

Momentum Newsletter: Summer

Summer is here and we're excited to share that each of our [signature fundraising events](#) have launched with in-person and virtual dates throughout the fall! Summer started strong as we kicked off [National Cancer Survivor's Month](#), a notable moment for our community to share supportive [Messages of Hope](#) for patients. In addition, applications for the [Seed Grant Program](#) are being accepted and reviewed by our Scientific Advisory Board and we're happy to share a career [progress update](#) from a past awardee. Each of our programs benefiting research and patients has a positive impact on our community. Your participation makes a difference whether you [make a donation](#), join us for a [Patient & Family Webinar](#) or [register for an event](#) to increase awareness, raise funds and encourage healthy living. We hope you will take this opportunity to get involved and champion the fight to cure pancreatic cancer in 2021!

National Cancer Survivors Month Spreads Hope

In celebration of [National Cancer Survivors Month](#) we shared incredible stories from [Steve](#), [Laura](#) and [Roberta](#), all pancreatic cancer survivors with a common goal to use their experiences to raise awareness. Concurrently, our [Messages of Hope](#) campaign invited both supporters and survivors to express words of encouragement, support and gratitude. Ruth, a 23-year survivor expressed her joy of being cancer free and impressed the importance of testing to be proactive and stay healthy. Kay, a 1-year survivor, thanked the doctors, researchers and caregivers who support patients throughout their cancer journey. Joanne, a supporter, shared her faith in every new day bringing a chance

for hope, treatments and a cure. Together, we will continue to celebrate every milestone reached and every challenge overcome by patients. We shared extraordinary stories and reminded the world that pancreatic cancer patients and families are fighters.

[Read Our Message of Hope →](#)

Registration Is Open For Upcoming Signature Events!

Our tradition of increasing awareness, raising funds and encouraging healthy living is building momentum as all of our favorite Hirshberg events return this Fall! Hirshberg Foundation events help fund research, educate the public about pancreatic cancer and provide an opportunity to honor our loved ones as we unite as a community. Register for one of our signature events to participate in-person or virtually!

Tour de Pier, Sunday, September 12, 2021

The [Tour de Pier](#) returns to the Manhattan Beach Strand on Sunday, September 12th. Our award-winning charity event brings stationary cycling outdoors with a beautiful ocean view. Whether you register as an in-person rider or tune in to our immersive livestream, you'll help make a difference for all those facing cancer.

[Tour de Pier →](#)

24th Annual LA Cancer Challenge 5K Walk/Run, Sunday, October 31, 2021

We also look forward to reuniting with our [LA Cancer Challenge](#) family on October 31st, so get those dazzling costumes ready to

walk, run or stroll this Halloween! It's sure to be a memorable family-friendly event for everyone joining us in-person at UCLA and for our virtual participants across the country.

[LA Cancer Challenge →](#)

Hirshberg Training Team 2021 at the LA Marathon, Sunday, November 7, 2021

If you're ready for an exciting challenge and want to return to a steady fitness routine, join the [Hirshberg Training Team](#) and start training for the LA Marathon on November 7th – during National Pancreatic Cancer Awareness Month. Many of our runners have been preparing for this event for over a year and are ready to honor loved ones and cross the finish line.

[Hirshberg Training Team →](#)

Registration is open for every event so [save these dates on your calendar](#) and register today!

Seed Grant Program Gives Researcher a Career Boost

Our [Seed Grant Program](#) is designed to invest in young researchers with the aim of aiding their careers in pancreatic cancer and driving innovative, collaborative research projects. Our investment supports early discoveries and helps pave the way for a career in pancreatic cancer research. A 2018 Seed Grant awardee, [Dr. Kathleen DelGiorno](#) is working to understand the initiating events that lead to tumor progression. Our funding allowed [Dr. DelGiorno](#) to publish extensively, making her a more attractive research candidate and helping her secure an Assistant Professorship at Vanderbilt University. As she wrote

to us, “Your generous funding has allowed me to be very productive. Thank you so much for launching my career!” Dr. DelGiorno’s trajectory is emblematic of what our Seed Grant program aims to achieve, and it is all made possible thanks to your support.

[Read more about Dr. DelGiorno’s research →](#)

New Clinical Trials Info & Patient Tools

In spring, we highlighted [Clinical Trial Awareness Month](#) by sharing new information and resources on this complex topic. When patients and families learn all of the treatment options available to them, they can develop a clear understanding of the benefits of new and emerging treatments and make informed decisions. Today, over [285 trials across the country are listed on the NIH website](#), all are actively recruiting and taking action by attacking this disease from every angle. Learn more about the process, [phases, safety protocols](#) and how to find a trial on our [clinical trials webpage](#).

