

# M I L E S T O N E S

DISCOVERIES  
THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE  
THE CAMPAIGN FOR WEILL CORNELL MEDICAL COLLEGE



SPRING 2012



Among the Weill Cornell Principal Investigators in the Starr Cancer Consortium (L to R): Steven M. Lipkin, M.D., Ph.D., Associate Professor of Medicine and Genetic Medicine; Selina Chen-Kiang, Ph.D., Professor of Pathology and Professor of Immunobiology and Microbial Pathogenesis; Samie Jaffrey, M.D., Ph.D., Associate Professor of Pharmacology.

## THE STARR FOUNDATION—

# Bold Blueprints for Our Health

The Starr Foundation recently announced two gifts for stem cell and cancer research totaling \$105 million to a consortium including **Weill Cornell Medical College and four other top-notch research organizations**. It is a major renewal of its previous support for this pioneering, collaborative research.

With these grants, The Starr Foundation is creating powerful “laboratories without walls” that allow scientists to forge unlikely alliances across institutions and traditional research fields to move medical breakthroughs more quickly from the laboratory to patient care. (See “At a Glance.”)

“Weill Cornell scientists are among our participants who have already made advances that promise to transform our capacity to prevent, treat and even cure a wide array of serious and fatal illnesses,” says Maurice R. (“Hank”) Greenberg, Chairman of The Starr Foundation and a member of the Weill Cornell Board of Overseers.

“Results have proven to us at the Foundation that using this collaborative framework is dramatically speeding up progress through close coordination among leading investigators working on the front lines of discovery,” he says.

These Starr Foundation gifts are the most recent step in its longstanding commitment to shape a framework for cross-institutional research that is intended to be a **game-changer in the research world**. They follow earlier Starr Foundation grants for these projects totaling \$150 million.

At Weill Cornell, some discoveries have moved from laboratory discoveries to clinical trials for patients in less than five years – much **faster than the average pace** of traditional approaches to research.

*continued on page 7*

### AT A GLANCE – THE STATS

#### The Starr Cancer Consortium

**New Gift:** \$55 million

**Initial Gift:** 2006 – \$100 million

**WCMC scientists to date:** 23

**Partners:** Weill Cornell Medical College, the Broad Institute of Harvard and MIT, Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory, Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, The Rockefeller University

#### The Starr Foundation Tri-Institutional Stem Cell Initiative

**New Gift:** \$50 million

**Initial Gift:** 2005 – \$50 million

**WCMC scientists and research fellows to date:** 33

**Partners:** Weill Cornell Medical College, Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, The Rockefeller University

**“Inspired philanthropy stays ahead of the curve. It builds creative partnerships with a focused end game in mind – the improvement of human health. This epitomizes the leadership of The Starr Foundation. They are helping to shape the model for the future of biomedical research. We are enormously grateful for their vision and support.”**

**Laurie H. Glimcher, M.D.**  
Stephen and Suzanne Weiss Dean  
Provost for Medical Affairs

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# Dr. John J. Kuiper

## A 50th Year Celebration Gift

While reflecting last year on what his Weill Cornell education has meant to him, John J. Kuiper, M.D. '61 decided to "give back" to the College by making a gift to help support in perpetuity Weill Cornell's education of the next generation of physicians.

He recently endowed the **John J. Kuiper Professorship of Medicine** in the Department of Medicine with a \$2 million planned gift. It was, he thought, a perfect way to celebrate the 50th anniversary of his graduation from Weill Cornell Medical College.

