



## **The Lustgarten Foundation Announces Landmark Year of Fueling Cutting-Edge Pancreatic Cancer Research**

UNIONDALE, NY, Aug 15, 2024 -- The Lustgarten Foundation, the nation's largest private funder of pancreatic cancer research, today announced a landmark year of funding, awarding ten new grants to researchers at seven leading institutions. These grants, totaling \$10.7 million, support Lustgarten's unique patient-centered mission which drives outcomes across three research pillars—early detection and interception, new drug development, and personalized medicine. With the addition of these new grants, the Lustgarten Foundation supports a total of 60 active grants across 33 institutions. The Foundation concentrates on translating its understanding of the underlying biology of pancreatic cancer into clinical applications to change, extend, and ultimately save patients' lives.

"We are at an inflection point in pancreatic cancer research," said Linda Tantawi, CEO of the Lustgarten Foundation. "Through significant financial investment and thought leadership we are empowering researchers and propelling critical science forward, towards a future where people with pancreatic cancer have more treatment options, better outcomes, and more precious time with their loved ones."

Of the \$10.7 million awarded:

- 14% supports early detection and interception efforts, aiming to develop and deliver tools enabling early diagnosis of pancreatic cancer; develop and optimize biomarkers enabling early detection in the general population; develop approaches for risk assessment and management of high-risk groups.
- 74% supports new drug development projects, aiming to accelerate the development of therapies; identify novel drug targets based on an understanding of the biology of pancreatic cancer initiation and progression; accelerate preclinical and clinical testing of novel drugs and combinations in pancreatic cancer.
- 12% supports personalized medicine studies, aiming to implement a personalized medicine program; better characterize and understand the heterogeneity of pancreatic cancer; develop tools to guide treatment decisions matching the right treatment to the right patient at the right time.

These 10 new grant commitments brought the Lustgarten Foundation's total support in fiscal year 2024 to \$23.7 million to fuel cutting-edge pancreatic cancer research.

This year's grants included:

The [LABS \(Lustgarten Advancing Breakthrough Science\) Program](#), a hallmark of the Foundation's unique research strategy, made significant progress this year, with two out of the six laboratories up for renewal. After rigorous review, Lustgarten continued funding for both labs, located at [Johns Hopkins](#)

[University](#), led by [Bert Vogelstein](#), MD, Director of the Ludwig Center, Clayton Professor of Oncology and Pathology and a Howard Hughes Medical Institute investigator at The Johns Hopkins Medical School and Kimmel Cancer Center, and [Elizabeth Jaffee](#), MD, Deputy Director, Sidney Kimmel Comprehensive Cancer Center at Johns Hopkins. The LABS Program provides long-term funding to promote the development of innovative ideas and speed the pace of discovery by incentivizing interdisciplinary team science, including groups with complementary expertise across the pipeline from target discovery and validation to preclinical development and clinical testing.

[Lustgarten Foundation-AACR Career Development Awards Honoring Ruth Bader Ginsburg and John Robert Lewis](#) awarded to [Tracey W. Liu](#), PhD, assistant professor at the West Virginia University School of Medicine in Morgantown, WV, for her study “Expanding immunotherapy in pancreatic cancer by targeting myeloperoxidase,” and [Christina G. Towers](#), PhD, assistant professor at the Salk Institute for Biological Studies in La Jolla, CA, for her study “Metastasis-Initiating Cells in Pancreatic Cancer.” The awards support trailblazing investigators committed to increasing the understanding and treatment of pancreatic cancer. These awards foster and grow the number of early-career women and underrepresented scientists receiving funding for pancreatic cancer research and honor the lives and legacies of two iconic Americans lost to pancreatic cancer.

[LEAD \(Lustgarten Equity, Accessibility, and Diversity\) Grants](#) awarded to [Fiyinfolu Balogun](#), MD, PhD, Assistant Professor at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, for his study “Investigating the molecular bases of pancreatic cancer disparities in underserved minority communities and increasing clinical trial recruitment employing linguistic intervention.” The LEAD Project aims to broaden inclusivity by actively recruiting and retaining patients from underrepresented minority groups in pancreatic cancer clinical trials.

