

Think Tank of Top Researchers and Physicians Presented Advancements in Pancreatic Cancer Research at 8th Annual Agi Hirshberg Symposium on Pancreatic Cancer

For Immediate Release

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(Los Angeles, California) – On January 31, top clinicians, researchers and physicians from Cancer Centers across the United States presented new developments and progress on finding a cure for pancreatic cancer at the **8th Annual Agi Hirshberg Symposium on Pancreatic Cancer**. The Symposium was hosted by the **Hirshberg Foundation for Pancreatic Cancer Research**.

Held on the campus of University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), where the Hirshberg Foundation supports one of the largest pancreatic cancer laboratory programs in the country, this year's Symposium dedicated to eradicating pancreatic cancer, was the most successful to date. Speakers featured talked about progress in topics ranging from new drug therapies for pancreas cancer to early detection screenings.

Agi Hirshberg, founder of the Hirshberg Foundation for

Pancreatic Cancer Research and the Hirshberg Symposium on Pancreatic Cancer said, "I'm very proud of this Symposium as each year we discover advances, bringing us to another step closer to our ultimate goal." She added, "Although we've made inroads in new drugs, clinical trials and treatments, we still have a long way to go. The cure for pancreatic cancer will not come from one lecture, only through progress."

The Symposium held dual sessions. The morning's Medical Session began with six Foundation Seed Grant Program recipients presenting new strategies in management for pancreatic cancer. The afternoon session geared toward Patient and Families consisted of topics including Research and Surgery, Palliative Care and the GI Process for Pancreatic Cancer. This is the fifth year that the Patient and Family Session was offered and its success continues to grow.

Highlights from the Patient and Family Session featured **targeted therapies for pancreas cancer – including research** presented by **F. Charles Brunicardi, MD, F.A.C.S.**, UCLA Santa Monica Medical Center on a new clinical trial drug called PDX; **early detection screening developments** (presented by **C. Melbern Wilcox, MD**, University Alabama at Birmingham); and **symptom management/patient care during treatment for pancreatic cancer** (presented by **Thomas Strouse, MD**, University of California, Los Angeles). In addition, Diane Simeone, MD, University of Michigan, spoke on targeting pancreatic stem cells and shared exciting news about a clinical trial for metastatic pancreatic cancer patients using a hedgehog inhibitor combined with Gemcitabine.

As an added benefit, the Symposium offered a special extended breakout session where patients and families were given the opportunity to choose which presentation they wanted to participate in. Topics included emotional support, genetic

counseling and legal resources. Detailed presentations by researchers and physicians can be found on the Hirshberg Foundation's website at www.pancreatic.org.

The 8th Annual Agi Hirshberg Symposium for Pancreatic Cancer was sponsored by biopharmaceutical and biotechnology companies, **Genentech**, **Celgene** and **Amgen**.

The Foundation's dedicated efforts have significantly raised awareness and understanding about pancreatic cancer, a disease that continues to be one of the most fatal and least funded of all cancer types. Their continued funding of basic and translational research is their chance to offer life extension, better treatment options and eventually, a cure. The Hirshberg Foundation staff is able to help when patients and families first receive diagnosis of pancreatic cancer by providing doctor referrals across the United States, second opinion referrals, treatment facility referrals, nutritional information, financial aid information, emotional support information for patients, families and caregivers and someone to talk to that has been through the process from beginning to end.

About the Hirshberg Foundation: Founded in 1997, the Hirshberg Foundation for Pancreatic Cancer Research is a national, non-profit organization dedicated to advancing pancreatic cancer research, and providing information, resources and support to pancreatic cancer patients and their families. It is a tax-exempt organization under Section 501(c)3 of the Internal Revenue Code. The federal tax ID number for the foundation (EIN) is 95-4640311.

Established by Agi Hirshberg, whose husband Ronald died of pancreatic cancer at the age of 54, the foundation includes the Ronald S. Hirshberg Translational Pancreatic Cancer Research Laboratory; the Ronald S. Hirshberg Chair in Translational

Pancreatic Cancer Research; and the Hirshberg Pancreatic Cancer Information Center.

