



milestones



How Philanthropic Support is Driving Groundbreaking Cancer Research

Dr. Lewis Cantley, Meyer Director of the Meyer Cancer Center, instructs Charles Murphy, PhD student, and Diana Wang, MD-PhD student

TIFFANY WALLING

On any given day, the Sandra and Edward Meyer Cancer Center is alive with activity; the labs are filled with brilliant scientists working together to solve some of medicine's most challenging mysteries. The center, headquartered within the Belfer Research Building, has grown incredibly since January 2014 – in large measure thanks to a gift of \$75 million from Sandra and Edward Meyer to fund cancer research at Weill Cornell Medicine. This gift has allowed cancer research at Weill Cornell to accelerate forward at a rate that has astounded even the Meyer Director of the center, Dr. Lewis Cantley.

"Philanthropy at Weill Cornell Medicine helps us build new infrastructures so that we're doing experiments that no one else in the world is doing," says Dr. Cantley. "It is exponentially expediting the time that it takes to get new therapies to patients."

Thanks to the generosity of the Meyers and countless donors and friends, the Meyer Cancer Center has had an influx of new recruits in the last year. These leading lights

include Dr. Harold Varmus, a Nobel Prize-winning cancer researcher; Dr. Howard Fine, founding director of the brain tumor center; and Dr. Silvia Formenti, the Sandra and Edward Meyer Professor of Cancer Research. Dr. Varmus left his position at the National Cancer Institute to join Weill Cornell as the Lewis Thomas University Professor and senior advisor to the dean. Dr. Fine's work has gained recent exposure after he dramatically enhanced Weill Cornell's ability to do clinical trials by creating "mini-brains," allowing him to grow brain tumors outside of the body and see how they respond to various courses of treatment. Dr. Formenti has conducted groundbreaking work in immunotherapy, which uses the body's own immune system to fight cancer.

The Meyer Cancer Center works in tandem with the Englander Institute for Precision Medicine, named in 2015 thanks to a significant investment from Caryl and Overseer Israel Englander and led by Dr. Mark Rubin, the Homer T. Hirst III Professor of Oncology in Pathology.

"When we began in precision medicine, our clinical decisions were based on evaluation of a relatively small number of genes," says Dr. Cantley. "We are now leaders

"Philanthropy at Weill Cornell Medicine helps us build new infrastructures so that we're doing experiments that no one else in the world is doing."

Dr. Lewis Cantley

in this field – we can evaluate all 23,000 genes – and by doing this broader analysis, we are catching things that we otherwise might have missed."

All of these advancements in cancer research, while thrilling, come at a time when federal funding for cancer research is at a low and, paradoxically, the cost to perform

this research is at an all-time high – due to the expense of implementing the newest and most effective innovations.

However, "the money that we spend today on cancer research is far more effective than it's ever been in the past because we now know in so much more detail the science of why cancers emerge and why they evolve and become resistant," says Dr. Cantley.

Another challenge in government funding of major cancer research, Dr. Cantley says, is that federal funding provides support for basic science, but not the pre-clinical stage of the research. Therefore, researchers rely on philanthropic support to fill this critical gap.

"When we have patients with late-stage disease who we know are running out of choices, we have committed to do everything we can for them," says Dr. Cantley. Philanthropy is absolutely essential for us to be able to do what we need to do.

"We have made remarkable progress just in the last year, particularly in the area of recruitment and the advancement of novel research. But we're not finished."

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Recent Donors to Cancer Research on What Inspired Their Gifts

Mindy and Jon Gray have dedicated themselves to supporting research on a mutation in either the BRCA1 or BRCA2 gene that can increase one's risk of breast and ovarian cancer. After her sister Faith Bassar passed away from ovarian cancer in 2002, Mrs. Gray joined the board of the Ovarian Cancer Research Fund and she and Mr. Gray formed the Bassar Center for BRCA at the University of Pennsylvania. Now, they have made a gift of \$1.65 million to support BRCA research at the Meyer Cancer Center, led by Dr. Cantley.

"We are actively committed to funding the best scientists in the world working on BRCA-related cancers, which is why we are so excited to be supporting Dr. Cantley's work," says Mrs. Gray. "From our first meeting with Dr. Cantley, we knew we wanted to partner with him and his team. His spirit of collaboration and ability to help move the field forward were particularly exciting to us, and we hope and believe that this work BRCA-related will have broad implications for the treatment of all cancers."

Overseers Sandra and Edward Meyer's commitment to cancer research is no secret; after generously funding the Meyer Cancer Center, they have been dedicated advocates for all that Dr. Cantley aims to accomplish in his work at Weill Cornell Medicine. They are also longtime supporters of Dr. Silvia Formenti, Chair of the Department of Radiation Oncology – who is an expert in immunotherapy and radiotherapy for cancer – and holder of the **Sandra and Edward Meyer Professorship of Cancer Research**, recently established with a \$3 million endowed gift from the Meyers.

