

Discovery
Seed Grant
Recipient Fund

Project supported
by *Discovery Fund*

Richard Phipps, Ph.D., was the primary investigator on a project supported by a grant from the *Discovery Fund* in 1998, entitled "Growth and differentiation of chronic lymphocytic leukemia cells."

Chronic lymphocytic leukemia (CLL) is the most common leukemia in the Western world. It is a cancer of a type of white blood cell called the B1 lymphocyte, of which little is known. The median age at which CLL is diagnosed is 65 years, but many patients are diagnosed in their thirties and forties. Current treatments for CLL are not very effective. In the next 20 years, the incidence of CLL will rise dramatically owing to the increase in the average age of our population.

One problem in studying leukemias and lymphomas in general is that these cells rapidly die once removed from the body. Drs. Phipps, Ryan and Bennett at the University of Rochester
(Continued on page 2)

Dialogue

University of Rochester
Cancer Center

Conquering Cancer Together Winter 1999



Cancer Center
**Discovery
Fund**

"We are so fortunate to have a National Cancer Institute designated center in our region. We need to get the word out about the quality of the research and the fact that people in the Rochester area do not have to travel to New York City or Buffalo to receive the best cancer treatment."

Joseph and Nancy Briggs donate \$100,000 to *Discovery Fund*

Joe Briggs, a founding member of the University of Rochester Cancer Center Community Council, and his wife, Nancy, have donated \$100,000 to the *Discovery Fund* for cancer research. The Briggs' initial donation of \$50,000 in 1997 established the Fund, which is used to support young researchers as they develop new ideas in the fight against cancer.

Linda Davey, Chair of the Council, said, "Because of Joe and Nancy's generosity, the bequest of Robert J. Strassenbergh II and other donors with gifts both large and small, we have been able to provide over \$90,000 a year for innovative research projects."

The 1999 grants will be announced in the Spring newsletter. Applications are reviewed by a panel of senior scientists and grants are awarded to investigators with the most promising projects. According to Russell Hilf, Ph.D., Interim Associate Director for Laboratory Research, "The value of the *Discovery Fund* seed grants is that they provide new investigators with the means to obtain sufficient preliminary data, which is essential in seeking major funding from sources such as the National Cancer Institute, American Cancer Society and other government agencies and private foundations."

Joe Briggs recognizes how fortunate we are to have a National Cancer Institute designated center in our region and has expressed the need to get the word out about the quality of the research and the fact that people in the Rochester area do not have to travel to New York City or Buffalo to receive the best cancer treatment. Community Council committees continue to address this need and are making progress in increasing the visibility of the Cancer Center as a treatment, research and education resource for our region.

Both Nancy and Joe Briggs hope that their donation will encourage others to participate in underwriting the annual research grants and in helping to reach the endowment goal of \$1 million.

(Continued from page 1)
Cancer Center have developed a new approach to maintaining viable CLL cells in vitro for months. This advance will permit their study in detail to determine ways to kill them. For example, the CLL cells could be tested for sensitivity to certain chemotherapeutic agents in the laboratory. The optimum chemotherapeutic agent could then be administered to the CLL patient, thereby increasing the likelihood of achieving a complete remission. This project continues to explore the optimal way to keep CLL cells alive outside the body and is now beginning to test their ability to be killed by a new fat-like compound. These new studies will also help scientists understand the fundamental nature of the B1 lymphocyte, which will provide a sound basis from which to develop new and more effective therapies. The University of Rochester Cancer Center Discovery Fund was crucial in providing the opportunity to initiate the project and in proving its feasibility.

Affiliates

IN CARE

Cancer Center hosts Second Annual Regional Consortium

In 1997, six major cancer centers in western New York, Ohio and Pennsylvania formed the Regional Cancer Center Consortium for Biological Therapy of Cancer, dedicated to sharing novel basic and clinical science. The cancer centers participating in the consortium include: the University of Rochester Cancer Center, The Cleveland Clinic Foundation, Pennsylvania State University College of Medicine, Ohio State University Comprehensive Cancer Center, Roswell Park Cancer Institute and the University of Pittsburgh Cancer Institute.