A cornerstone of our commitment to the pancreatic cancer community is to provide resources for patients, caregivers and loved ones. We continue to deliver on that promise through our ever evolving library of [Patient Tools](#). From a resource guide for [newly diagnosed patients](#) to information on the [financial costs of cancer](#) to a [new podcast](#) from long-term survivor Roberta Luna, we are working to tackle the topics that impact our community. If you would like us to address a particular issue, please [let us know](#).

Our research, programs, and services are made possible thanks to your support. Every donation has a positive impact on our

pancreatic cancer community.

The 2021 LA Cancer Challenge Honorary Medical Chair is Dr. Li of UCLA

On October 31st the LA Cancer Challenge is making a triumphant return to the UCLA campus once again! We are delighted to share that a dedicated supporter of the Foundation, [Dr. Zhaoping Li](#), Chief of the Division of Clinical Nutrition, has accepted our invitation to be LACC Honorary Medical Chair. It is fitting that we begin a new post-pandemic chapter with Dr. Li at the helm; her exceptional commitment to wellness and expertise in nutrition impacts pancreatic cancer survivors every day.

Zhaoping Li, MD, PhD was welcomed into our Foundation family in 2016 when she was awarded a [Seed Grant](#) for 'Nutrition Support to improve outcomes in patients with unresectable pancreatic cancer.' It was the first study of its kind to be funded by the Hirshberg Foundation. A couple years later she would also launch a medically supervised study investigating how dietary counseling, with and without nutrition supplementation, can affect outcomes of non-surgical patients. Dr. Li's research and position at UCLA continue to enrich our partnership and effectively serve patients in new ways.

In 2017, Dr. Li presented for the first time at the Hirshberg Foundation's Symposium for Pancreatic Cancer. Her unique insight made a memorable impression on patients. She was immediately a

crowd favorite, sharing with patients [how to achieve optimal nutrition](#). Not long after, the Hirshberg Foundation hosted a hands-on [Cooking Healthy class](#), and Dr. Li answered the call once again. She patiently led survivors and caregivers through a fun cooking experience sharing nutritious recipes and cooking tips. Dr. Li continues to be instrumental in educating patients as they find themselves balancing the complexities of a changing diet during and after treatment.

Whether she's discussing [nutrition and pancreatic cancer](#) at the 2019 Symposium or hosting our very first webinar during the pandemic, '[Eat & Live Well During the Corona Virus](#),' Dr. Li always has patients' best interests at heart. Nutrition can be a contentious topic for many patients navigating side effects, but Dr. Li's compassion, knowledge and warm personality make each event outshine the last. We are thrilled to welcome her as LACC Honorary Medical Chair and grateful to have her [walk and fundraise](#) on the [UCLA Health Sciences Team](#)!

More about Dr. Zhaoping Li

Zhaoping Li, MD, PhD is Professor of Medicine and Chief of the Division of Clinical Nutrition at the University of California, Los Angeles. Dr. Li completed her MD and PhD in Physiology at Beijing University. Dr. Li has been a faculty member at UCLA and VA Greater Los Angeles Health Care System since 1997. Dr. Li is board-certified in Internal Medicine and Physician Nutrition Specialist. Dr. Li has been a principal investigator for over 100 investigator-initiated NIH and industry-sponsored clinical trials; she has published over 200 peer-reviewed scientific papers and co-authored two books focusing on nutrition and nutrition-related to oncology.

Understanding Early Tumor Progression Through Tuft Cells

One of the main ways to improve the outcomes for pancreatic cancer patients is early diagnosis and the way to better diagnostics is through a greater understanding of the initiating events in tumor progression. That is exactly what Kathleen DelGiorno, Ph.D. and her lab at Vanderbilt University are studying.

[Dr. DelGiorno](#) was a 2018 Seed Grant Awardee back when she was at The Salk Institute for Biological Studies in the [Wahl Lab](#). Thanks to funding from the Hirshberg Foundation, she was able to publish her research, collaborate on other publications, and in her words, “become a much more attractive candidate for Assistant Professor positions.” We were thrilled to hear that in July 2020 she was offered the position of Assistant Professor at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, TN. She wrote to Agi, “Your generous funding has allowed me to be very productive over the last year. Thank you so much for launching my career!” Dr. DelGiorno’s success is emblematic of what our Seed Grant program aims to achieve.

Below, read more about Dr. Kathy DelGiorno’s research and what she has been studying thanks to support from the Hirshberg Foundation.