"The ultimate mission of the Meyer Cancer Center is to develop cancer treatments based on groundbreaking research at Weill Cornell Medicine," said Mr. Meyer. "Sandy and I can think of no better inaugural holder for this professorship than Dr. Formenti, whose innovative and translational work in radiation oncology has the potential to make an indelible mark on cancer care for patients around the world."

Ian and Isabelle Loring recently made a gift of \$1 million to support the **Program for Experimental Therapeutics for Non-Hodgkin Lymphomas**. The gift, which is under the direction of Meyer Cancer Center leaders Dr. Cantley, Dr. John Leonard, associate dean of clinical research, and Dr. Ari Melnick, chair of the hematologic malignancies program, comes from a place of personal interest; Mrs. Loring was diagnosed with non-Hodgkin lymphoma two years ago.

"We feel very fortunate to have this opportunity to be in partnership with Weill Cornell Medicine and possibly further this research," says Mrs. Loring. "Weill Cornell's team of researchers is on the cutting edge of potential therapies that could not only make treatment of non-Hodgkin lymphoma less toxic, but also provide a better outcome. That would be really wonderful."

New Gift to Boost Recruitment Efforts in Heart Health and Women's Health

A new gift from Susan and Benjamin Winter will support two critical areas of healthcare: cardiovascular research and women's health. The \$1 million gift will fund recruitment for a director of the Cardiovascular Research Institute and a chief of general internal medicine for Weill Cornell Medicine and NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital.

The joint gift, inspired by the work of Overseer Dr. David Blumenthal (MD '75), a clinical professor of medicine, and Dr. Orli Etingin, director of the Iris Cantor Women's Health Center, is made in honor of Dr. Blumenthal, for whom the Winters have great respect and admiration.

"Dr. Blumenthal has been our cardiologist for many years," says Mr. Winter. "We like him, of course, as a doctor, but we also like him as a person, and in wanting to support cardiology, a tribute to him seemed a fitting way to do that."

The admiration is mutual from Dr. Blumenthal, who calls the Winters "generous, warm and lovely people."

"Since this gift from the Winters arrived, we have been successful in recruiting Dr. Geoffrey Pitt, a top cardiologist and scientist, to lead the Cardiovascular Research Institute, which we hope will be a hub for some major investigative achievements," says Dr. Blumenthal. "Heart disease is the number one killer in the United States of both men and women, and if our research institute can continue to make major contributions to that field, we are literally affecting at least half the population of the country."

Susan Winter was familiar with Dr. Etingin's reputation as an excellent physician, and was eager to support her work after learning more about her women's health initiatives. After learning about the gift, Dr. Etingin immediately reached out to Dr. Monika Safford, a clinician and investigator at the University of Alabama with a reputation for excellence in research on diabetes, cardiovascular disease and health disparities.

"This generous gift from the Winters allowed us to recruit a top-notch clinical researcher and educator who pioneered a system of Patient Activated Learning Systems, or PALS," says Dr. Etingin, the Lisa and Sanford B. Ehrenkranz Professor in Women's Health. "This system empowers patients to become knowledgeable and engage in their care, which leads to better outcomes."

"When Dr. Safford was considering this major career move in August, I told her that the Winters' gift would allow implementation of PALS here; she decided to sign on the following day."

"Bringing in high-quality people is important for any business or profession," says Mr. Winter. "Our hope is that this gift results in the recruitment of more truly exceptional doctors at Weill Cornell Medicine."

Benjamin and Susan Winter



Education Scholar Award Established to Give Physicians the Tools to Teach

When Gary Summers first met internist Dr. Richard Cohen (MD '75), it was for a medical appointment. The appointment itself was fairly standard, but what stood out in his mind was a phone call from Dr. Cohen the next day.

"A day later, the phone rang, and it was him simply calling to follow up and see how I was doing, without any need or prior discussion about it," says Mr. Summers. "I had never experienced that before. I would describe Dr. Cohen as a doctor who really cares about his patients, and practices medicine with that in mind – he puts his patients first and everything else second."

So when Mr. Summers decided to support the institution with a \$1 million gift that would help produce more physicians like Dr. Cohen, he chose to establish the **Gary M. Summers Education Scholar Award** to provide physicians with dedicated time to commit to medical education.

"In philanthropy, most of my focus is around education and, to some extent, healthcare. When I learned that this type of award would allow faculty members to focus on teaching, I thought, 'What a great way to help further education at Weill Cornell Medicine,'" he says.

Education scholar awards provide faculty with necessary funds so they don't have to choose between practicing medicine and teaching; often, physicians are limited in the time they can spend on teaching if they also need to generate income from their clinical practice.