The University of Rochester Cancer Center will host the second annual Regional Cancer Center Consortium for Biological Therapy of Cancer February 25-27, 1999. The consortium meets once a year to exchange information, provide a presentation forum for students and postdoctoral fellows, and facilitate clinical collaborations and development of joint clinical protocols within the region. For two days, scientists from participating centers attend sessions on topics including: cytokine, chemokine and cancer therapy, gene therapy, and clinical trials in immunological and biological therapies.

Guest speakers at this year's consortium include: Timothy Mosmann, Ph.D., Director of the Center for Vaccine Biology and Immunology at the University of Rochester, Ralph Reisfeld, Ph.D., The Scripps Research Institute, Soldano Ferrone, M.D., Ph.D., Roswell Park Cancer Institute, and Ozlem Tureci, Ph.D., the University of Saarland in Hamburg, Germany. Over 125 principal investigators, clinicians and scientists are slated to attend this year's meetings.

"Working together with the other centers serves to rapidly advance cancer research in the region. The meeting provides a relaxed, informal setting in which the translation of laboratory findings into clinical strategies is facilitated," said Joseph Rosenblatt, M.D., co-organizer of the consortium.

Cancer Center's Patient Needs Fund continues to help many

In 1997, the graduating class at the University of Rochester's School of Medicine and Dentistry donated \$4,500 to establish the Cancer Center's Patient Needs Fund. Thanks to that initial gift and a \$6,000 donation from the Cornell-Weinstein Foundation, the fund continues to provide patient access to treatment by easing the financial burden that some patients with limited means face along with the diagnosis of cancer.

"A fund like this is desperately needed by our patients and is a valuable tool for those of us trying to make life easier for them as they deal with cancer," said Martha Neubert, C.S.W., social work clinical coordinator. "Cab fare to and from treatment and drug prescriptions are just a few of the expenses this fund helps cover. Without such help, many patients would be unable to access necessary medical care," Neubert noted.

"Every patient who has utilized this fund has been grateful for relief from barriers to care that financial constraints can impose," she said.

Patient
Needs
Fund



Anyone wishing to make a donation to the Patient Needs Fund may contact Meredith Chamberlain at 275-5199.

NEW

Appointments

Cancer Center welcomes Hartmut Land, Ph.D.



Hartmut Land, Ph.D., has been appointed Associate Director for Basic Research at the Cancer Center as well as Director of the new Cancer Cell Biology program at the University of Rochester Medical Center. Land, a renowned scientist, will assume his appointments July 1.

Land's postdoctoral work at Massachusetts Institute of Technology led to one of this era's most important discoveries in cancer research. Land provided proof that a defect in a single growth-regulating gene is not sufficient to cause cancer; he found that defects in *several* of these genes cause normal cells to grow out of control, resulting in cancer.

Land's current research is focused on understanding the complex molecular mechanisms by which defects in several growth-regulating genes conspire to cause cancer. Understanding how certain combinations of growth-regulating genes work in concert to regulate cell growth—and how defects in those combinations of genes result in cancer—are two of the fundamental questions that cancer researchers will address in the next decade. Progress in this area is likely to yield new treatments capable of preventing or halting many forms of the disease. This is the goal Land and his colleagues will pursue in the Cancer Cell Biology program.

"As a leader in the field of molecular biology, Dr. Land's commitment to understanding the complexities of this disease will guide cancer research in Rochester to a new level," said George Abraham, M.D., Director of the Cancer Center.

Land earned his Ph.D. at the University of Heidelberg, and comes to Rochester from the Imperial Cancer Research Fund in London, England, where he was the head of the Cell Growth Control and Development Department since 1985.

A commitment to research

Gary Morrow, Ph.D., has been appointed Associate Director for Community Research and Coordinator of Research Training at the Cancer Center. In addition to this new role, he is currently Director for the University of Rochester Cancer Center Community Clinical Oncology Program Research Base, as well as the director of the Behavioral Medicine Unit at the Cancer Center.

He currently holds multiple research grants from NCI, the U.S. Army, the Cummings Foundation and the National Center for Nursing Research. His research has pioneered an understanding of methods for preventing the side effects and morbidity of cancer treatment, as well as measuring the impact that group therapy can have on the quality of life of newly diagnosed cancer patients.