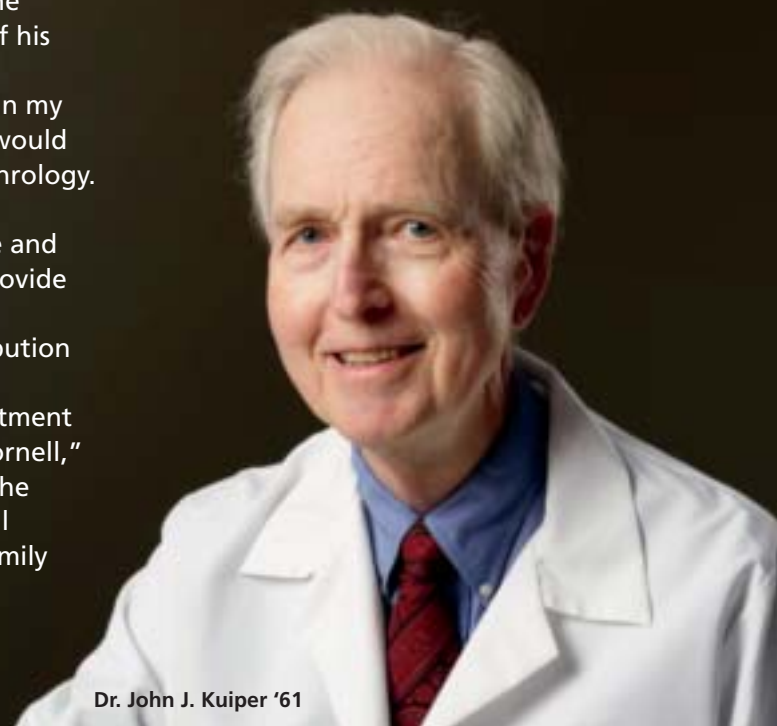
"Weill Cornell gave me knowledge and practical skills I have used on a daily basis in my career – in my residency, in my medical practice, in my teaching," he says. "I wanted to make a gift at a level that would show my appreciation." Until his recent retirement, Dr. Kuiper practiced internal medicine and nephrology. He continues as a faculty member at UCLA near his home.

Because of his strong interest in encouraging medical students to enter the fields of primary care and family medicine, where there is a national shortage, Dr. Kuiper designated that the professorship provide endowment support for the head of the Division of General Medicine.

The gift was created by using a strategic combination of municipal bonds and a charitable distribution from his IRA.

"Dr. Kuiper's gift reflects his vision for primary care and family medicine, a mission that the Department of Medicine has made a top priority, as well as his passion for medicine and his gratitude to Weill Cornell," says Andrew I. Schafer, M.D., E. Hugh Luckey Distinguished Professor of Medicine and Chairman of the Department of Medicine. "His commitment as an alumnus to maintaining our high quality medical education, and to addressing the need for more doctors in underserved fields like primary care and family medicine, make his generous gift truly special. We are very grateful."

For more information on how to include Weill Cornell in your estate plans, please contact: Stephanie Franco, Director of Planned Giving, 646-317-7410.



Dr. John J. Kuiper '61

## The Louis and Rachel Rudin Foundation

# FOUR DECADES OF HELPING DOCTORS HELP OTHERS

"My grandparents and my parents taught my brother and me that good fortune is a gift to be shared with others," says Jack Rudin, Chairman of the Louis and Rachel Rudin Foundation. "They taught us to be champions for our city, for education, and for medical research that can reduce suffering."

Their family legacy lives on in Weill Cornell-trained doctors who, as medical students, have received more than 170 scholarships from the Louis and Rachel Rudin Foundation. The Foundation is especially interested in helping those who want to go into lower-paying medical specialties like primary care, family medicine and pediatrics, which have a shortage of doctors.



"I don't want to be a super-specialist – **I want to care for patients with all sorts of problems in all walks of life**, including those who don't have the ability to pay. That kind of work doesn't provide the best income," says **Benjamin Jack**, Class

of 2014, one of the current recipients of a Rudin scholarship. "The generosity of philanthropists like the Rudin family makes all the difference for me because after I graduate I can focus on my work and caring for patients instead of worrying about paying off my loans."

To learn more about how you can help students today and assure medical excellence in the future with *Scholarships that Make a Difference*, please contact: Elizabeth Herrera, Director of Advancement Programs, 646-317-7382.

Nationally, **costs for medical education**

**continue to rise**, compelling many students to enter the more lucrative areas of medicine in order to pay down educational debt. Although Weill Cornell's tuition is lower than that of its peer medical schools, for the first time in 2009 **more than 50%** of the incoming class **qualified for scholarships**.

The Foundation is creating a new \$500,000 scholarship endowment at Weill Cornell, and making a gift of \$1 million to initiate an endowment for a professorship in honor of Matthew E. Fink, M.D., Professor of Clinical Neurology and Interim Chairman of the Department of Neurology and Neuroscience. It has also provided steadfast support for fellowships to train physicians in stroke prevention, treatment and rehabilitation.

"The Rudin family has always been supportive of education, and truly understands how the benefit of a scholarship is multiplied many times over by the lifetime efforts of the recipient," says Dr. Fink. "This new professorship endowment will have the same ripple effect, not only on education, but also on research and patient care. I am touched and extremely grateful."