Dr. Cohen is a longtime advocate of education at Weill Cornell Medicine. Not only is he the co-chair of the Campaign for Education, launched in late 2014 and more than halfway to its \$50 million goal, Dr. Cohen attended Weill Cornell Medicine for medical school, his internship and his residency, and is currently a clinical professor of medicine at the institution.



Dr. Richard Cohen and Gary Summers

"The future of American medicine is going to depend on the quality of the physicians that we train," says Dr. Cohen. "Particularly, we have a need today to provide financial support and protected time for our physician-teachers at the medical school despite limited funds. That's why this fundraising effort that we're involved in is important, and support from

donors like Mr. Summers is so valuable."

"I'm neither a scientist nor a physician, but I'm not sure you need to be to realize how complicated medicine is," says Mr. Summers. "I think that whatever we can do to educate and assist the physicians of tomorrow is great for the future of our society. I hope that this gift helps bring forth many more Dr. Richard Cohens."

Inaugural Drukier Prize in Children's Health Research

Dr. Sing Sing Way, the Pauline and Lawson Reed Chair in Infectious Disease at Cincinnati Children's Hospital and an associate professor of pediatrics at the University of Cincinnati College of Medicine, was awarded the inaugural **Gale and Ira Drukier Prize in Children's Health Research** at an event held on Wednesday, March 16 at the Belfer Research Building.

The Gale and Ira Drukier Prize in Children's Health Research was established as part of an extraordinary \$25 million gift from Dr. Gale Drukier and Overseer Ira Drukier in December 2014, which also created the Gale and Ira Drukier Institute for Children's Health.

The annual Drukier Prize honors an early-career pediatrician whose research has made important contributions towards improving the health of children and adolescents. Dr. Way was recognized for his groundbreaking research on how a woman's immune system naturally tolerates the developing fetus and placenta

during pregnancy, preventing rejection of these genetically foreign tissues. Many pregnancy complications – including stillbirth, prematurity and preeclampsia – are associated with disruptions in the body's tolerance of a fetus, and children born

following these pregnancy complications are highly susceptible to infection, breathing disorders, deafness and blindness, along with learning and behavior disabilities. With a better understanding of immune cells that maintain a healthy pregnancy, doctors may be able to provide more effective therapies against these complications to improve the health of infants and children.

"We are thrilled to honor Dr. Way with this inaugural award, and to formally recognize the quality of his vital work and his dedication to improving children's health," said Dr. Drukier.

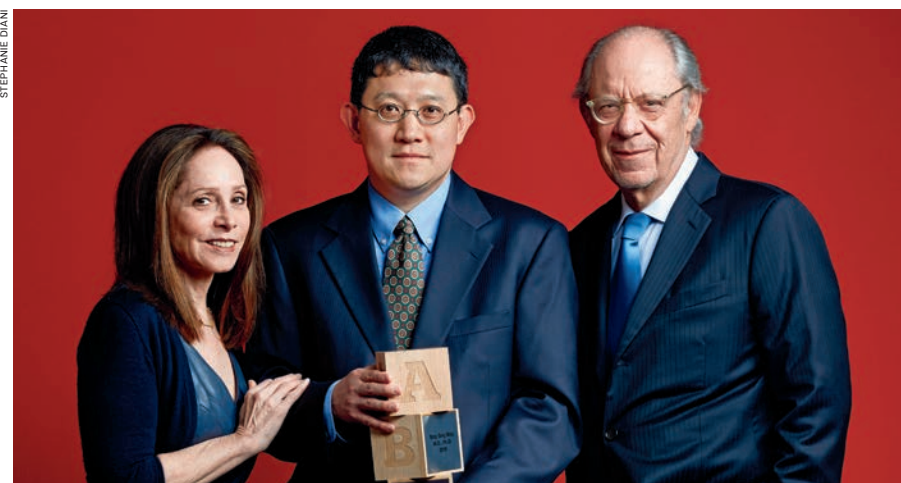
"There is still so much we don't know about how the maternal immune system functions during pregnancy," said Dr. Gerald Loughlin, the Nancy C. Paduano Professor



Dr. Gerald Loughlin, who led the selection committee, gave opening remarks

and Chairman of the Department of Pediatrics. "Dr. Way is dedicated to answering these fundamental scientific questions. For that reason, he is an ideal awardee."

"I have enormous gratitude toward the Drukier family for creating this recognition, and toward Weill Cornell Medicine and the Department of Pediatrics for using this award to put pediatric research in the national spotlight," Dr. Way said. "Reproductive immunology and prenatal infection are specialized research areas, and I am excited for this award to draw more attention to these understudied clinical problems that carry profound medical and emotional repercussions for families."