Morrow has been at the Cancer Center since 1975. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Rhode Island and his M.S. in Medical Statistics from the University of Rochester. He is currently a member of the American Statistical Association, the American Society for Preventive Oncology and the Society for Behavioral Medicine.

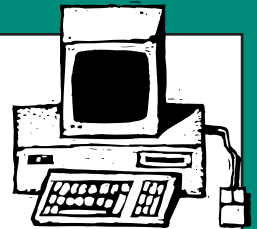
"Dr. Morrow brings extensive experience to this leadership position. We are most pleased that he has assumed this associate directorship," said George Abraham, M.D., Director of the Cancer Center.



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“This research strives to provide this patient population with additional treatment options to prolong survival free of leukemia.”

Searching for new options

As both a clinician and researcher, Jane Liesveld, M.D., Director of the Bone Marrow Transplant Unit, strives to provide her patients with the best treatment options currently available while searching for better methods for the future.

Liesveld recently received a Scholar Award in Clinical Research from the Leukemia Society of America for her research project, which will examine a group of patients with myelodysplasia or secondary leukemia who have received a chemotherapy regime of cytarabine and topotecan. “In the past these patients have had poor response to traditional chemotherapies used to treat their acute myelogenous leukemia,” said Liesveld. “Recently there have been new chemotherapy regimens designed to allow a higher percentage of patients with these diagnoses to enter a complete remission. However, the problem is that most of these patients have an early relapse, which has led researchers to ask what can be done to assure that patients stay in remission,” noted Liesveld.

Traditionally, one method of assuring remission in various cancers has been allogeneic bone marrow transplantation. In this process, the patient receives marrow from a healthy donor, which provides blood cell production without the risk for recurrence of the leukemia. The problem with this approach to myelodysplasia or secondary leukemia is that many patients with these diseases are older and less likely to tolerate the rigors of allogeneic bone marrow transplantation, which drastically weakens their immune system.

“My investigation is designed as a feasibility protocol to see how many of these patients will actually demonstrate normal blood cell formation after eradication of the leukemia and how many can successfully have normal stem cells collected for autologous transplantation. We will be performing laboratory tests to measure the quality and quantity of these stem cells. Autologous transplantation uses patients’ own stem cells to rescue their bone marrow, which had been destroyed with high doses of chemotherapy or radiation,” noted Liesveld. “Our research strives to provide this patient population with additional treatment options to prolong survival free of leukemia.”

“The IPOP gives patients a sense of independence and control during their treatment.”

A Grand Opening

November 12, 1998 marked the official opening of Bone Marrow Transplant Unit’s Inpatient/Outpatient Unit, referred to as IPOP. “This facility is becoming the standard for larger transplant units in this country,” said Jane Liesveld, M.D., Director of the Bone Marrow Transplant Unit.

Nationally, there have been trends to perform portions of bone marrow transplants on an outpatient basis. “It’s important that we have in place mechanisms that do not compromise patient care or the quality of such care,” noted Liesveld. The IPOP provides an area where the same team that cared for patients during their bone marrow transplantation can readily attend to them after their discharge if they have any acute care needs. The unit provides care 24 hours a day.

Overall, patients will now be able to spend less time in the hospital, and more time at home recuperating. “The IPOP gives patients a sense of independence and control during their treatment,” said Liesveld.



A twist in transplants: Having the freedom to come and go

In June of 1995, Susan Zanders was diagnosed with chronic myelogenous leukemia (CML). Zanders, a resident of Wellsville, NY, was referred to the Bone Marrow Transplant (BMT) program at Strong Memorial Hospital for her care. She was treated with Interferon for two years, and she did very well. When a bone marrow test was done in August 1998 to look for evidence of her chronic leukemia, the disease was noted to be in remission. “Because the chance of eventually relapsing is quite high, my doctor sought further treatment options to try and ensure that I remained in remission,” said Zanders.

