



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

UNIONDALE, NY, Sep 15, 2025 -- 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 eight leading institutions. These new grants, totaling \$13.85 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 51 active grants across 29 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.

“Despite devastating federal cuts to cancer research, the Lustgarten Foundation remains the driving force behind pancreatic cancer science,” said Linda Tantawi, CEO of the Lustgarten Foundation. “We are advancing critical research with urgency and purpose—because patients don’t have the luxury of time. Through significant financial investment and thought leadership, we are empowering researchers and propelling science forward, toward a future where people with pancreatic cancer have more treatment options, better outcomes, and more precious time with their loved ones. There has never been a more hopeful time in pancreatic cancer research—and we are determined to turn that hope into real breakthroughs.”

Of the \$13.85 million in new awards:

- 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.
- 66% 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.
- 20% 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 ten new grant commitments bring the Lustgarten Foundation's total support in fiscal year 2025 to nearly \$20 million to fuel cutting-edge pancreatic cancer research.

Advancing the Lustgarten Foundation's commitment to funding early detection projects, [Marcia Canto, MD](#), Director of Clinical Research, Division of Gastroenterology at Johns Hopkins University School of

Medicine was awarded a grant for her study “*Artificial Intelligence-Augmented Early Detection and Prevention of Pancreatic Cancer*.” Funding the development and delivery of tools to enable early diagnosis of pancreatic cancer, including screening in the general population and approaches for risk assessment, management, and interception in high-risk groups will ultimately give patients and their families more help—and more hope—than ever before.

[Lustgarten Foundation-AACR Career Development Awards Honoring Ruth Bader Ginsburg and John Robert Lewis](#) awarded to [Anupriya Singhal, MD, PhD](#), Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, for her study “*Interrogating vulnerabilities of a KRAS inhibitor-resistant cell state in pancreatic cancer*,” and [Vincent Bernard Pagan, MD, PhD](#), The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center, for his study “*Targeting oncogenic metabolic adaptations to overcome therapy resistance in pancreatic cancer*.” The awards support trailblazing investigators committed to increasing the understanding and treatment of pancreatic cancer. These awards support career advancement and the development of promising talent in pancreatic cancer research, in honor of the lives and legacies of two iconic Americans lost to pancreatic cancer.

[Dr. Robert F. Vizza Lustgarten Clinical Accelerator Initiative \(CAI\)](#) grants awarded to [Gregory Beatty, MD, PhD](#), Associate Professor of Medicine (Hematology-Oncology) at the University of Pennsylvania Perelman School of Medicine for his study “*Combinatorial myeloid activation as immunotherapy for metastatic pancreatic cancer*,” [Dung Le, MD](#), Professor of Oncology at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine for her study “*NC410 and FOLFIRINOX in Combination with Anti-PD-1 with and without Anti-CTLA-4 for Treatment Naive Metastatic Pancreatic Cancer*,” [Kevin C. Soares, MD](#), Assistant Attending Surgeon of Hepatopancreatobiliary Surgery at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center (MSK) for his study “*A Pilot Study of Neoadjuvant mFOLFIRINOX and ELI-002 7P with or without Anti-PD-1 Checkpoint Blockade in Borderline and Resectable Pancreatic Ductal Adenocarcinoma*,” and [Brian Boone, MD](#), assistant professor in the Department of Surgical Oncology and an adjunct assistant professor in the Department of Microbiology, Immunology, and Cell Biology at West Virginia University for his study “*Targeting myeloperoxidase to enhance chemotherapy response in 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 12 trials supported through this innovative program. All the 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.

[Innovation and Collaboration Program](#) grants awarded to [Ronald Parchem, PhD](#), Baylor College of Medicine For his study, “*Mechanisms Driving Tumor Innervation in Pancreatic Cancer*,” and [Massimiliano Mazzone, PhD](#), Group Leader at the VIB-KU Leuven Center for Cancer Biology and Professor in the Department of Oncology at KU Leuven for his study “*Unraveling the role of P2Y6+ macrophages in PDAC liver Metastasis*.”

[Lustgarten Equity, Accessibility, and Diversity \(LEAD\) Grant Program](#) supports efforts to increase the participation of underrepresented groups in pancreatic cancer clinical trials. When clinical trials lack diversity, it can lead to inaccurate results, less effective—or even harmful—treatments for some populations, and a loss of trust in the medical system. It also hinders innovation and can cost billions in failed trials or limited market access. The supported projects are designed to identify and address barriers to participation and develop and implement specific tools to expand community outreach, patient education, and/or clinical recruitment staff.

The 2025 LEAD grant (\$426,975) was awarded to [Nina Steele, PhD](#), University of Cincinnati, and Howard Crawford, PhD, Henry Ford Pancreatic Cancer Center, for their project “Racial Disparities in Pancreatic Cancer.” This project will enable Drs. Steele and Crawford to develop tools that will allow researchers to better understand the complexity and heterogeneity of pancreatic cancer. Black African Americans are 20% more likely to develop pancreatic cancer and have worse survival outcomes compared to White patients, yet available research tools and databases typically do not include, or massively under-represent, Black African American patients. To advance the Lustgarten Foundation’s personalized medicine efforts, a grant was awarded to [Howard Crawford, PhD](#), Scientific Director of the Henry Ford Pancreatic Cancer Center for his study “*Mapping stromal evolution and immune suppression in the first racially diverse human pancreatic cancer spatial genome atlas.*” Personalized (or precision) medicine is an important and evolving research area for pancreatic cancer, focusing on creating custom treatment strategies based on a patient’s unique genetic and tumor markers and mutations.

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, leading cancer research experts convened for a [workshop focused on Solving the Early Detection and Diagnosis of Recalcitrant Cancers](#). The event, jointly hosted by the Lustgarten Foundation, the [Mark Foundation for Cancer Research](#), and the [American Association for Cancer Research \(AACR\)](#), showcased how partnership drives progress in addressing critical gaps in cancer research, particularly in early detection—a frontier that holds promising life-saving potential. As a direct outcome of the workshop, a new request for applications (RFA) was released, with funding for selected grants expected in fiscal year 2026.

“By breaking down silos and driving 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, collaborative and science-driven strategy is fueling discoveries and advancing breakthroughs faster than ever before.”

To date, the Lustgarten Foundation has funded more than **\$301 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](#), [Bluesky](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [YouTube](#).

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