

# Celebrate National Research Month in May

In recognition of National Research Month, we're shining a light on extraordinary scientific advances gaining momentum in pancreatic cancer. To date, the Hirshberg Foundation has funded over 120 Seed Grant projects leading to significant [NIH funding](#), clinical trials, and [improved patient outcomes](#). Groundbreaking ideas are coming to fruition, including the use of [artificial intelligence to analyze CT scans](#) for pancreatic cancer patients and an [mRNA vaccine](#) in the pipeline to prevent disease recurrence. The greater pancreatic cancer research community remains committed to discovering answers and we are watching them turn an exciting corner.

This month and throughout the year, we look forward to sharing news from our [UCLA laboratories](#), [Seed Grant projects](#), and updates directly from the headlines. Your generous support has allowed us to increase our research efforts worldwide and we look forward to announcing the results of their efforts!

## ACTIVITY SUMMARY REPORT

The UCLA Activity Summary Report includes a comprehensive overview of advancements in research and patient care. From [66 open clinical trials](#) to individual Seed Grant updates, and news from the [Agi Hirshberg Center for Pancreatic Diseases](#) – the latest report details this progress over the past year.

[Read the Report](#)

## RESEARCH LABORATORIES

The Hirshberg Foundation's UCLA laboratories have propelled research forward in the global medical community. The collaboration between the [Hirshberg Translation Laboratory](#) and the [Sahin-Toth Laboratory](#) is central to our work on campus as they make great strides forward.

[Learn More](#)

## NCCN GUIDELINES

The Hirshberg Foundation is a sponsor of the [NCCN Guidelines for Patients: Pancreatic Cancer](#). These extensive guidelines include clinical trials and studies, care options, treatment protocols, and much more.

[Learn More](#)

## ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

At the latest APA meeting, lectures were led by researchers from Mayo Clinic, Cedars Sinai, and MD Anderson Cancer Center each discussing innovation in the AI space as it relates to early detection and diagnostic tests. [Take a look at our APA Video on AI](#), a symposium funded by the Hirshberg Foundation.

With your support, we are empowering the medical community to pursue groundbreaking research and initiatives that make an impact across the globe.

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# What is Type 3c Diabetes?

Type 3c diabetes develops when the pancreas is damaged in ways that affect its ability to produce insulin. Conditions such as chronic pancreatitis, cystic fibrosis, and pancreas surgery, either complete or partial removal (pancreatectomy), can lead to pancreas damage that causes diabetes. Type 3c diabetes (also known as pancreatogenic diabetes) is diabetes that comes secondary to pancreas diseases, involving the exocrine and digestive functions of the [pancreas](#).

Diabetes is a health condition that occurs when blood sugar, or glucose levels in the blood, are too high. This develops when the pancreas doesn't make any or enough insulin (a hormone), or the body doesn't respond to insulin properly and glucose levels rise in the blood.

The pancreas has two main functions in the body:

**Exocrine function:** Produces enzymes including amylase, proteases, and lipase that assist with the digestion of carbohydrates, proteins, and fats.

**Endocrine function:** Sends out hormones (mainly insulin and glucagon) that control the amount of sugar in the bloodstream.

Pancreas damage that leads to type 3c diabetes may also affect the pancreas's ability to produce the enzymes that help with digestion and absorption of nutrients. This condition is called [exocrine pancreatic insufficiency \(EPI\)](#).

The difference between the various types of diabetes is what causes them. **Type 1 diabetes** is an autoimmune disease in which the immune system attacks and destroys insulin-producing cells in the pancreas for unknown reasons. Individuals with type 1 always need insulin to manage the condition. **Type 2 diabetes**

develops when the body doesn't make enough insulin and/or the body's cells don't respond normally to the insulin (insulin resistance). Individuals with type 2 diabetes may manage the condition with lifestyle changes, oral medication and/or insulin. **Type 3c diabetes** results from damage to the pancreas that isn't autoimmune in nature. People with type 3c often also lack the ability to produce enough enzymes their pancreas makes for digestion and absorption of nutrients. In this form of diabetes, the amount of insulin being made by the pancreas can vary. Some individuals will need to take oral diabetes medications while others may also need insulin to manage the condition.

The worldwide prevalence of type 3c diabetes is unknown. It is often misdiagnosed and under recognized because there is not a universally accepted diagnostic criteria. The management of type 3c diabetes depends on the level of damage and what caused the damage to the pancreas but may include oral medications, insulin injections, and diet and lifestyle modifications.

