another common roadblock for patients is an initial apprehension as to how safe a clinical trial is because of its experimental nature. Clinical trials have some risk, however, from start-to-finish specific practices are put in motion to ensure patient safety. Patients must give [informed consent](#) and researchers develop [clinical trial protocols](#), follow [FDA regulations](#), are monitored and scrutinized by an [Institutional Review Board](#) and [Data & Safety Monitoring Board](#). World-class scientists are committed to unlocking the answers to pancreatic cancer through clinical trials and accomplishing the task safely. <

Finally, it is important that the people who are eligible and will benefit from the research are represented in clinical trials. In 2018, an [FDA Clinical Trial Snapshot](#) disclosed that 48% of all adult clinical trials missed their target recruitment goal for minorities. Balanced representation can only be achieved if patients, doctors and clinical trial recruiting processes share this goal.

Finding a Clinical Trial

Clinical trials are helping to transform medicine, personalize treatment and expand our medical knowledge for generations to come. If you are interested in exploring a clinical trial, discuss this option with your oncologist or physician. The following resources can help you or a loved one find a clinical

trial that is right for you.

We are here to help, contact [Patient Support](#) today to speak with our Patient & Family Coordinator.

- Hirshberg Foundation video [A-B-C's of Clinical Trials](#)
 - National Institutes of Health [NIH\) clinical trial database](#)
 - National Cancer Institute [\(NCI\) search tool](#)
 - MassiveBio's [SYNERGY search platform](#)
 - EmergingMed's [clinical trial navigator service](#)
 - Let's Win PC video on [How to Find a Clinical Trial](#)
 - UCLA [clinical trial search tool](#)
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Our UCLA Activity Summary Report is now Available

The Hirshberg Foundation maintains its longstanding partnership with UCLA and is a crucial source of support for a wide range of research programs, patient care initiatives, and faculty members in the [UCLA Agi Hirshberg Center for Pancreatic Diseases](#). Despite the difficulties of 2020, our supporters help us provide the financial stability necessary to face challenges with the innovation, compassion, and ingenuity that are hallmarks of the Hirshberg Foundation and [the UCLA Hirshberg Center](#).

Each year, UCLA provides the Hirshberg Foundation with a [detailed report](#) of the advances being made and what we are accomplishing together. Below are a few of the achievements taking place at UCLA thanks to your continued support.

UCLA Agi Hirshberg Center for Pancreatic Diseases

In March of 2020, as the pandemic reached the United States, UCLA Health and the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA worked to transition many activities to virtual platforms. Once safety protocols were in place, pancreatic cancer care and surgery continued. Hirshberg Center's pancreatic disease-focused integrated practice unit (IPU), which brings together surgeons, medical oncologists, radiation oncologists, pathologists, gastroenterologists, geneticists, and psychosocial care specialists, continued virtually to collaborate on care plans for individual patients. Amid the myriad challenges of 2020, delivering excellence in patient care remains a cornerstone for the Hirshberg Foundation and the Hirshberg Center.

Clinical Trials at UCLA

UCLA is currently participating in nine [clinical trials](#) aimed at improving treatment for pancreatic disease. [One of these trials](#) uses high-dose magnetic resonance imaging (MRI)-guided hypofractionated radiation therapy delivered using daily adaptive dose planning. This treatment model has been shown in a retrospective study to result in improved overall survival (relative to patients receiving lower radiation doses) in patients with locally advanced pancreatic cancer, without increasing the rate of serious gastrointestinal toxicity. Another high impact clinical trial is examining the effectiveness of [nivolumab](#), a treatment combining immunotherapy with monoclonal antibodies, in conjunction with combination chemotherapy, which work synergistically to shrink tumors and stop the spread of cancer prior to surgery.

Ronald S. Hirshberg Translational Pancreatic Cancer Research Laboratory

Under the direction of Guido Eibl, M.D., Professor, Department of Surgery, David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA, the [Ronald S. Hirshberg Translational Pancreatic Cancer Research Laboratory](#) is home to a robust research program focused on understanding the role of diet, obesity, and inflammation in pancreatic cancer. In May 2020, Dr. Eibl and his team were awarded a [\\$5.75 million five-year grant](#) from the National Cancer Institute to advance their pioneering work. The grant is funding an interconnected series of research projects with participating researchers from Cedars–Sinai Medical Center and the University of California, San Diego, collaborating with the team at UCLA. Dr. Eibl's project is examining inflammation associated with body fat and how the mechanisms of this chronic condition can accelerate pancreatic cancer. This study is shedding new light on the mechanisms that influence the formation of pancreatic tumors and on ways to intervene and prevent cancer in people who have risk factors.

The Sahin-Toth Laboratory

The 2019 recruitment of Miklos Sahin-Toth, M.D., Ph.D., a leading pancreatic disease researcher and specialist in chronic pancreatitis and Garry Shandling Chair in Pancreatic Diseases, accelerated the center's world-class research program, resulting in [numerous recent publications](#) and discoveries. As part of his pioneering work investigating the genetic foundations of chronic pancreatitis, Dr. Sahin-Toth helped create international guidelines for risk factors in chronic pancreatitis, which were recently published in [Pancreatology](#). These risk factors include alcohol consumption, smoking, and certain genetic alterations.