Since 1973, the Louis and Rachel Rudin Foundation has awarded Weill Cornell Medical College **nearly \$6.5 million for medical scholarships, fellowships and educational support**.

Along with the May and Samuel Rudin Family Foundation, it has also supported research at Weill Cornell over the decades, focused on giving next-generation physicians the tools with which to improve health and longevity.

Support from both foundations has led to new understanding and treatments for neurological disorders, hypertension, diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, gastrointestinal illnesses, stroke, and eye diseases, among others.



From Our Dean



When I accepted the job as Dean, the most frequently asked question from my friends and colleagues was this: “Why Weill Cornell?” Part of the answer lies in my passion for and, increasingly, my concern for academic medicine. Qualified medical professionals have never been in more demand, yet the resources to educate them have never been under more pressure. **This next generation needs advocates and champions.** It also needs institutions that provide the very best environments for the critical journey of discovery that is at the core of everything they do. Which leads to the other part of my answer: I believe Weill Cornell is one of those institutions, and is poised to be a first-rate biomedical research enterprise.

My first four months as Dean have confirmed, and in many cases exceeded, my expectations coming into my new role. The more I have learned about Weill Cornell, the more excited I have become about the potential of this great institution. I have spent much of these early days on my own journey of discovery, meeting as many

benefactors, leaders, faculty, students and staff as possible, and refining my vision and the priorities that will drive it. It has been an exhilarating experience, and I want to thank all those who have generously shared their time and their thoughts with me, helping to flatten my learning curve and make me feel so welcome.

With the help of so many, my vision for Weill Cornell has become very clear. **I want our institution to be a pioneer in everything it does.** A decade from now, I want to see Weill Cornell ranked among the top 10 medical schools in this country, with a doubling of its current NIH support. I want us to further enhance our status as a biomedical research leader, known for our ability to translate science into meaningful therapies. I want to expand our scope as an institution of both national and international standing. And I want Weill Cornell to be among the best in the world in each element of our tripartite mission: research, education and clinical care. It’s an ambitious agenda to be sure, but I believe we need to be aggressive in putting Weill Cornell in the vanguard of finding solutions to the complex challenges that face health care in this country.

To realize this vision, I have set out several immediate priorities that are reflected in the current phase of our Campaign – the *Research Leads to Cures* Initiative. They are to retain our top physician-scientists, recruit more world-class researchers, and create an organization and culture that enable collaborative research. I have met and discussed these priorities with many of our scientists as well as the leadership of our neighboring

research institutions, and at Cornell University, and there is a very positive response to exploring the creation of research “hubs” to further collaboration in biomedical science. There is a strong shared view that the more we work together to move research forward, the better we can serve our patients by more effectively offering more clinical trials, the latest therapies and newest drugs, and delivering rapid turnaround times in an efficient way.

As you all know, we have a significant competitive advantage in our strong bond with NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital. Our institutions are inextricably linked in our commitment to translate our research more quickly to patient care. Our faculty serves that institution, and the more research-clinical bridges we build, the more our patients will benefit. Ensuring that **our patients are at the center of everything we do** is our ultimate objective.

I want to thank you for your support since my arrival in January and I look forward to working together with you to realize our vision. Together, we can further enhance Weill Cornell’s position as a leading source of bold new ideas and the standard of excellence in academic medicine.

Laurie H. Glimcher, M.D.  
*Stephen and Suzanne Weiss Dean*  
Provost for Medical Affairs

AN EARTHQUAKE’S TOLL –  
**Becton, Dickinson and Company Steps In**

A generous gift valued at \$1 million from the global medical technology company **BD (Becton, Dickinson and Company)**, including medical supplies and a \$600,000 cash grant, will help build a permanent 30-bed tuberculosis hospital at GHESKIO\* in Port au Prince, Haiti.

Weill Cornell Medical College has a 30-year history of close collaboration with GHESKIO, which is directed by Jean William Pape, M.D. ‘75, Professor of Medicine at Weill Cornell Medical College, and an alumnus of the College. It was founded by Dr. Pape and Warren D. Johnson, Jr., M.D., Director of the Weill Cornell Center for Global Health.

Tuberculosis (TB), a major infectious killer, is now epidemic in Port au Prince. The 2010 earthquake **destroyed all three major tuberculosis hospitals** and at least 3,000 TB patients stopped treatment and dispersed to crowded tent cities, where a significant portion of the population still lives. Many of these patients have multidrug-resistant TB and are now spreading the disease, especially to children.