If you or a loved one thinks you have type 3c diabetes, please speak with your healthcare team. We are [here to help](#).

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## **School of Nursing Grant Focused on Emotional Wellness**

A new study, funded through the Hirshberg Foundation's [Seed Grant program](#), will focus on the emotional wellbeing of patients and their caregivers as they face pancreatic cancer.

Through a new partnership with the clinical teams at the [UCLA](#)

[Agi Hirshberg Center for Pancreatic Diseases](#) and the psychosocial clinicians at the [Simms/Mann-UCLA Center for Integrative Oncology](#), Dr. [Eden Brauer](#), Dr. Denice Economou, and Barbara Demman have developed a study to identify the optimal way to provide a mindfulness-based intervention to patients and caregivers facing pancreatic cancer. The team has devised an intervention plan to provide four pre-recorded, self-paced modules that will focus on four aspects of the cancer journey and ways to be mindful. These include: 1. Introduction to Mindfulness, 2. Cultivating Self-Compassion, 3. Making the Most of the Moment, and 4. Life Review and Legacy Envisioning.

These modules, recorded by a nursing faculty member who is a mindfulness certified facilitator, will be available online through a study website so participants can engage with them in a flexible way. This will allow study participants to access the four modules when it is convenient for them and as often as they need over a six-week period. The team's primary objective will be to determine the best way to provide a web-based mindfulness practice and set of tools for those facing pancreatic cancer. Another objective of the study is to collect data on other aspects of the patient and caregiver emotional well-being throughout the cancer journey. This mindfulness intervention aims to track and improve self-reported symptoms of depression, anxiety, spiritual wellbeing, sleep, and quality of life for both the patients and caregivers.

The Hirshberg Foundation is honored and excited to partner with the UCLA School of Nursing to work towards understanding the ways to support and improve both patient and caregiver emotional well-being throughout the cancer journey. This research is made possible thanks to our community.

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# **The World Pancreatic Cancer Coalition Highlights the Hirshberg Foundation**

*This spring, the World Pancreatic Cancer Coalition (WPCC) is shining a light on the Hirshberg Foundation for Pancreatic Cancer Research. As a member of the WPCC, we celebrate and recognize that we are not alone in this fight. With over 100 member organizations from 40 countries, the coalition raises awareness, inspires action, and ultimately creates better outcomes for patients. Every organization in the WPCC brings something unique and remarkable to the table. As the pancreatic cancer foundation that pioneered these efforts, we are honored to share our history, mission, and ongoing projects.*

## **WORLD PANCREATIC CANCER COALITION MEMBER PROFILE**

In 1997, the Hirshberg Foundation was established to fund groundbreaking scientific research, provide patient education and support, and sustain the hope that this cancer will be eradicated once and for all. To date, the organization offers many programs focused on accelerating multidisciplinary pancreatic cancer research, providing comprehensive support services to patients, educating families, and raising community awareness.

## WHERE WE STARTED

Over twenty-five years ago, Agi Hirshberg set out on an extraordinary journey to lead the fight against pancreatic cancer in honor of her late husband, Ronnie. Determined to find answers, she made a promise that still holds true: she would be relentless in the fight against this disease, and she would never give up. Today, the Foundation she started remains at the forefront of pancreatic cancer research and is a beacon of hope for patients and families facing this disease.

The Hirshberg Foundation's research efforts launched with the opening of the Ronald S. Hirshberg Translational Pancreatic Cancer Research Laboratory at UCLA and the Foundation's world-renowned Seed Grant Program. The Seed Grant Program provides early funding for researchers, opening the door for investigators to secure additional support to advance their work. To date, over 120 individual and collaborative Hirshberg Seed Grants have been funded at more than 45 research institutions in the US and abroad.

Under Agi's direction, the Foundation's Scientific Advisory Board and an ever-growing community of doctors and scientists have been instrumental in elevating patient care, leading research globally, and increasing awareness in the medical community. In 2005, the Foundation funded the UCLA Pancreas Tissue Bank, sharing specimens to aid the basic, translational, and clinical research activities of investigators. That same year, the first Symposium for Pancreatic Cancer was presented to the pancreatic cancer community, providing critical information and updates on treatment, research, and topics including nutrition, genetics, surveillance, and more to patients, caregivers, the research and the medical community.

To date, the Hirshberg Foundation's patient programs include

one-on-one support, patient-focused events, educational resources and webinars, financial aid for low-income households, the National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN) Guidelines, and the Agi Hirshberg Center for Pancreatic Diseases at UCLA. Patients and families are at the heart of the Foundation's mission, and each of these resources empowers them as they navigate a diagnosis with the support they need.

