

# PROGRESS & PROMISE

NEWSLETTER OF THE LUSTGARTEN FOUNDATION

SPRING 2021

## The “Future” of Pancreatic Cancer Research **IS HERE AND NOW**

**The Lustgarten Foundation’s new Phase II clinical trial has the potential to dramatically shift the pancreatic cancer paradigm—from diagnosis ... to treatment ... to higher survival rates.**



This trial—called *Pancreatic Adenocarcinoma Signature Stratification for Treatment (PASS-01)*—employs organoids, a technology that would have been considered “futuristic” just a few years ago. Organoids, 3D models of an individual patient’s tumor, can be grown in the lab, where multiple treatments can be tested on them.

Funded in part by a generous gift establishing the **Gail V. Coleman and Kenneth M. Bruntel Organoids for Personalized Therapy Grant**, this trial brings science into the clinic. A team of experts, co-led by the Foundation’s Chief Medical Advisor, Elizabeth M. Jaffee, MD, seek to determine how to use this technology to study cancerous tumor traits and to determine *personalized* treatment paths for patients.

Researchers will hone the ability to maximize response to standard, first-line chemotherapy and to improve patient outcomes by comparing two standard-of-care chemotherapy regimens. In the PASS trial, organoids will be created from patients diagnosed with metastatic pancreatic cancer and tested against the patient’s treatment plan. Patients will be randomized to receive one of the two first-line

standard-of-care chemotherapy treatments (FOLFIRINOX or Gemcitabine/nabpaclitaxel) and their tumor’s response to treatment will be compared to the organoid’s response. The study is the first to compare the two drug regimens head-to-head. Data from the organoids will help determine if doctors can use this approach to successfully predict the best treatment for patients.

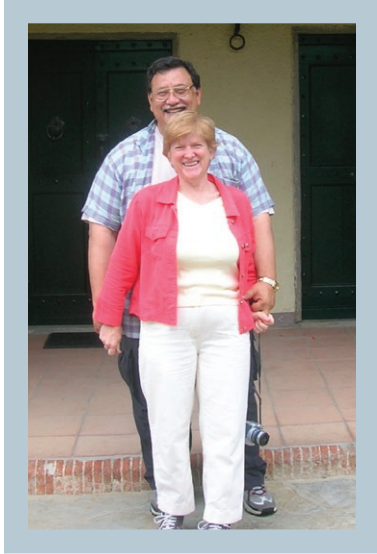
“This trial is an important step forward,” said Andrew Rakeman, PhD, Vice President of Research at the Lustgarten Foundation. “Gail understands the urgency of families facing a pancreatic cancer diagnosis... This grant allows us to bring the proven power of organoids from the labs to the clinic much faster.”

If successful, the trial will pave the way for the use of organoids to individualize metastatic pancreatic cancer therapies. ♦

**Read on to discover how our pioneering research is saving lives. →**

# An Extraordinary Gift to Honor an Extraordinary Love

Thanks to a significant gift from Gail V. Coleman, organoid analysis is included in the PASS trial, allowing researchers to determine if the organoids can accurately predict which chemotherapy a patient will respond best to.



The PASS initiative is vitally important to Ms. Coleman. Having suffered the crushing losses of her mother, father, and husband Ken to pancreatic cancer, she knows there is much work to be done—and that this trial could dramatically change outcomes for more patients. Despite advances in pancreatic cancer research, only 10% of patients survive five years after their initial diagnosis. And while surgical removal of the cancerous tissue can be effective, eligibility for the

procedure depends on early diagnosis, which means only 15% of patients are candidates.

Pancreatic cancer has touched Ms. Coleman's life in a profound way—which is why she is so eager to help others with the disease. She established the **Gail V. Coleman and Kenneth M. Bruntel Organoids for Personalized Therapy Grant**. Her exceptional

generosity is advancing research from the laboratory to the clinic, where it can have a pivotal effect on patients' lives.

*"What excites me the most about the project is that Ken can continue to positively impact the lives of others,"* Ms. Coleman shared. *"I believe this study will be an important step in personalized therapy, matching new or different therapies to the tumor characteristics of future pancreatic cancer patients. If this prolongs the lives of patients with metastatic cancer, that will be our legacy,"* she added. ♦

## Transforming Personal Tragedy into Hope for Others

Few lives have been impacted by pancreatic cancer as deeply as Gail V. Coleman's—the disease claimed the lives of those most dear to her. Ms. Coleman's mother died at age 65 in 1989; her father at age 80 in 2002; and her husband at age 60 in 2009.



After her husband Ken died, Ms. Coleman decided to learn all she could about pancreatic cancer research—and to put his retirement fund to extraordinary work.

