Anything is Possible When the Goal is Saving Lives!

Dear Hirshberg Foundation Family,

When 2021 began, I felt a renewed sense of hope for great things to come as we forged ahead with our efforts to be part of the cure. **Our scientists, who you helped fund, are reminding the world that anything is possible when the goal is to save lives.** This year we look forward to our investigators delivering exciting results, offering new & innovative resources to patients, and bringing our community together again. I feel optimistic and hope you do too!

In January I was given the greatest gift imaginable for my birthday. We hosted our first Patient & Family Webinar celebrating a 10-year, 20-year and 30-year survivor as they shared their personal journeys. Guests from 3 continents learned from these remarkable survivors, or 'thrivers' as one of our speakers identified. **What was once thought to be impossible has already become a reality – a full and healthier life after a diagnosis**. And the common message from everyone was "Don't listen to statistics!" These insightful monthly webinars will continue and I promise an informative year for patients and caregivers nationwide.

I also recently received notice that our Chief Scientific Advisor, Dr. Vay Liang Go, received the 2021 American Gastroenterology Mentor Award. He is the Co-Director of the UCLA Hirshberg Center for Pancreatic Diseases and has been instrumental in the creation of this center and mentoring young investigators over the years. **Dr. Go has helped lead our vast research efforts making his role in our foundation's growth pivotal**. The pancreatic cancer medical community has made

incredible strides with his guidance and we are profoundly grateful.

The progress we're making is a joint effort and results become a reality because of your donations. Your first donation or monthly gift of 2021 will allow us to keep providing invaluable patient resources and pursue more collaborative research projects. As we raise awareness throughout February's National Cancer Prevention Month, we ask for your support. Help us continue to take proactive steps to prevent a pancreatic cancer diagnosis for all loved ones in the future!

With gratitude,

Agi
Founder

February is National Cancer Prevention Month: Genetics

If you have a history of pancreatic cancer in your family, a basic understanding of genetic risk factors and resources may help you prevent a diagnosis or detect it early. We may not "have a say" when it comes to DNA but we are empowered to learn about pancreatic cancer, talk to family members about our health history and take steps to lessen risk. This knowledge, in combination with the resources the Hirshberg Foundation provides, can help address your concerns about Familial Pancreatic Cancer (FPC).

When two first-degree relatives (parent, child or sibling) have

been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer, seeking genetic counseling is part of your path to education and prevention. Having a family history does not necessarily mean you will develop pancreatic cancer, but it can increase your risk. Familial or hereditary pancreatic cancer accounts for about 10% of pancreatic cancer diagnosis.

Gene mutations can be passed down through generations, known as inherited mutations and can increase your risk for developing pancreatic and other cancers. For example, the BRCA1 & BRCA2 gene mutations, in part, account for an increased risk of cancer among Ashkenazi Jews. Several genetic mutations are currently being researched for their connection to an increased risk of developing pancreatic and other cancers. These genes include: PRSS1 BRCA1, BRCA2, ATM, PALB2, MLH1, MSH2, EPCAM, MSH6, APC, STK11, and CDKN2A. Each of these genes have a different risk profile and different cancer risks depending on the individual gene. Genetic testing and counseling can lead to medical management to reduce the chance of developing cancer or increased surveillance for cancer, with the goal of detecting cancer earlier when treatment options and outcomes are better.

Learning your family history and knowing the risk factors can help you take proactive steps. You can find a genetic counselor in the US or Canada by contacting the National Society of Genetic Counselors. The National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN) recommends genetic counselling for all individuals diagnosed with pancreatic cancer, however, genetic testing is not limited to patients. As you investigate your family history, it is also important to understand the basics about this disease. Take the time to discover what your pancreas is and which modifiable risk factors you can prevent. Understanding your genetic make-up will help you determine whether your DNA puts you at higher risk and how to tackle those challenges.

Learn more about genetic risk factors.

Genetic Counseling

Wendy Conlon, MS, CGC, a genetic counselor with the UCLA Center for Pancreatic Diseases is a highly esteemed and trusted speaker for Hirshberg Foundation educational events. She oversees surveillance of patients and their family members, provides risk assessment, genetic counseling, and genetic testing for individuals with pancreatic cancer and their at-risk relatives. She helps individuals and families navigate their treatment options, as well as other cancer prevention strategies. In 2020 she was featured in our ongoing Patient & Family Webinar Series providing important updates on genetic counseling and access to testing during COVID 19. In 2019, she also provided her expertise when she presented on *Why Should I See a Genetic Counselor*at the Hirshberg Foundation's annual Symposium on Pancreatic Cancer. We invite you to take advantage of these videos and other resources shared so you can learn about the benefits of genetic counseling.