“Although a bone marrow transplant using a sibling would have been the best alternative for me, it was not possible because none of my family members’ bone marrow matched mine. Therefore, my physician thought my best alternative was to have an autologous transplant in which my own stem cells would be harvested [removed] and stored. I would get chemotherapy and then the cells would be returned to my body,” noted Zanders. Her physician, Jane

Liesveld, M.D., Director of the Bone Marrow Transplant Unit, suggested a treatment protocol for chronic leukemia patients offered at Strong Memorial.

With the opening of the Inpatient/Outpatient (IPOP) unit this fall, Zanders was able to stay at the local Ronald McDonald House while receiving her daily transplant regime at the hospital. “They gave me a calendar outlining what to expect regarding my treatment. I also had many guidelines to follow regarding my care so that I knew exactly when I needed to be concerned and call the hospital. The team provided safe and excellent care. I received chemotherapy in pill form for a total of five days, visiting the IPOP every other day to be monitored. After resting for two days I then went back to the hospital for the actual stem cell transplant—which only took a few minutes,” said Zanders. “I was glad I was given the option to receive my transplant at the IPOP unit—it enabled me to maintain my independence. I am thankful I did not have to stay in the hospital for so

long—emotionally and financially the transplant would have been a lot harder.”

Zanders was hospitalized for a short period of time when her blood counts fell and she needed specialized care. The IPOP unit, having the capability of providing care 24 hours a day, is located on the BMT unit so the same trained bone marrow transplant staff cared for Zanders during her outpatient and inpatient stay. She remained hospitalized for 7 days. Without the availability of the IPOP, she would have likely needed to be hospitalized for triple that time.

Zanders is gaining strength each day and is planning to resume her fulltime work schedule in February. She returns to the IPOP unit for monthly checkups. “Having my transplant on an outpatient basis was a very positive experience,” noted Zanders. “I was only a phone call away from the hospital—I knew I could go there anytime if I needed—and I could not have asked for anything more from anyone,” she said.

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Exchange

Sherwin Nuland, M.D., inspires health care providers

Sherwin Nuland, M.D., Yale surgeon and author of two best-selling books, *How We Live* and *The Wisdom of the Body*, spent a day last November at the Medical Center speaking to health care providers and community members about end-of-life issues. Dr. Nuland's visit was sponsored by the Community Council's Patient Relations and Education Committee.

At Anesthesiology Grand Rounds, Nuland gave a lecture on the history of euthanasia and the ethical issues surrounding decisions surgeons make on a day-to-day basis. Afterward, Nuland met with first- and second-year medical students. The meeting began with two medical students telling about their first experiences with a patient death. Nuland then reflected on their presentations and guided them through some thinking on concepts important to physicians during their training and during their years of practice. Nuland was very well received; the students gave him a standing ovation at the end of the session.

Finally, in the afternoon it was standing room only in Whipple Auditorium as Nuland moderated a program entitled: "Breaking Bad News" at Medical Grand Rounds. The program began with a tape of a medical resident telling a patient that he had stomach cancer. That launched the discussions about physician/patient interactions; thoughtful comments and questions were made by the audience, which included both health care providers and community members.

"Dr. Nuland's presentation was outstanding. We frequently have to break bad news and need to learn how to do this more compassionately and effectively. Dr. Nuland and the panelists helped us to reflect more upon the impact such news has on patients and their families," noted Joseph Rosenblatt, M.D.

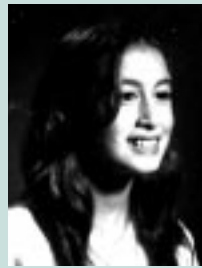
GYN-Oncology nurse honored

Patti Messina, RN, OCN, received the Genesee Valley Oncology Nursing Society's (GVONS) Nurse of Distinction Award for 1998. The award was presented at the GVONS annual dinner. Messina is a nurse in the GYN-Oncology Division.

Our dedicated friends

The Cancer Center sends a special thank you to:

Last summer, The American Cancer Society (ACS) presented the Cancer Center with a check for \$1.4 million in research grants. Included was \$31,000 raised at last June's annual ACS Monroe County Women's Golf Classic. According to the tournament's committee chairs, Marlene Peterson and Linda Postler, a generous supporter will contribute \$10,000 if the tournament can increase its proceeds by that much in 1999.