To date, the Foundation has:

- Funded Seed Grant Award Recipients who have received \$40 million dollars in NIH grants
- Raised more than \$12 million for pancreatic cancer research
- Granted over \$650,000 in financial aid for patients
- Provided assistance to thousands of patients and their families
- Expanded seed grant funding to Loma Linda University, City of Hope, Johns Hopkins Medical Center, Mayo Clinic, Columbia University, University of Minnesota, University of Pittsburgh, Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, University of California, San Diego, Harvard Medical School, Duke University Medical Center, Vanderbilt Medical School and University of Arizona Cancer Center.
- Supported the American Pancreatic Association's (APA), Japan Pancreas Society, and the European Pancreatic Club's Annual Meetings
- Presented the Agi Hirshberg Symposium at UCLA, focusing on research progress and patient and family education
- Funded the creation of the Tissue Data Bank at UCLA
- Awarded international grants to new investigators

Foundation Commitments:

- Fund medical Symposiums for pancreatic cancer research
- Fund seed grants for new research projects of merit for pancreatic cancer
- Consistently update the pancreatic.org site with the latest news and information
- Host fundraising events to raise awareness and funds for pancreatic cancer
- Provide financial assistance for patients

Doug C. Never Gives Up!

Since Doug's diagnosis he has been an avid supporter and participant in Hirshberg Foundation events and programs including the Annual symposium, the LA Cancer Challenge and hosting his Fishing for a Cure fundraising event. He continues to share his story with the community, advocating for patients and raising awareness. His passion for life and his determination to never give up continues to inspire us all!

You Can H.E.L.P Fund Spotlight – Koplow Fund

By Leslie Koplow

My Dad, Michael Koplow, was diagnosed in July 2010 with pancreatic cancer. They discovered that he had a large tumor in the head of the pancreas, which had not yet metastasized. In typical Dad fashion, he took a weekend to absorb and process the information on his own, before breaking the news to his wife and kids.

As a man of science, and a mechanical engineer by trade, Dad attacked his disease with his full arsenal of tools – his ability to tackle complex projects, his research skills, his

scientific knowledge, his patience, his fortitude and stoicism, his charm, and his ability to just “get things done.” He knew from the beginning that the statistics were not in his favor, but he was determined to get the best treatment he could and extend his life as long as possible while maintaining the quality of life he required. Years of hockey, tennis and basketball and his wife’s excellent cooking had him in good shape for the battle. For 20 months, he was able to stave off most of the disease’s effects, undergoing a Whipple operation attempt, 17 rounds of Gemcitabine (chemotherapy) and 2 rounds of Cyberknife (radiation). During that time, he was able to accomplish many of his end-of-life goals with help from dear friends and family, by preparing he and his wife’s house for sale, buying and refinishing a new condominium apartment, visiting with all his children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren near and far, and managing his treatment with the help of his medical team.

Dad was treated at Beth Israel Deaconess Hospital in Boston. He kept meticulous notes of his symptoms and treatments, and charted his CA-19 levels against the tumor’s size. He never showed any self-pity; his biggest worry was how his death would affect his family. It was only in the last two months, when his digestion became severely compromised by the tumor’s growth that he experienced pain and real debilitation.

Once his options had run out for treatment, he quickly decided that he had no interest in lingering in an incapacitated state, and chose to withhold all measures that might extend his life. This is so in keeping with the man he was! He talked of his worry of “disrupting his children’s lives for too long” as we and his grandchildren all gathered in Boston to help in any way we could and be with him during this incredibly difficult time. He died a mere eight days later, very peacefully at home, surrounded by his children, Paul, Leslie, Hilarie, and Jeff, his

dear wife Dottie, and his daughter-in-law Kathy.

He had an excellent relationship with his oncologist, Dr. Andrea Bullock, and her colleague, Dr. Jamie Potossek of Beth Israel Deaconess, and fully comprehended the challenges of pancreatic cancer. Unlike many other cancers for which treatments have been developed, pancreatic cancer remains inevitably fatal and difficult to treat effectively. We decided to create a You Can Help Fund Page in memory of dad because Dr. Bullock's pancreatic cancer research was supported by the Hirshberg Foundation Seed Grant Program and thus Dad hoped that friends and family would contribute to this Fund in his memory and to help future patients diagnosed with this terrible disease.