The disease, called “malady ti kay” or the “disease of the small house” in Hatian Creole, is transmitted by coughing and, in crowded houses, **one infected person can easily infect ten others.** Effective treatment for TB requires four antibiotics taken daily for six months – and, if this strict regimen is not followed, then TB bacteria can become drug-resistant, creating even greater danger.

Since the earthquake, the GHESKIO pediatric clinic has seen a **six-fold increase in the number of children with tuberculosis.** TB is one of the ten major causes of death among children, causing an estimated 130,000 deaths a year, according to the World Health Organization.



(L to R) Dr. Jean William Pape ‘75 and Ed Ludwig



A young child who was treated for multidrug-resistant TB and was cured at the GHESKIO field hospital.

“What impresses me about GHESKIO is that Dr. Pape and others from Weill Cornell are at the heart of the need – respected by the community and surrounded by those who most need their medical experience and their compassion. **Not only have they conducted outstanding medical research, but they are**

**treating patients and helping people live healthy lives on a daily basis,”** says Edward Ludwig, Chairman of BD, which has a nearly decade-long partnership with Weill Cornell and GHESKIO in the fight against TB.

Today, the GHESKIO clinic, the only one in Haiti that can diagnose drug-resistant strains of TB, provides free TB diagnosis and treatment to more than 1,000 adults and children. It is operating temporarily out of a TB field hospital to provide inpatient services.

“Thanks, in part, to BD, the people of Haiti will once again have a fully-equipped, modern hospital for treating TB patients,” says Dr. Pape. “BD’s long-term commitment and their familiarity with developing world needs make them a valued partner in our work.”

\* GHESKIO is the French acronym for the Haitian Group for the Study of Kaposi’s Sarcoma and Opportunistic Infections.

**“They roll up their sleeves and get it done. This is what makes GHESKIO unique and powerful.”**

Ed Ludwig, Chairman, BD



A tent city in Port au Prince, Haiti.





## FROM OUR CAMPAIGN LEADERSHIP

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Thanks to you, our generous donors, the *Discoveries that Make a Difference* Campaign has hit another important milestone – **we have currently topped \$1.15 billion** – with \$150 million to go toward our goal of \$1.3 billion.

Our final \$150 million will be focused on the *Research Leads to Cures* Initiative, which will bring top-tier scientists to Weill Cornell, one of Dean Glimcher's top priorities (see page 3). These physician-scientists and their groundbreaking research will drive the discoveries that lead to tomorrow's cures. Much of this innovative work will take place in the new Belfer Research Building – our state-of-the art facility that will transform research on our campus and beyond.

Recently, I had the opportunity to take a tour of the building with Dr. Glimcher. The building progress is impressive – and I was truly inspired when I considered the work that will soon be underway there.

I invite you to take a tour of this remarkable space (see page 7 for more details) – and imagine the limitless discoveries on our horizon.

Sincerely,

**Robert J. Appel**  
Campaign Chairman



## FROM OUR BOARD LEADERSHIP

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The generous gifts you are reading about in this issue of *Milestones* span many of our *Discoveries* Campaign priorities. They support research programs in stem cells, cancer, cardiovascular disease, neurology, and global health.

They support people – through an endowed professorship designed to encourage students to pursue careers in primary care, and scholarships to help our students enter their choice of medical fields.

Now that we have reached the \$1.15 billion mark in our Campaign and the end is almost in sight, **gifts such as these become more important than ever**. They go hand-in-hand with the extraordinary leadership and philanthropy that have made the magnificent Belfer Research Building a reality. They are essential to Weill Cornell's goal to be, as Dean Glimcher puts it so well, "a pioneer in all we do." (See page 3.)

These gifts toward our research programs and people are the heart and soul of this phase of our Campaign. We encourage you to join us, and help create a healthier future.

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**Antonio M. Gotto, Jr., M.D., D.Phil.**  
Co-Chair, Board of Overseers  
Lewis Thomas University Professor  
Vice President, Cornell University



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# In Honor of Dr. Antonio M. Gotto, Jr. **New Lipids Research Institute**

Small molecules called lipids affect our heart in big ways.