*"I concluded that translational research—which moves research from the laboratory to the clinic—offers the best chance for giving future patients some meaningful time after diagnosis. It was important to me to invest in a project where our gift could make the most impact."*

The Lustgarten Foundation is grateful to Ms. Coleman for her remarkable generosity. ♦

A MESSAGE FROM LINDA TANTAWI, CEO

## Resilience, Renewal and Research

Dear Friends,

As I think about you, our Lustgarten community, I am thinking about:

**RESILIENCE:** Yikes, this pandemic has been trying and sad, but the Lustgarten community is stronger than ever.

**RENEWAL:** Happy spring! Time for fresh purple: crocuses, hyacinths, and violets!

**RESEARCH:** Thanks to donors like you, the Lustgarten Foundation will invest \$25 million in pancreatic cancer research this year and this research is the reason why I come to work every day. I know with you by our side everything is possible, including better treatments and better and more days for pancreatic cancer patients. All of the progress and promise we see on the horizon is possible because of your commitment to putting an end to this devastating disease.

There is power in resilience, comfort in renewal and strength in research. Together we are transforming pancreatic cancer. Together we are making progress. I am grateful for you. ♦

Hope and hugs,

*Linda*

Linda Tantawi, CEO



# New Research Awards Honor the Legacies of Two Transformative Americans

**When pancreatic cancer claimed the lives of Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Congressman John Lewis last year, the world grieved.**

In honor of their public fight for equality—and privately against pancreatic cancer—we established two three-year,

\$300,000 career development awards to address the need for greater gender and racial diversity within the pancreatic cancer research community. The inaugural recipients are:

**Ginsburg:** Dannielle Engle, PhD, an assistant professor at the Salk Institute for Biological Studies, will investigate the role of pancreatitis and inflammation in the formation of pancreatic cancer.

**Lewis:** Avery D. Posey, PhD, an assistant professor in the Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania, will continue his research to increase immune system efficacy at attacking pancreatic cancer.

The program is supported by Bristol Myers Squibb and is administered by the American Association for Cancer Research. ♦

## Q&A with Dr. Allyson Ocean

**Patients and families have questions about clinical trials. We have answers.**

Renowned medical oncologist Allyson J. Ocean, MD—who treats malignancies, including pancreatic cancer—recently discussed clinical trials for our publication *Interview with an Expert*. Here is an excerpt:

### Who is eligible to participate in clinical trials?

Every study has its own rules, and participation is guided by a trial's eligibility requirements to ensure certain variables are controlled. In cancer studies, research may be geared to those with early-stage disease or metastatic disease. Treatment history is often factored in, as some potential participants may be excluded based on prior treatment.

### Are there different types of clinical research?

You may be familiar with clinical trials looking for better ways to treat pancreatic cancer with medications, surgery, radiation, immunotherapy and other modalities. However, we might also look at prevention and better methods to diagnose the disease or conduct research examining screening and quality of life. Genetic studies are another area of intense research, especially with the focus on precision medicine, or tailor-made treatment based on an individual's genetic

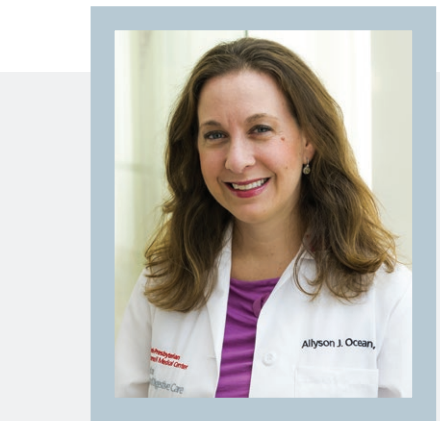
makeup or the molecular makeup of his or her individual tumor.

### What are the benefits of participating in a clinical trial?

Pancreatic cancer is a tough disease with limited treatment options, and clinical trials aid in identifying new, better treatments. One of the benefits of participating is societal, as patients help advance medicine, potentially enabling future generations of patients to have more treatment options. When patients participate in a clinical trial, they may also be helping themselves, as a clinical trial will provide access to a promising therapy that may be more effective than standard-of-care treatment.

### What resources would you recommend to help patients find out about which clinical trials are available and which ones they would qualify for?

The first step will be the treatment team, especially if the patient is receiving care at an academic center. Often there



**Dr. Allyson J. Ocean** is Associate Professor of Clinical Medicine at Weill Cornell Medical College of Cornell University, medical oncologist and attending physician in gastrointestinal oncology, Solid Tumor Division, at New York-Presbyterian Hospital/Weill Cornell Medical Center, and practices medical oncology at The Jay Monahan Center for Gastrointestinal Health.

are trials right at that institution. Other resources include disease-specific groups like the Lustgarten Foundation and Let's Win! Pancreatic Cancer ([letswinpc.org](http://letswinpc.org)), which are focused on pancreatic cancer. Another excellent resource is [clinicaltrials.gov](http://clinicaltrials.gov), which is a service offered by the NIH.