Dr. DelGiorno’s research is looking to uncover early changes in the pancreas that lead to tumor formation. Chronic pancreatitis

is a known risk factor for pancreatic ductal adenocarcinoma (PDAC), which accounts for more than 90% of pancreas cancers, and is characterized by inflammation, fibrosis and acinar to ductal metaplasia (ADM). ADM is a process where acinar cells (differentiated specialized cells in the pancreas) undergo remodeling back to ductal-like cells when the pancreas is injured. When oncogenic KRAS is present, ADM can be initiated, but the reversal of ADM does not happen, leading to metaplastic cells (less differentiated cells) that can then lead to precancerous lesions such as pancreatic intraepithelial neoplasia (PanINs) or directly into PDAC. Dr. DelGiorno also studies tuft cells, which are solitary chemosensory cells seen throughout the hollow organs of the digestive tract and have been found to form spontaneously in the pancreas as the result of injury or tumorigenesis.

Research published by Dr. DelGiorno in [Frontiers in Physiology](#) details the landmark formation of tuft cells in the pancreas of wild-type mice, those with no genetic mutations, in the context of wound healing. This study linked tuft cell formation to ADM and shows that ADM takes place in the pancreas of mice after injury. This research demonstrates that wild-type mice can be used as a model and establishes a system to further study pancreatic tuft cells.

Subsequent research published in [Gastroenterology](#), demonstrated that the formation of tuft cells originated during ADM, and that tuft cell generation may be a step in the process of tumorigenesis in the pancreas. The study found that when tuft cell formation was inhibited, pancreatic cancer development increased. They analyzed gene expression and found differences in the genes involved in inflammation, lipid (fat) synthesis, and metabolism. Prostaglandins, lipids that have hormone like functions, specifically prostaglandin D2, was shown to be lower when tuft cells were deleted. These lipids play an important

role in keeping the pancreas from becoming inflamed and activating stromal cells, which contribute to pancreatic tumor formation. This suggests that tuft cells may actually restrain early tumor progression by secreting lipids, which inhibit inflammation.

Recently, Dr. DelGiorno's lab at Vanderbilt released a pre-print (a research paper that is still under peer review) at [bioRxiv](#) using single cell sequencing to characterize all of the cell types that result from ADM and pancreatic injury. They found that, in addition to tuft cells, ADM is also characterized by enteroendocrine cell formation, cells that generate hormones with the potential to control information, tissue injury, and tumor formation. The DelGiorno lab is now studying how these cells control tumor formation and their potential to become tumors themselves.

Through her lab at Vanderbilt, Dr. DelGiorno's research continues studying how tuft cells inhibit tumors in the hopes that these pathways can be mimicked therapeutically. Her ultimate goal is to exploit anti-tumorigenic signaling or target pro-tumorigenic signaling pathways in the hopes of benefitting patients. We applaud the work of Dr. DelGiorno and her lab for their contributions to understanding the early mechanics of tumor formation.

These advances are made possible thanks to your support. Thank you for helping us fund this vital research.

New Podcast from Pancreatic Cancer Survivor Offers Hope

Since her diagnosis with an inoperable pancreatic tumor in 2002, [Roberta Luna](#) has embarked on many new adventures. From her first half-marathon, to her first tattoo to her first of many sky diving trips, Roberta has embraced living life to its fullest. As she said, “we tend to put off doing things we want to... because we think there’s plenty of time down the road.” So when the opportunity to host a podcast radio show on OC Talk Radio presented itself, Roberta, along with her husband and caregiver, Vic, began yet another first.

“Vic and I recently had the opportunity to take another leap of faith and embark on a new journey with OC Talk Radio. We have created the podcast and radio show, [Living Hope; Your Journey with Pancreatic Cancer](#).”

Through their podcast, Roberta and Vic hope to provide information and [resources](#), share [inspirational stories](#), give hope to those affected by pancreatic cancer. With new episodes available on Thursdays, Roberta is not only sharing her story, but stories from across the pancreatic cancer community. As she shared, “through my experience with this horrific disease, I believe I am here to help those who have also been affected by pancreatic cancer, to hopefully inspire them and give them much needed hope.”

Roberta is a wife, mother, self-proclaimed thrill-seeker, tireless advocate and volunteer, and as of April 1, 2021, a 19-year pancreatic cancer survivor, with an inoperable tumor due to artery & vein involvement.

Vic and Roberta hope to share the journeys of various patients,

caregivers and advocates, including the good, bad and ugly of facing this disease. They aim educate, raise awareness, provide hope and spark inspiration in their audience. Together, the pancreatic cancer community can weather the storm with the support of loved ones, family, “the purple family” and the many people encountered along this often-difficult journey. We are happy to support Roberta and Vic on their latest endeavor!

Learn more and listen to their show → <https://livinghopepc.com/>
Follow along on their Facebook page → <https://www.facebook.com/LivingHope2055>

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.