Early research by Antonio M. Gotto, Jr., M.D., D.Phil., Dean Emeritus of Weill Cornell, Co-Chairman of the Board of Overseers, and Lewis Thomas University Professor, was instrumental in delving into the mysteries behind the impact of lipids on heart health. He laid the foundation for development of cholesterol-controlling statins that have led to a dramatic reduction in heart-related deaths around the world.

But scientists are just at the beginning of a journey to more fully understand the causes and find solutions for lipid-related heart diseases that are afflicting millions of people. Their goal: relieve suffering and improve health and longevity. (See “The Science” below.)

Now, with the help of **our pioneering donors** listed here, the research expertise of Dr. Gotto and other Weill Cornell physician-scientists is being harnessed to tackle this tenacious disease in a collaborative, newly intensified approach.

They are laying the foundation for a new lipids research institute, which will be made possible by **recruiting additional top scientists who will continue to build on Weill Cornell’s research strengths in this area.** They will be recruited from across the fields of cardiology, endocrinology, nutrition, cell biology, physiology, public health, global health, physics and chemistry, among others.

The institute will be named in honor of Dr. Gotto’s 15-year leadership of Weill Cornell, and his discoveries and renown in the field of lipids research.

It will be centered in the new Belfer Research Building.

## **The Science**

### *What Happens When Lipids Go Bad*

Lipids include a broad group of molecules that affect our metabolism in various ways, including the way messages are received and processed by our cells.

Now, a new approach to address this complexity, under the leadership of Weill Cornell, is at hand.

Lipid disorders, generally in the form of “high cholesterol,” are a primary cause of atherosclerosis (hardening of the arteries), which can lead to cardiovascular disease (heart disease).

#### **The Personal Toll and Economic Cost**

The level of personal suffering and distress to patients and their families is widespread. More than 27 million adults in the U.S. live with cardiovascular disease.

The financial cost to individuals and society in health care is also significant: 14 million Americans with heart disease visit doctor’s offices, emergency departments, and hospital outpatient care units each year. Another 4 million are hospitalized.

Despite progress in controlling it, heart disease remains the biggest cause of death in this country and worldwide. In low-income countries, the percent of premature deaths from cardiovascular disease is now at 42%, and rising rapidly.

“These donors recognize the importance of **breaking down academic silos** in this complex field and approaching solutions from a cross-disciplinary, cross-institutional perspective. This is **the way lipids research – and all biomedical science – will advance** in the future,” says Dean Laurie H. Glimcher.

## **Thank You to Our Pioneering Donors**

Through their recruitment and program support, these donors are at the vanguard of the next wave of research into lipids’ role in atherosclerosis and cardiovascular disease.

**Jane and Frederic Hamilton** – \$3 million to create the Antonio M. Gotto, Jr., M.D., Professorship in Atherosclerosis and Lipids Research and the Jane and Frederic Hamilton Clinical Scholar Award in Lipids

**Anonymous** – \$1 million for program support and recruitment of new physician-scientists dedicated to this research

**Rahmi Koç** – \$300,000 for lipids research program support

## **The Lewis Thomas** University Professorship



Antonio M. Gotto, Jr., M.D., D.Phil.

This professorship, now held by Dr. Gotto, honors the late Lewis Thomas, M.D., former Professor of Pathology and Medicine and Scholar-in-Residence at Weill Cornell. Dr. Thomas was a renowned physician-scientist whose book, *The Lives of a Cell*, became a national best seller.

Dr. Thomas’s writings and work had a profound impact on patient care, the training of medical students and researchers, and our society’s knowledge of how people interact with, and are part of, their environment. The holder of the Lewis Thomas University Professorship must be, according to its criteria, a “preeminent scientist-teacher”

who, as Dr. Thomas did, “possesses a breadth of scientific knowledge, exhibits a wide ranging intellectual curiosity, and manifests a commitment to the value of humanism” and scientific collaboration.

**Dr. Gotto is all that and more.** A lifelong supporter of educational efforts aimed at reducing the risk of cardiovascular disease, he speaks nationally and internationally on heart health, and has contributed more than 500 scholarly articles and books to the medical literature. Not content to stop there, he, like Dr. Thomas, extended his reach to a popular audience by co-authoring a best-selling series of books on heart health and wholesome eating. The latest volume, *The Living Heart in the 21st Century*, was published in April.