Event Spotlight – Dance for a Cure

By Abigail Houston, Colleen Perks, & Melinda Kolesar

Every year at the West Branch Area Senior High School in Morrisdale, PA, students are asked to design, plan, and implement a Senior Project. When it was our turn to propose a project, we knew that we wanted to do something to make a difference in the field of cancer, specifically because we all have been personally touched by cancer. After our initial meeting, it was clear to all three of us what type of cancer we wanted to focus on.

In the summer of 2010, Abigail's Uncle William "Wilbur" O'Neill was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. Abigail was there while he struggled and valiantly tried to fight this horrible

disease. At only 54 years old, Uncle Wilbur, a sweet, caring, loving man, always full of life, lost his battle with cancer six weeks after his diagnosis. He fought until the very end. The twinkle in those Irish eyes will never be forgotten.

After going through such a devastating experience, all three of us, Colleen, Melinda and Abigail, made the decision to dedicate our senior project to raising money to help fight pancreatic cancer. We started our planning at the beginning of our senior year. We decided to put on a dance as a way of raising money for our project. The name we chose was "Dance For A Cure". We scheduled the dance for Saturday, November 18th, 2011 in the high school gym. We secured a DJ, booked our security, and started making posters.

We pre-sold tickets for the dance and, when selling the tickets, we also had bracelets for sale. We also mailed out letters to individuals and businesses. If a business or individual donated \$25 or more, their name would be written on our t-shirts which were to students, parents, teachers, and community members. The actual night of the dance, we sold drinks, pizza, baked goods, and snacks. Businesses and individuals also donated items to be chanced off the night of the event.

We decorated our high school gym with purple and white balloons. Most of the students who were present purchased a t-shirt and wore it in honor of all pancreatic cancer patients. The night was a huge success. Everyone that attended showed so much support and danced the night away for our amazing cause. We could certainly feel that Uncle Wilbur was there looking down on us, smiling upon us with those dimples. We felt blessed that we were able to raise \$2,485.65 for the Hirshberg Foundation for Pancreatic Cancer Research.

You Can H.E.L.P. Fund Spotlight – UNCONDITIONAL Fund: In Memory of Ken McCleary

By Lyndsey McCleary Schroeder

I found the Hirshberg Foundation website while searching for information about signs and symptoms of pancreatic cancer. I clicked on their link and began looking at their site. The information provided was so clear and easy to understand. I emailed their office with a question and heard back within hours. I felt like I had made a connection and in some way, my dad helped me find them. I created a You Can Help Fund on their website in honor of my dad. I knew that this was where I wanted donations to be sent. I have kept my promise to my dad to find some good out of his bad diagnosis and am currently working with my daughter on hosting three events this year – all benefiting the Hirshberg Foundation.

Ken McCleary, my dad, was twelve days from his 44th birthday on November 1, 2007. A happy, fun-loving, open armed, funny, healthy and hardworking man, he enjoyed his time mostly surrounded by family and good friends. After several days in the hospital with unexplained stomach and back pain, the doctors told us the news. This healthy, wonderful man that we all adored had pancreatic cancer, and so aggressively that it had already spread to his lungs, his liver, and his lymph nodes. Stage 4 and terminal. Inoperable and not likely to respond to any other

methods of medications or treatment, the doctors gave him 3-4 weeks left of life.

Hearing that his time was now limited, the first thing Dad requested was to be taken home with his family (whom he made promise to try not to cry), friends (more than just the two at a time most hospitals let in), football (a diehard Lions Fan), good food (that he pretended to be hungry for), and most of all, his birthday on November 13th. With our now crunched time to have him close, we watched football, laughed, loved, and smiled in his presence. But with our backs turned, we all cried and ached for the man we all knew was each day looking worse than he had the day before. Any time Dad would catch us with tears in our eyes, he'd say "I don't know why everyone is crying, you all only have to miss one guy. I have to miss ALL of you." Of course, he said it with a smile. He always had a way of trying to make things easier by joking. And of course, frequently asking what we planned on doing for his upcoming birthday, because according to Dad...you don't have a birthDAY, you have a birthMONTH.