Jenna Ossip-Klein

Jenna Eve Ossip-Klein, age 13, has donated a portion of her bat mitzvah gifts to the *Discovery Fund*. In a letter she wrote to George Abraham, M.D., Director of the Cancer Center, the seventh grader and daughter of Deborah Ossip-Klein, Ph.D., explained that she was becoming a Jewish woman and felt it was time to start giving back to the community.



Eliana Rosenblatt

Eliana Rosenblatt, a 13-year-old eighth grader at Hillel School, also sent a donation to the Cancer Center's *Discovery Fund*. She is the daughter of Joseph Rosenblatt, M.D., and Lily Rosenblatt, Co-Chair of the Cancer Center Community Council Special Event Committee. Eliana explained that through her parents' involvement she has had the benefit of learning not only about the difficulties surrounding cancer, but also about the progress being made in its treatment. "I know I'm young and my contribution is small, but at least I get to be a part of something very important," she said.

Bradley's Restaurant in Canandaigua hosted a show and sale by local artists this past December. A percent of the sale proceeds were donated to the Cancer Center's *Discovery Fund*. The display attracted restaurant patrons and art lovers alike, raising \$250 for cancer research.



Bradley Gray of Bradley's Restaurant in Canandaigua.

Connections



From the Director's Desk



Dear Friends,

As a designated National Cancer Institute Cancer Center, the research and clinical care we provide is held to high standards set by the National Institutes of Health. We are proud of the fact that we not only meet, but also surpass, the requirements necessary to enable the Cancer Center to engage in innovative research and in turn continually provide excellent clinical care for our patients.

The recent appointment of Hartmut Land, Ph.D., as Associate Director for Basic Research at the Cancer Center as well as Director of the new Cancer Cell Biology program at the University of Rochester Medical Center, represents an exciting opportunity for advances in cancer research right here in Rochester. A renowned scientist, Dr. Land is credited with one of the landmark discoveries in understanding how human genes can cause cancer. With his leadership, other scientists will be recruited in the near future, as we work to uncover the intricacies of this disease and discover more effective treatments.

As this new year unfolds, I look forward to working with our dedicated Community Council to create more opportunities for community awareness and involvement. We will continue to build upon our past successes in order to formulate a strong future that enables us to best serve our patients.

Sincerely,

George Abraham, M.D.

George Abraham, M.D.

Dear Friends,

It is hard to adequately express our gratitude for the marvelous gift that Joe and Nancy Briggs have just made to support cancer research through the Council's *Discovery Fund*. Joe and Nancy initiated the fund two years ago and other donors have added significantly to the fund. Our appeal this past December has brought in over \$17,000, so together we are able to provide support for new projects this year.

At our community breakfast April 2 the URCC Community Council will present Olympic ice-skater and cancer survivor Scott Hamilton with the Cancer Center's first Inspiration Award. This award is given in honor of his willingness to share his experiences with cancer and his dedication to educating the public about this disease.

The Special Events Committee has begun planning what will become the Cancer Center's signature fund-raising event—the "Discovery Ball." The Chairs of this event, Olivia and David Cornell, are working with a planning committee to create what promises to be an evening of fun and elegance. The event is tentatively slotted for Spring 2000; we'll keep you posted on our progress.

The Council looks forward to creating new opportunities for the Rochester community to learn about the Cancer Center and to join us in our mission.

Sincerely,

Linda Davey

Community Council Executive Committee

- | | |
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Dialogue Editor: Susan Scholl, Associate Director for Public Affairs, 273-4143.

Assistant Editor: Meredith Chamberlain, Assistant Director for Public Affairs, 275-5199.

Donors

The Cancer Center is deeply grateful to the donors who have made gifts, both large and small, during 1998. Each donation has been important in our effort to provide the best possible patient care and to continue to find new and better treatments for cancer.

The following alphabetical list represents *all levels* of giving. The symbol * indicates that the donor is deceased or the gift is an estate bequest. (Every effort has been made to provide a complete list. We apologize for any omissions or inaccuracies that may appear.)

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