Watch *Why Should I See a Genetic Counselor*

Watch Genetic Counseling: Review and Updates During COVID-19

Cannabis Components and Cancer: What We Know and Where

We're Headed

Dr. Ziva Cooper, Director of the UCLA Cannabis Research Initiative, will join our Patient and Family Webinar Series to talk about the history of cannabis and what has been established with respect to cannabis and cancer. Dr. Cooper will discuss the origins of cannabis, its various cannabinoid components, current research and an exciting new study that may help cancer patients.

Dr. Cooper will spotlight a new study on the pain relief and appetite stimulating effects of cannabigerol (CBG), a minor cannabinoid that seems to lack the psychoactive side effects of THC. This research could provide a new tool to help manage the side effects of cancer treatment, such as loss of appetite and pain. The study will investigate whether CBG, alone or in synergistic combination with low doses of THC, can provide analgesic (pain relief) and appetite-stimulating properties in humans. It is particularly exciting as this will be the first study of CBG in humans.

Please join us for an hour of interesting conversation with Dr. Ziva Cooper on Friday, February 26th, 2021 at 1pm (PST). The presentation will be followed by a Q & A and our new **Survivor Chat**. During this time of isolation we continue to do what we can to bring our pancreatic cancer community together. Our **Survivor Chat**, is a space for patients and loved ones to have an opportunity to spend time talking amongst each other once the webinar is over. Share stories, information and ask questions of your fellow participants from the comfort of your living room!

As the Director of the UCLA Cannabis Research Initiative, Dr. Cooper strives to incorporate a translational approach to understating both the potential therapeutic and adverse effects associated with cannabis and cannabinoids. Dr. Cooper is also

Associate Professor-in-Residence in the Department of Psychiatry and Biobehavioral Sciences at David Geffen School of Medicine. Her current research involves understanding variables that influence both the therapeutic potential and adverse effects of cannabis and cannabinoids.

More about UCLA's Cannabis Research Initiative:

The UCLA Cannabis Research Initiative (CRI) is a strategic initiative out of the UCLA Jane and Terry Semel Institute for Neuroscience and Human Behavior. As one of the first university programs focused on the multidisciplinary study of cannabis, they aim to bring together experts from diverse fields to advance the understanding the plant's impact on body, brain, and society. Despite unprecedented access, nearly a century of research restrictions and funding barriers have contributed to a lack of scientific knowledge about cannabis and hemp, particularly in regards to the therapeutic potential and the industrial applications. Their mission is to address the most pressing questions related to the impact of cannabis legalization through rigorous scientific study and discourse across disciplines.

Watch Webinar

February is National Cancer Prevention Month: Lifestyle

Throughout National Cancer Prevention Month we'll share risk factors, scientific research, webinars on topics touching on prevention and facts about how you can make an impact.

The choices we make *and* avoid when it comes to our personal health can have a ripple effect throughout the body. Research has shown that certain lifestyle choices, such as smoking, can damage cells and create a domino effect throughout our DNA. When cells become damaged, there is a risk of gene mutations that can cause cells to divide at unprecedented rates and grow exponentially. When cells grow rapidly, out of control or do not die off at the appropriate time, they cause tumors. In most pancreatic cancer cases, risk factors such as smoking, obesity, stage-2 diabetes and chronic pancreatitis can cause these DNA mutations. The first steps on the path to prevention are to adopt a healthy lifestyle and lower your modifiable risk factors.

Our Path to Prevention worksheet outlines risk factors to avoid and steps you can take to get on track towards wellness. While the scientific community is investigating possible methods for prevention and early screening, it is up to us to stay vigilant about our health. If you smoke make a plan to quit, reduce your alcohol intake and remember that your food choices matter. Build a lifestyle around nutritious food, find ways to boost the immune system, take care to reduce stress and kick bad habits as these changes may even save your life. Speak with your doctor on the best course of action to reduce inflammation, prevent insulin-resistance and lower stress. The path to prevention starts with a healthy lifestyle that can help lower your risk

for cancer.

Share our Path to Prevention worksheet with your community »

Prevention Research

In 2020, a team of UCLA researchers were awarded an NIH grant for $5.75 million to study the roles diet, obesity and inflammation play in the development of pancreatic cancer. “We know that the biological mechanisms of obesity, such as inflammation, can lead to the development of pancreatic cancer,” said Dr. Guido Eibl, Laboratory Director of the Hirshberg Translational Pancreatic Cancer Research Laboratory. This study will look at the mechanisms that drive the formation of pancreas tumors with the goal of prevention strategies for those at higher risk. Dr. Eibl included, "Several known and modifiable risk factors can increase the risk for pancreatic cancer, including obesity, smoking, and alcohol. In addition, chronic pancreatitis and genetic factors can enhance the risk for pancreatic cancer. It is paramount to avoid or lower known risk factors, manage chronic pancreatitis, and get genetic counseling (if pancreatic cancer runs in the family) to reduce the risk of and prevent pancreatic cancer."

Read more about Dr. Eibl’s research »

Share the Love on Valentine’s

Day

On Valentine’s Day, most people show their love through roses & chocolates. This year, share your love with patients and families facing pancreatic cancer. Check out the many ways you can celebrate Cupid and make a difference in the fight against this disease.