Thanks to the partnership, guidance, and brilliance of doctors and investigators from every corner of the globe, significant strides have been made in both research and patient care. Today, the Foundation remains focused on finding a cure for pancreatic cancer and empowering patients and families whose lives have been touched by this disease. Advances being made are not only offering families hope, they're giving patients a fighting chance.

## **WHO WE ARE AT OUR CORE**

When the Foundation was established, it was organized around Agi's vision and five mission pillars. To date, the Foundation has accomplished 4 of those 5 goals, with a cure being the final piece of the puzzle. The hard-fought battles of our patients, families, researchers, and medical community have brought us closer than ever to a cancer-free life, and the Foundation remains committed to our mission and our mantra to Never Give Up!

[Read our mission pillars](#)

## **Ongoing Projects**



# Seed Grant Program

Each year, the Foundation Seed Grant program provides research funding to innovative projects led by basic and clinical investigators. To date, over 120 research projects have been funded at 45 medical and research institutions in the United States and overseas, many of which have gone on to receive NIH support. The program funds research in treatment/therapy, patient care, early diagnosis, detection, cancer biology, basic science, prevention/metabolism, and research core facilities. It is allocated annually- submissions pouring in from locations around the world, with a notable emphasis on collaborative initiatives involving multiple research institutions.

[Learn more about the Seed Grant Program](#)

# Symposium for Patients & Families

The 18th Annual Symposium on Pancreatic Cancer returns to the Luskin Center on April 13th with a host of new topics and guest speakers. This invaluable event is provided free of charge and brings together patients, caregivers, medical professionals, and scientific researchers. This year's Symposium will cover topics from genetics to enzymes, the Pancreatic Cancer Early Detection Consortium, and the Canopy Cancer Collective. The highlight of this event includes a patient and caregiver panel sharing personal experiences, unique perspectives, and inspiration with survivors and caregivers. Guests may attend in person or online, with videos made available later for viewing.

[Learn more about the Symposium](#)

# Agi Hirshberg Center for Pancreatic Diseases

The Agi Hirshberg Center for Pancreatic Disease continues to set the standard for state-of-the-art care as it grows and thrives. The Center has made tremendous progress, assembling an ever-growing arsenal of tools to understand and mitigate the effects of the illness and advance its quest for greater patient comfort. Now, under the direction of Dr. Timothy Donahue, the Center recently opened in a new larger space at UCLA where patients can receive top-notch care from their entire medical team. Patients are able to meet with surgeons, medical oncologists, gastroenterologists, palliative care specialists, dietitians, genetic counselors, clinical trials coordinators, and therapists from the Simms-Mann psychosocial care team – all in one location and often in one visit.

[Learn more about the Center](#)

## UCLA Partnership

The longstanding partnership between the Hirshberg Foundation and UCLA plays a crucial role in advancing research and improving patient outcomes. The Foundation funds laboratories, core research facilities, and the Pancreas Tissue Bank. The relationship extends to psychosocial care from the Simms/ Mann Center for Integrative Oncology as well. As a member of the Canopy Collective, our UCLA team is making great strides in nutrition, palliative care, genetic testing, clinical trial participation, and patient education. The clinical trial portfolio of the Agi Hirshberg Center for Pancreatic Diseases is also among the strongest in the country. Trials have robust patient enrollment, with collaboration across multidisciplinary teams.

[Learn more about our UCLA partnership](#)

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# “Love Rides” at the 12th Annual Tour de Pier

South Bay artist displays life-size custom artwork at the award-winning outdoor stationary cycling fundraiser to honor loved ones and friends in the fight against cancer

In the battle against cancer, it takes love and the dedication of community to make a difference. South Bay artist [Wendy Stillman](#) is showing her support by creating the custom-design mixed media painting, “Love Rides” which will be on display at the [12th Annual Tour de Pier](#) outdoor stationary cycling fundraiser on Sunday, May 19 at the Manhattan Beach Pier & Strand.

Masterfully using acrylic on canvas, Stillman’s artwork is a large, vibrant 7.5 feet by 7.5 feet painting featuring healing heart hands surrounded by symbols of support. “As a local artist and longtime resident here in the South Bay, I was thrilled to have the opportunity to create a large custom piece of art for the Tour de Pier,” said Stillman. “These hand hearts represent all the love people are expressing by participating in this event and riding at the Tour de Pier to honor loved ones, friends, and the fight against cancer.” She added, “I wanted to create a large, strong piece both physically and visually to symbolize the power we have collectively to stand together as a community to fight the fight, and what better way to symbolize that than two hands coming together to symbolize love.”