**For more information about this and other Campaign priorities, please contact Lucille Ferraro, Campaign Director, at 646-317-7387.**



# Q&A *What Inspires Giving?* Meet Nanette Laitman

Nanette Laitman is a thoughtful, strategic and engaged philanthropist who focuses her gifts to Weill Cornell in areas that will make the most difference in building a healthier future for us all – ranging from neuroscience to public health. She and her family have had a close relationship with the College for 30 years – beginning in 1982 when her father, William Lasdon, joined the Board of Overseers. Nan is a generous donor to the *Discoveries that Make a Difference* Campaign and the *Research Leads to Cures* Initiative. She recently sat down with Larry Schafer, Vice Provost for Development, to talk about why she gives to Weill Cornell, and how she makes decisions about the areas in which to give.

Her generosity, and that of her family, now totals more than \$20 million, which has made a tremendous difference across our entire tri-partite mission of research, patient care, and medical education. The Lasdon name permeates our campus and our most important activities. It is connected to professorships, clinical scholar awards for faculty, programs, and facilities; the Lasdon Biomedical Research Center; and the Jacob S. Lasdon House, which is home to many medical and graduate students. Mrs. Laitman and her family also funded the Childhood Bereavement Program in the Department of Psychiatry, and teaching labs in the Weill Education Center.

**LS:** Nan, first I'd like to thank you for your and your family's ongoing legacy of a wonderful partnership with Weill Cornell. How do you make your decisions about what is most important for you to support?

**Nan:** I must admit that I operate a lot on instinct. Something either feels right – or it doesn't. Supporting Weill Cornell has always felt right. My parents had a long history of giving to the College and they trusted this institution with much of their own medical care. Before my father passed away, he made a promised gift to establish the Lasdon Medical Research Building. After he passed away, my mother and I fulfilled that promise and I have continued his legacy of giving by supporting a variety of different areas that seem to me to be the most critical.

**LS:** Thank you for your recent gift that created the **Nanette Laitman Professorship in Neurology and Neuroscience** as part of our *Discoveries that Make a Difference* Campaign. As you know, this professorship will allow us to recruit a top neuroscientist in the field – which is a priority for the College and for Dean Glimcher. What was behind your decision to create this professorship?

**Nan:** When I was thinking about creating a professorship, I consulted with my son-in-law, who is a retired psychiatrist. In my discussions with him, I further realized something that I have known, on some level, for a long while – that if you can keep the brain going, the rest will follow. When you think of it this way, it's clear that neuroscience may be key to the future of medicine and good health, so I decided to create a professorship that would support this important field not only now – but also for many years to come.

**LS:** Community health is also one of your priorities. You created the Nanette Laitman Clinical Scholars Program in Public Health to fund research into how to improve community health through better prevention and quality of care. You also endowed the Nanette Laitman Distinguished Professorship in Public Health, held by Dr. Al Mushlin, Chairman of the Department of Public Health. What has led to your interest in public health?

**Nan:** I believe that people should no longer go to the emergency room for every small thing – as they may have fifty or sixty years ago. In today's society, we need to be educated about how to avoid pitfalls in health – and that education will help us be more proactive in our own care – and allow us to lead longer and healthier lives. The importance of public health sparked something inside of me and I felt it was the right area to support. Since that time, the department has certainly emerged as a strong force at Weill Cornell – thanks, in no small part, to the hard work and dedication shown by Dr. Mushlin.

**LS:** Your gifts to Weill Cornell span quite a wide range, yet they have one thing in common – they are all people-focused. They help assure that the people behind the medicine – the researchers, clinicians, medical students – have the resources they need to do their work. This is a priority of the *Research Leads to Cures* Initiative of our Campaign. Why is this kind of support so important to you?