In addition, Dr. Sahin-Toth recently published an article in [Gastroenterology](#) discussing the ways that COVID-19 multiorgan failure resembles lipotoxic organ failure during severe acute pancreatitis. In both diseases, interstitial leakage of pancreatic lipase may occur resulting in adipose lipolysis and increased levels of unsaturated fatty acids. These toxic fatty acids cause mitochondrial injury and stimulate the excessive production and release of proinflammatory immune mediators (cytokine storm) that can drive disease progression and eventual multiorgan failure, including acute respiratory distress syndrome, the leading cause of COVID-19-related mortality. In 2021, Dr. Sahin-Toth received a new grant from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to explore how genetic risk factors affecting the digestive enzyme chymotrypsin cause pancreatitis.

Psychosocial Care Via the Simms/Mann–UCLA Center for Integrative Oncology

The COVID-19 health crisis has brought into sharp focus the necessity for world-class psychosocial support and integrative care, particularly for patients going through cancer treatment and the Simms/Mann-UCLA Center for Integrative Oncology has continued to serve those needs. The broad range of services offered by the center, including psychosocial and psychiatric support, workshops and groups, nutritional guidance, and spiritual care, can make the difference between a cancer treatment journey defined by pain or galvanized by hope. The Simms/Mann team rapidly implemented telehealth operations to continue treatment during the pandemic, an option made even more crucial because of the vulnerability of the patient population. Elizabeth Cleary, Ph.D., a licensed clinical psychologist, join our [Patient and Family Webinar Series](#) to present “[Coping Skills](#)

[for the Pancreatic Community: Tools and Tips during COVID-19](#)” in April 2020.

Simms/Mann clinician Sydney Siegel initiated a new program for patients undergoing chemotherapy without the support of friends and family by their side that was featured in the [Los Angeles Times](#). Cancer survivors wrote anonymous letters to newly diagnosed patients sharing their thoughts, insight, and encouragement. These letters were then compiled into a booklet, titled [From the Chemo Chair: My Heart to Yours](#), and distributed to UCLA hematology/oncology clinics so patients could receive them on their first day of treatment, accompanied by a playlist of inspirational songs selected by survivors.

Listen to the [playlist here](#). If you would like more information, please [contact Amy](#).

Hirshberg Foundation Seed Grant Program

In 2020, the Hirshberg Foundation Seed Grant Program began a new initiative to encourage collaboration among researchers. The program invited groups of two or more UCLA investigators to apply for a cooperative grant of \$100,000 each to develop collaborative research in pancreatic cancer. The [Hirshberg Foundation Seed Grant Program](#) received three joint applications from teams of UCLA researchers for the 2020-2021 seed grant cohort. One grant was awarded to a promising research project led by [Dr. Guido Eibl and Zsanett Jancso](#), Ph.D., Assistant Project Scientist, to investigate whether hereditary pancreatitis accelerates pancreatic cancer development. The study will offer critical insight into how hereditary pancreatitis-associated pancreatic cancer develops and how chronic inflammation promotes tumor growth in the pancreas.

Through our partnership with UCLA, we are empowering clinicians and researchers to connect with one another and find inspiration in collaboration. Even in the era of social distancing, we continue to facilitate connection through our [Patient and Caregiver Webinar Series](#), which was created in lieu of an in-person symposium in 2020. Each session covers topics relevant to patients and caregivers and enables experts to speak directly with the people who are benefiting from their work. In this way, the foundation continues to center on the experience of patients and ensure that their needs are met and their questions are answered.

United in purpose, the UCLA Agi Hirshberg Center for Pancreatic Diseases is making tremendous progress toward improved treatments, outcomes, and quality of life for patients with pancreatic cancer. Together, we continue to provide world-class care and to seek improved standards of treatment through pioneering research.

Read the full summary [here](#).

Advocating for Women Facing Pancreatic Cancer

This Mother's Day, as you celebrate, honor or remember the special women in your life, join us in taking action on behalf of the countless moms who have fought pancreatic cancer. Each year, too many women and mothers across the country face a pancreatic cancer diagnosis and must begin their treatment journey. The courage and resilience of these women inspires us

to move mountains to save lives.

In celebration of Mother's Day, the Hirshberg Foundation is sharing the story of Purmine "Mine" Oksayan, a beautiful and vibrant representation of all the strong moms and survivors we're honoring. Diagnosed with pancreatic cancer in 2016, Mine is a mother and a wife, a friend and a hero. In [Mine's story](#), her children Ani and Parsegh share a dedication.

"This strong, beautiful woman lived each day focused on taking care of her family, offering unwavering support and strength and functioning as the glue that held everything together. She's rolled up her sleeves, dove into her battle and the only option is recovery. And yes, that truly is her mindset – the only option is conquering the beast in her pancreas and getting on with her life. My brother and I hit the jackpot when we were chosen to be her children."

Mine is more than a pancreatic cancer survivor. A dedicated supporter, Mine and her family make the long drive from San Diego to attend our LA area events and are ambassadors to the pancreatic cancer community. Her devoted husband and family encourage her light to shine, while her story, her smile and positivity inspire other survivors, patients, and families.

She has joined the Hirshberg Foundation year after year at the LA Cancer Challenge Walk/Run with her family and in 2020 she was our [Honorary Starter](#). Attending Symposiums and Patient & Family Webinars, Mine understands how important it is for patients to have access to resources, support and research. She and her husband, children and grandchildren represent all of the families who deserve a better, brighter and healthier future together.

As we celebrate Mother's Day, help us get closer to discovering a cure so that more families can have a story like Mine's.