Agi & Ron Hirshberg are a love story for the ages. Three days after they met, they set their wedding date for Valentine’s Day 1987. Just 10 years later, Ron was taken by pancreatic cancer and, in his memory, the Hirshberg Foundation was founded. Valentine’s Day is a bittersweet memory of their wedding anniversary and a reminder of why our “Never Give Up” motto is so important.

Watch Agi’s Love Story

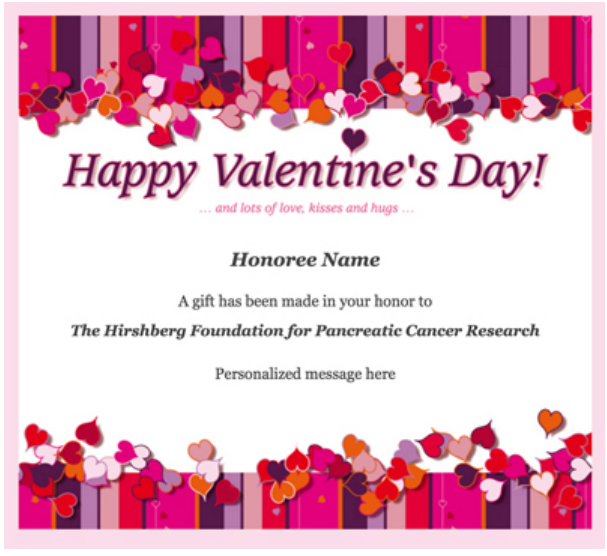
Viola Floral

Jelena was a caretaker to her mom as she battled pancreatic cancer. Today, she keeps her mom’s memory and spirit alive through her designs at Viola Floral. Her floral arrangements pay homage to all the women who raise and uplift us, through all walks of life. Like flowers, they continually remind us to live in full bloom. As a special dedication, 50% of the proceeds from the sale of the “Hopeful Blooms” arrangement will benefit the Hirshberg Foundation. Delivery available in Los Angeles County only.
Send a gorgeous bouquet that gives back →

Jewelry

Wear your support proudly! Our collection of hand-picked jewelry gives back, creates awareness and looks fabulous. Treat yourself or a loved one to one of our bracelets or necklaces.
Shop today →

Valentines e-Card



Don’t rush out to Hallmark store. Send a Valentines e-card to all the loved ones in your life.
Donate today →
We wish everyone a safe, healthy and happy Valentine’s Day.

February is National Cancer Prevention Month!

Throughout National Cancer Prevention Month we'll share risk factors, scientific research, webinars on topics touching on prevention and facts about how you can make an impact.

The first step on the pancreatic cancer prevention path is making healthy lifestyle choices. It takes decisive action to commit to quit smoking, maintaining a healthy weight, avoiding diabetes and managing pancreatitis. Learning about these lifestyle changes, or modifiable risk factors, empowers us to make healthy choices that can help prevent cancer. Adopting healthy lifestyle choices is the first step towards decreasing risk.

While we can change some risk factors, others are beyond our control, like family history and genetics. Knowledge is power when it comes to these immutable risk factors. It is important to know your family history and determine if there are familial risk factors. Seeking out a qualified geneticist allows those at an increased risk for hereditary pancreatic cancer to make proactive choices. While there is still no early screening test for pancreatic cancer, those with a genetic predisposition may qualify for screening programs. Across the US researchers have created pancreatic cancer tumor registries to track people with an increased genetic risk. Some of these registries include:

- The Pancreatic Tumor Registry at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center (MSKCC)
- The National Familial Pancreatic Tumor Registry (NFPTR) at

Johns Hopkins University
- The Cancer of the Pancreas Screening-5 (CAPS5) Study which is also a clinical trial currently conducted at 8 universities

Researchers continue to investigate what puts us at risk organically, genetically, environmentally and socioeconomically so that we can better prevent and treat pancreatic cancer. While scientists continue to explore and uncover what leads to pancreatic cancer, the first step on the path to prevention is to stay vigilant with your healthy choices.

Learn more about risk factors »

Prevention Research

The Hirshberg Foundation funds research to better understand the biology behind tumor development as well as to fully understand how environmental factors can accelerate tumor growth. This research contributes to pancreatic cancer prevention, early screening and treatment options.

The Sahin-Toth Laboratory, under the direction of leading pancreatic disease researcher, Dr. Sahin-Toth, is contributing to our understanding of this disease and one of the largest risk factors: chronic pancreatitis. In 2020, the Sahin-Toth lab published 10 papers, including a new study that looks at lifestyle factors and acute pancreatitis to determine prevention strategies. Working closely with the Hirshberg Translational Pancreatic Cancer Research Laboratory these two labs are working to better understand how diet, obesity, genetics & inflammation contribute to pancreatic cancer acceleration.