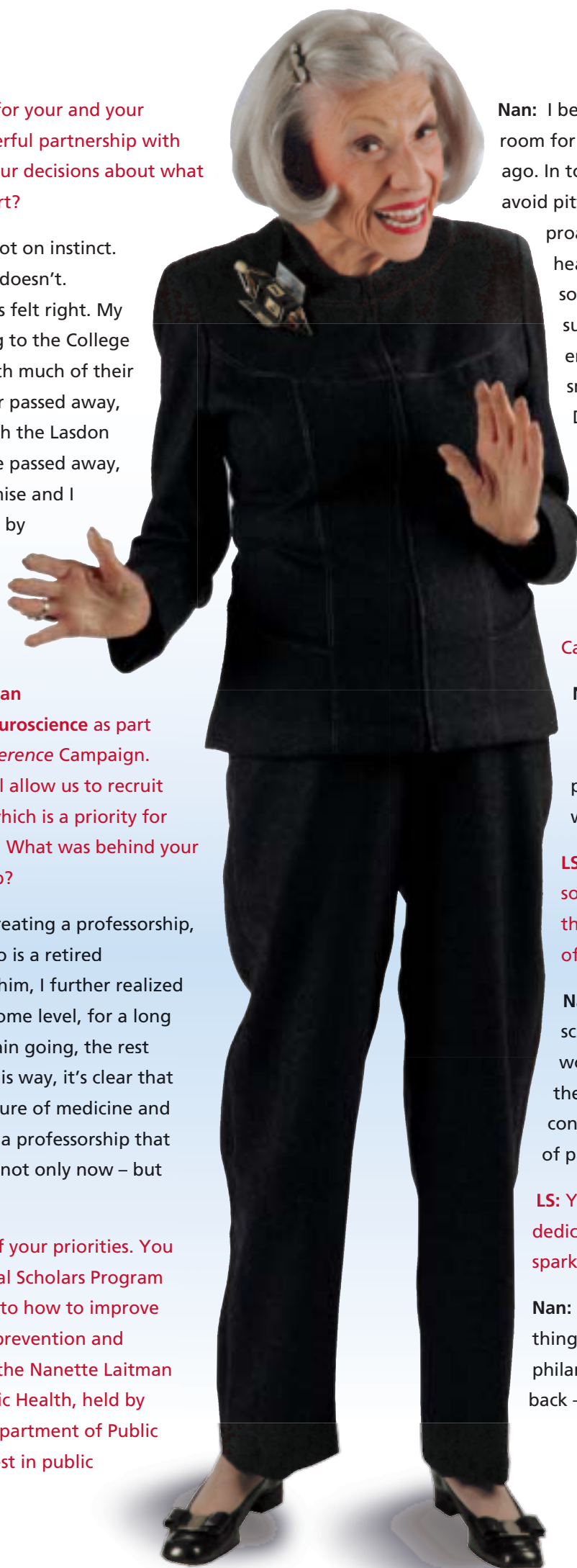
**Nan:** Well, as you know, I'm a people person. Funding research through the microscope is wonderful and so important – but I have always felt drawn to supporting the people who are behind the microscope. They are the ones who are driving the action and making the science happen.

**LS:** I know that you have had the opportunity to meet some of the clinical scholars whom you have supported through the years. How has it been to see the results of your generosity 'in action'?

**Nan:** Yes, I have had the opportunity to meet the clinical scholars on many occasions and am kept up to date on their work. They are all doing a wonderful job. It is thrilling to see their progress and makes me feel proud to know that I am contributing to their success and advancing the whole area of patient care.

**LS:** You are a supporter of science and medicine, and also a dedicated contributor to the arts. What do you think is the spark that makes people philanthropic and want to give back?

**Nan:** For me, it's a natural part of life, a natural way of doing things. We are lucky to live in a country that strongly values philanthropy and encourages people to give. I am happy to give back – It's truly my pleasure.





# In Their Own Words

Hear more inside stories from our scientists and doctors about their latest research and how it's helping our patients.

To see the full videos, please visit

[weill.cornell.edu/campaign/research](http://weill.cornell.edu/campaign/research)



## Federal Funding at Weill Cornell – *Where Research Leads to Cures*

*Many physician-scientists at Weill Cornell receive prestigious government grants for dynamic research that will transform the quality of patient care and assure longer, healthier lives.*

*Below, you will find a few recent highlights  
of just some of our publicly-funded research –*



### **Weill Cornell and Columbia Join National Effort to Spur Clinical Trials in the Neurosciences**

Claire Henchcliffe, M.D., D.Phil., will lead Weill Cornell Medical College in a joint project with Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons to accelerate the development of therapies for people with neurological diseases. The new national effort is funded by a seven-year, \$2.27 million grant from The National Institute for Neurological Disorders and Stroke. The Columbia-Weill Cornell NeuroNEXT (Network of Excellence in Neuroscience Clinical Trials) site at NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital will be one of 25 research sites across the country linked together in an effort to streamline the process of conducting complex clinical trials.

Dr. Henchcliffe is Associate Professor of Neurology and Neuroscience and Director of the Weill Cornell Parkinson's Disease and Movement Disorders Institute.