One afternoon, my mom reluctantly left the house for the grocery store. There were few things that my dad would actually eat or drink, so she made sure she had whatever he wanted available. The second he heard the garage door close, my dad looked me right in the eye and said "I need a favor". Of course I told him, "Anything." Big blue eyes staring directly into my watery green ones said "I need you to make something good happen from this thing. It can't be all bad. And don't be all sad all the time, I don't like that. Can you promise me that one favor?" Loving him even more than I thought possible, I could only nod. He couldn't have asked me for anything harder. But a promise is a promise.

Around 11 p.m. the first Friday night he was home, he awoke from

sleep, not himself. Always within speaking distance, and mostly by his bedside, my mom and I knew something was wrong. This was the moment we had secretly been hoping would never come. For the first time, he admitted he was in pain and let it show by the tears in his eyes. My mom and I were watching the strong, healthy, worryless man we idolized become weak, vulnerable, and critically ill. We finally got him calm enough to lie on the couch and looked at each other while we watched his breathing deteriorate and his face wince in pain. "It hurts. Can't breathe." was all he could get out. My mom told him how much he meant to her and how much she loved him, and I smiled at him and told him I loved him. And then I told him the biggest lie I've ever told. I told him that we would be okay without him if he was too tired and needed to stop fighting. I told him that we would all learn how to continue in our days, learning from all the things he had already taught us. I told him it was okay to let go, that we understood and didn't want him to hurt anymore. He listened while I lied, looked at my mom who tearfully nodded, and mumbled something quietly..."I love you both." At 11:15pm, he took his one last breath and my hand on his chest felt that one last heartbeat. Just eight days after his diagnosis, my dad lost his battle. It was November 9th, four days shy of the birthday he so badly wanted to celebrate one last time.

In place of a birthday party that November 13th, we held a funeral. At the wake, I made a promise to my dad and everyone there that loved him that we would never forget him, that we would always use November as Kenny's "BirthMONTH". So Unconditional was born. The name, because it just is the best one to describe him. An open armed, always forgiving, inviting man to everything and everyone. Family, friend, foe, child, adult, co-worker, or stranger – it never mattered to him who you were, he just wanted you to feel comfortable around him. "Unconditional" seemed the only fitting title for any event or

idea that would be put on in his memory. So to start, every year we hold “UNCONDITIONAL Birthdays”. November to honor Pancreatic Cancer Awareness Month, a never forgotten “Happy Birthday” to my dad, and my own personal way of letting him know that I haven’t forgotten my favor of trying to make something good come out of something so sad.

Event Spotlight – Peds of Purple

By Barbara Krippel

The first Peds for Purple Pancreatic Cancer Walk took place on the early morning of November 5, 2011 in Southern New Jersey. Thirty-two participants took a 5K stroll around Pennsauken’s Cooper River Park amid crisp temperatures, fall foliage and sunny skies.

The goal of our fundraiser is to call attention to the need for funding research and treatment of pancreatic cancer and to honor the memory of my mother Margaret Davison, who succumbed to pancreatic cancer in 2003.

Our efforts were rewarded as the walkers and event organizers, Barbara Krippel, Marjorie Swingle and Elizabeth Johnson helped raise more than \$1,100 for the Hirshberg Foundation for Pancreatic Cancer Research. Fortified by donated beverages, snacks and a 50/50 drawing, the participants were well prepared to embark on their walk, all for a great cause. Some walked for the personal reason to honor the loved ones that they had lost to this disease, accompanied by supportive spouses or friends.

To further emphasize the far reaching affects of pancreatic cancer, a somber moment at the beginning of the walk was taken to remember those relatives and friends whose lives have been cut short by pancreatic cancer. Participants wore shirts printed with pictures of their departed loved ones, while others brought photos and other mementos to share. Everyone completed the walk, and no injuries occurred!

Bolstered by the encouraging turnout, the 2nd Annual Peds for Purple Pancreatic Cancer Walk has already been scheduled for Saturday, November 3, 2012 and we have already begun our organizing efforts to increase both awareness and donations.