Since the launch of the Tour de Pier more than a decade ago, the hand heart gesture has been incorporated into rides as a symbol of love and hope for those fighting cancer. This year, the Tour de Pier is honored that Stillman will be sharing her incredible art with the community. "Our goal this year is to weave the healing power of art into the Tour de Pier. Over the years, the hand heart has been a unifying gesture of love and support between our instructors and the participants," said Heath Gregory, Co-Founder of the Tour de Pier. "We wanted to embrace hand heart fully and extend the sentiment into the greater community with Wendy's help and talent. Her piece, 'Love Rides' is a symbol of the love we have for our greater South Bay community and a message of love and hope to those fighting cancer."

Broadening community engagement, the Tour de Pier shared the "Love Rides" collaboration with the youth arts program of [Indivisible Arts at Resin](#) in Hermosa Beach, a nonprofit organization dedicated to cultivating creativity, consciousness, and connection through the arts. Stillman created a project for kids to create smaller 8-inch by 8-inch versions of the hand heart painting so they could participate in the community's effort to show support for all those fighting against cancer. Artwork of students from Indivisible Arts will be showcased, along with Stillman's painting, at the Tour de Pier.

The hand heart design will continue to have prominent presence at the Tour de Pier as it will appear on the front of this year's exclusively designed t-shirts worn by participants and volunteers. Hosted by [Splatterz Studio](#), kids and adults can craft their own hand heart design (for a suggested donation) at the Health & Fitness Expo which is free and open to the public.

To catch a sneak peek of Stillman's painting in the weeks leading up to the Tour de Pier, visit Culture Brewing Co. in

Manhattan Beach and the Bay Club in El Segundo.

The Tour de Pier will be held at the iconic Manhattan Beach Pier & Strand, 2 Manhattan Beach Blvd., Manhattan Beach, CA 90266 from 8:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. The fundraiser benefits a trio of nonprofit cancer organizations that work tirelessly to advance research and provide multi-layer support services: Hirshberg Foundation for Pancreatic Cancer Research, Cancer Support Community South Bay, and the Uncle Kory Foundation for Brain Cancer Research. To learn more about “Love Rides” and the Tour de Pier, visit [www.tourdepier.com](http://www.tourdepier.com).





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**Agi's National Doctors Day**

# Message

When I started the Hirshberg Foundation more than 26 years ago with the goal of eradicating this disease, I relied on the doctors at UCLA who had cared for my late husband Ronnie for guidance. Over the years, [these doctors became instrumental](#) in the battle against pancreatic cancer by [elevating patient care](#), leading the [research front](#), and increasing awareness in the medical community. **Today, on National Doctors Day, I hope you will join me in celebrating the extraordinary impact they have all made on our loved ones and in the field of pancreatic cancer.**

Dr. Howard A. Reber, Ronnie's surgeon, was the first to steward the Hirshberg Foundation. [Dr Vay Liang W. Go](#) was by my side for more than two decades and was the visionary behind our Seed Grant Program. Long before [Dr. O. Joe Hines](#) became the Chair of the Department of Surgery at UCLA, he helmed the [Hirshberg Translational Lab](#) and was the first Director of the [UCLA Agi Hirshberg Pancreatic Center for Pancreatic Diseases](#). **The partnership and brilliance of these doctors led to significant strides forward in both research and patient care.**





**Today, we have the best and brightest doctors guiding our efforts.** Our Scientific Advisory Board Chair, Miklos Sahin-Toth, MD, and the Director of the UCLA Agi Hirshberg Center for Pancreatic Diseases, Timonthy Donahue, MD, are the top leaders in pancreatic cancer. We have outstanding medical professionals serving on our [Scientific Advisory Board](#), as physicians and caretakers to patients, and making [groundbreaking discoveries](#) in the lab. Their steadfast work is changing the trajectory of this disease and bringing us closer to a cure.

**I am grateful for the expertise, commitment, and friendship of each doctor who helped the Hirshberg Foundation pioneer our path forward.** If you would like to shine a light on a doctor who has supported our fight against pancreatic cancer, someone who has been your champion, or helped a loved one, I invite you to [share your story](#).

With gratitude,

Agi Hirshberg  
Founder