The care team should be able to help patients navigate the information, and patient advocacy groups often have staff dedicated to assisting patients with finding trials.

If you or a loved one is considering a clinical trial, please consult your physician. You may want to read the entire Q&A with Dr. Ocean, which you can find at [lustgarten.org](http://lustgarten.org). ♦

**Feel Good About Making Your Gift!** Naming the Lustgarten Foundation as a beneficiary in your will is one way you can ensure the pioneering research you support today will continue well into the future. You may also consider establishing a Donor-Advised Fund which can support the charitable organizations you care about. *For more information about planned giving opportunities, contact Stephanie DerGarabedian at [stephanied@lustgarten.org](mailto:stephanied@lustgarten.org) or 516.737.1521.* ♦

# Getting Involved and Making a Difference!

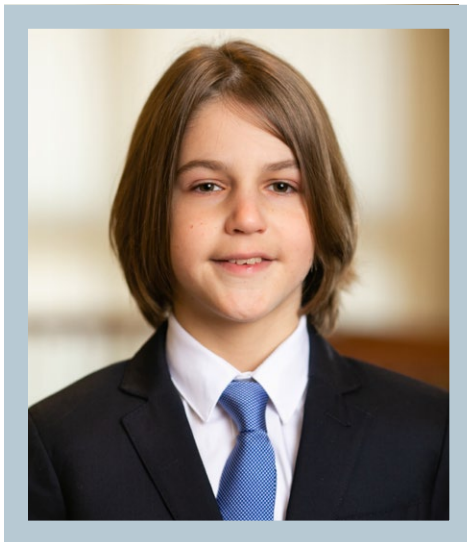
## Up and Running in Florida

For a second year, we've received a huge boost from Memorial Healthcare System (MHS) with their \$10,000 sponsorship for our Boca Raton **Pancreatic Cancer Research Walk**. We're deeply grateful to MHS for helping to jumpstart this key event, which was held on Feb. 28 as part of the 2021 Florida Pancreatic Cancer Research Walk program.



## Way to go, Zach!

When 13-year-old Zach Newshel contemplated his Bar Mitzvah he thought of his great-uncle Jeffrey Rosenzweig, who had passed away from pancreatic cancer. He was inspired by his mom, Jessica, a long-time Lustgarten supporter. So, in the family tradition, Zach designated the Foundation as a charity in lieu of gifts and generated nearly \$2,800 in donations! To show his gratitude, Zach composed an original song he shared with everyone who donated.



**LUSTGARTEN**  
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PANCREATIC CANCER RESEARCH



Photos taken prior to pandemic

## A Big Heart ... that Keeps Giving

To commemorate the caring and joyful spirit of his wife, Judy—and to raise funds for curing the disease that claimed her life—Tom Lund and his friends and family again participated in the Southwest Florida Pancreatic Cancer Research Walk as Team I ♥ Judy Lund. To coincide with the walk on Feb. 28, Tom held an in-person event at a local golf course (adhering to COVID safety guidelines) and generously matched all donations.

"Judy worked so hard to be at the walk in 2019—and to raise money and awareness so others won't have to suffer the same fate. Sadly, she passed shortly after that walk," shared Tom. We're incredibly grateful to Tom and his family—through their efforts over the past three years, they have raised more than \$100,000 for the Lustgarten Foundation.

## Save the Date! The National Neighborhood Walk for Research is Saturday, June 5!

The Foundation's National Neighborhood Walk for Research is your chance to join forces with thousands of others from across the country whose lives have been touched by pancreatic cancer. Together, we will raise awareness and fund research to defeat this devastating disease.

**Register. Donate. Fundraise. Share.** Then take to the streets of your neighborhood on June 5 to show your commitment to finding a cure. Be sure to tag us at @LustgartenFDN and use hashtags so we can find your posts: #HopeFromHome #PancreaticCancerResearch. Please also join us online for our opening ceremony and ribbon-cutting!

Visit [lustgarten.org/walks](http://lustgarten.org/walks) for more information about this walk and others planned in communities across the country in May and June. Remember, when you choose your walk, you are showing your solidarity with supporters nationwide who share your passion for funding pancreatic cancer research.

## Raise Funds through Facebook

If you're not walking with us, you can still create a Facebook Fundraiser. Enabling Facebook Fundraiser takes just a few minutes and a few simple steps—and the average Facebook Fundraiser raises at least \$150. Ask family and friends to commemorate your birthday, anniversary, graduation or other milestone by making a donation. Remember, 100% of every donation funds research!



Join the conversation and follow us on social media!



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