Lustgarten Foundation-Swim Across America-AACR Early Detection Research Grant awarded to [Renato Ostuni](#), PhD, Associate Professor at Università Vita-Salute San Raffaele, Milan, Italy, for his study “Targeting the PGE2-IL-1b axis for PDAC diagnosis and early treatment.” The Lustgarten Foundation-Swim Across America-AACR Pancreatic Cancer Early Detection Research Grant represents a joint effort to support innovative research to advance efforts toward the early detection and interception of pancreatic cancer.

[Innovation and Collaboration Program](#) Grant awarded to [Linda Resar](#), MD, Professor of Medicine, Oncology, and Pathology, Johns Hopkins University for her study “Targeting HMGA1 Tumor-Stromal Signaling Networks in Pancreatic Cancer.” This program provides seed funding for highly innovative research projects with significant potential to accelerate the Lustgarten Foundation’s mission to transform pancreatic cancer into a curable disease.

[Dr. Robert F. Vizza Lustgarten Clinical Accelerator Initiative \(CAI\)](#) Grants awarded to [Kim Reiss Binder](#), MD, Assistant Professor of Medicine, Division of Hematology-Oncology, Penn Medicine, for her study “Testing and Understanding Anti-CTLA4 Plus PARP Inhibitor Maintenance Therapy in Patients with Metastatic Pancreatic Cancer Who Have Achieved Stable Disease on FOLFIRINOX,” [Andrew Lowy](#), Director of Surgical Oncology at UC San Diego, and Associate Clinical Director, Surgery, Moores Cancer Center, UC San Diego, in collaboration with Shweta Joshi, PhD Moores Cancer Center, UC San Diego, for their study “Syk-Targeted Therapy with Fostamatinib: A Promising Avenue to Enhance Chemotherapy Response in Pancreatic Cancer,” and [Eric Christenson](#), MD, Assistant Professor, Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, for his study “A pilot study comparing neoadjuvant and adjuvant GVAX vs a mutated KRAS peptide vaccine given with anti-PD-1 and anti-CD137 agonist for the treatment of surgically

resectable pancreatic adenocarcinoma.” The CAI speeds the translation of basic research into the clinic by supporting novel, science-driven clinical trials. With three new trials added this year, there are now ten trials supported through this innovative program. In support of this, all data from CAI trials will also be integrated into [Lustgarten’s United Clinical Information Database \(LUCID\)](#), improving the data’s collective potential while making it accessible to the broader research community.

Through partnerships, the Lustgarten Foundation brings focus and strategy to pancreatic cancer research and maximizes our collective financial investment so we can fund the most high-risk, high-reward science. This year, Lustgarten and the Cancer Research Institute (CRI) announced a partnership focused exclusively on supporting pancreatic cancer immunotherapy research. The partnership, [INSPIRE \(Integrated Network for Supporting Pancreatic Cancer Immunotherapy Research Efforts\)](#), will encompass the established and ongoing adaptive platform trial, [REVOLUTION](#), evaluating first-line chemo-immunotherapy treatment combinations for patients with metastatic pancreatic adenocarcinoma, and will also expand into new areas of pancreatic immunotherapy research. This next wave in immunotherapy research reflects a shared commitment to transforming pancreatic cancer into a curable disease.

“By breaking down industry silos to drive collaboration and information sharing, we are creating a culture of innovation and dedication to scientific rigor that is critical to solving the complexities of pancreatic cancer,” said Andrew Rakeman, Vice President of Research at the Lustgarten Foundation. “At the Lustgarten Foundation, we are confident that our collaborative and science-driven strategy will continue to fuel discoveries and advance breakthroughs faster than ever before.”

To date, the Lustgarten Foundation has funded more than **\$282.4 million in research grants** and has been a driving force in every major advancement in pancreatic cancer research since its inception in 1998.

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### **About Lustgarten Foundation**

The Lustgarten Foundation is the largest private funder of pancreatic cancer research in the world, funding preeminent pancreatic cancer researchers, driving the pursuit of bold and innovative science toward earlier detection and better treatments, and transforming pancreatic cancer into a curable disease. The Foundation funds research where creative risks yield high rewards to accelerate and expand life-saving treatment options. We believe time is everything to patients and their families, and that community is power. Lustgarten programs and events provide people affected by pancreatic cancer a voice and a place to create hope, together. For more information about the Lustgarten Foundation, visit [lustgarten.org](http://lustgarten.org) and follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [YouTube](#).

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