Gale and Overseer Ira Drukier with Dr. Sing Sing Way

Healthy Living Symposium in Palm Beach



Dean Glimcher with panelists (L to R) Dr. Matthew Fink, Dr. John Leonard and Dr. James Min



Attendees at the symposium



Vice Chair Overseer Bob Appel and his wife Helen

The Healthy Living Symposium in Palm Beach brings together leading physicians and scientists from Weill Cornell Medicine to speak about some of the most pressing health concerns of our time. These top-tier specialists share their knowledge and expertise with symposium attendees, providing strategies for disease prevention and practical information on how to lead a healthier life.

This year's symposium, which took place on Monday, February 29 at The Breakers in Palm Beach, was filled to capacity and featured the following speakers and topics:

Matthew Fink, MD

Louis and Gertrude Feil Professor of Clinical Neurology
Chairman, Department of Neurology
Advances in Brain Treatment

John Leonard, MD

Richard T. Silver Distinguished Professor of Hematology and Medical Oncology
Associate Dean of Clinical Research
Precision Cancer Therapy: What it Means for Patients

James Min, MD

Director of the Dalio Institute of Cardiovascular Imaging
Professor of Radiology and Professor of Medicine
The Vulnerable Patient: Identifying High-Risk Atherosclerosis



Dr. Ellen Scherl, Jill Roberts, Dr. Augustine Choi, Chairman Bibliowicz and Dr. David Artis

Roberts Institute Ribbon-Cutting

The Jill Roberts Institute for Research in Inflammatory Bowel Disease celebrated its opening with a ribbon-cutting ceremony held on Thursday, March 17. The institute, established thanks to the vision and generosity of longstanding benefactor Jill Roberts, is dedicated to understanding the molecular underpinnings of Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD) in order to translate basic research breakthroughs into the most advanced therapies for patients. Led by Director Dr. David Artis, the Michael Kors Professor in Immunology, the institute works hand-in-hand with the clinical Jill Roberts Center for Inflammatory Bowel Disease, also established by Mrs. Roberts (in 2006) and directed by Dr. Ellen Scherl, Jill Roberts Professor of Inflammatory Bowel Disease.

"Together, the Jill Roberts Institute and Center are poised to make groundbreaking discoveries in the care and treatment of IBD – and make a real difference for patients," says Dr. Artis. "We certainly could not do this without our trusted friend, Jill Roberts."

Children's Health Council Family Science Day

The Children's Health Council held their second annual Family Science Day on Saturday, March 5 at the Belfer Research Building. Families joined Weill Cornell Medicine graduate students and faculty from the departments of pediatrics and psychiatry for a morning of exploration and innovation, featuring exciting and awe-inspiring hands-on experiments. The Children's Health Council is committed to advancing pioneering research into some of the most prevalent children's health issues concerning today's families, recognizing the pivotal role of academic medicine in accelerating solutions to these problems.



Brielle Bonugli

To learn more about the Children's Health Council, please contact childrenshealthcouncil@med.cornell.edu



Oren Casriel



**Weill Cornell
Medicine**

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2016



**Save
the
Date**

Alumni Reunion

The Weill Cornell Medicine Alumni Reunion will take place from Friday, September 23 to Saturday, September 24, offering engaging guest speakers, institutional updates and tours, class get-togethers, a gala dinner dance and opportunities to mingle and network with old friends.

Class years ending in '0, '1, '5 and '6 are celebrating milestone reunions, and, as always, all alumni are invited back to campus to commemorate another year since graduation.

We hope to see you there!

Visit www.weill.cornell.edu/alumni/reunion for updates.

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Weill Cornell Medicine

From Our Chairman

I am so grateful for the **dedication and commitment** of our incredible donors, leadership, faculty and staff.



JOHN ABBOTT

The stories in this issue of Milestones capture the powerful impact of philanthropy on each area of the Weill Cornell Medicine mission. As you'll read in these pages, it is, in part, because of the ongoing support and generosity of our donors, that our world-class faculty continues to perform groundbreaking research, provide the finest patient care and educate our future healthcare leaders. These critical feats are what make our institution such an inspiring and accomplished place, and further reinforce our overarching motto, "Care. Discover. Teach." which serves as a compelling force behind what we do each and every day.

This is an exciting time at Weill Cornell Medicine, filled with so much forward momentum and progress, while this institution continues to lead the way in academic medicine in New York City and beyond. As we chart our course for the future, I am so grateful for the dedication and commitment of our incredible donors, leadership, faculty and staff. These are amazingly talented and passionate individuals who are a constant source of inspiration to so many of us. I am proud to lead this great institution into our next chapter, and I have every confidence that together we will continue on this strong trajectory of growth, providing the most innovative treatments and cures to our patients.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Jessica Bibliowicz".

Jessica Bibliowicz
Chairman
Weill Cornell Medicine Board of Overseers

Care.
Discover.
Teach.



**Weill Cornell
Medicine**

Care. Discover. Teach.

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