### **Improving the Safety and Effectiveness of Medical Devices**

Art Sedrakyan, M.D., Ph.D., is the Principal Investigator of a \$1.475 million federal contract awarded by the Food and Drug Administration to establish a center that focuses on investigating the safety and effectiveness of implantable medical devices based on patient outcome data contained in registries and electronic data sources across the country. The research will also help to create a road map for incorporating the device information in electronic medical records systems to enable further data analysis on medical devices. The center will be called the Medical Device Epidemiology Network (MDEpiNet) Science and Infrastructure Center.

Dr. Sedrakyan is Associate Professor of Public Health at Weill Cornell.



### **Understanding the Development of Hypertension During Menopause**

Research shows that young women are less susceptible to developing hypertension than young men until they hit menopause, when they are at elevated risk of developing cardiovascular disease. Teresa Milner, Ph.D., secured an \$880,000 grant from the Heart, Lung and Blood Institute of the National Institutes of Health to study a brain region that is particularly sensitive to fluctuations in hormone levels that may contribute to increased susceptibility to hypertension. By understanding how estrogen plays a part in hypertension, researchers may be able to develop a targeted treatment for women before menopause firmly takes root.

Dr. Milner is Professor of Neuroscience at Weill Cornell.



# THE STARR FOUNDATION – Bold Blueprints for Our Health

Continued from page 1

## The Starr Foundation Projects

The kind of leading-edge science funded by The Starr Foundation is highly exploratory. As a result, researchers depend heavily on philanthropy from individuals and committed organizations such as The Starr Foundation. Conventional funding sources like the federal government often shy away from bold new ideas, and prefer to fund “safe” projects that already have convincing “preliminary data.” With The Starr Foundation’s support, scientists are encouraged to take on these high-risk but promising projects. The results are already yielding significant discoveries. This success, in turn, makes it more likely that these research efforts will become attractive to traditional funding sources, such as the National Institutes of Health.

## The Starr Cancer Consortium

The Starr Cancer Consortium builds on complementary strengths among scientists across five research institutions. (See page one, “At a Glance.”) Working together, these scientists, are conducting research on **the many kinds of cancer that, together, constitute one of the greatest worldwide threats to human health.**

These include cancer of the breast, prostate, brain, bone marrow, and blood, among others.

Revolutionary advances in medical and computer technology, such as “deep sequencing,” now allow access to information at the genetic and molecular level, where discoveries are revealing ever more complexities among various cancers.

The Starr Cancer Consortium allows biomedical investigators to pool ideas, easily share early-stage research findings, and build a critical mass of knowledge, advanced technology and data.

## The Starr Foundation Tri-Institutional Stem Cell Initiative

The Tri-Institutional Stem Cell Initiative forges interdisciplinary teams of top scientists at Weill Cornell and its two neighboring research institutions on New York City’s Upper East Side. (See page one, “At a Glance.”)

The Tri-Institutional Stem Cell Initiative builds on a strong 40-year history of collaborations in research and education among the three organizations.



**Shahin Rafii, M.D.**  
Director of the Tri-Institutional Stem Cell Initiative at Weill Cornell Medical College; The Arthur B. Belfer Professor in Genetic Medicine; Professor of Medicine; Director of the Ansary Stem Cell Institute; Howard Hughes Medical Institute Investigator

As part of the Initiative, Dr. Rafii discovered a way to convert mature cells collected during amniocentesis into endothelial cells – which line our blood vessels. This means that these more easily accessible/abundant cells could eventually be used to repair damage to circulatory systems and help regenerate organs.

PHOTO: JOHN ABBOTT

## Tri-Institutional Collaboration – In Our DNA

Weill Cornell Medical College, The Rockefeller University, and Sloan-Kettering Institute have for 40 years partnered to form the first, and still one of the few, inter-institutional collaborations dedicated to joint M.D.-Ph.D. training.

Known as the Tri-Institutional M.D.-Ph.D. Program, its mission is not only to educate and train physician-scientists, but also to bridge the traditional gap between laboratory research and patient care as a way to more effectively contribute to improving health and quality of life. Students receive their M.D. from Weill Cornell Medical College and their Ph.D. from either Weill Cornell Graduate School, The Rockefeller University or the Gerstner Sloan-Kettering Graduate School.

Each year, more than 500 students apply for on average 14 positions, which are fully funded by the NIH Medical Scientists Training Program.

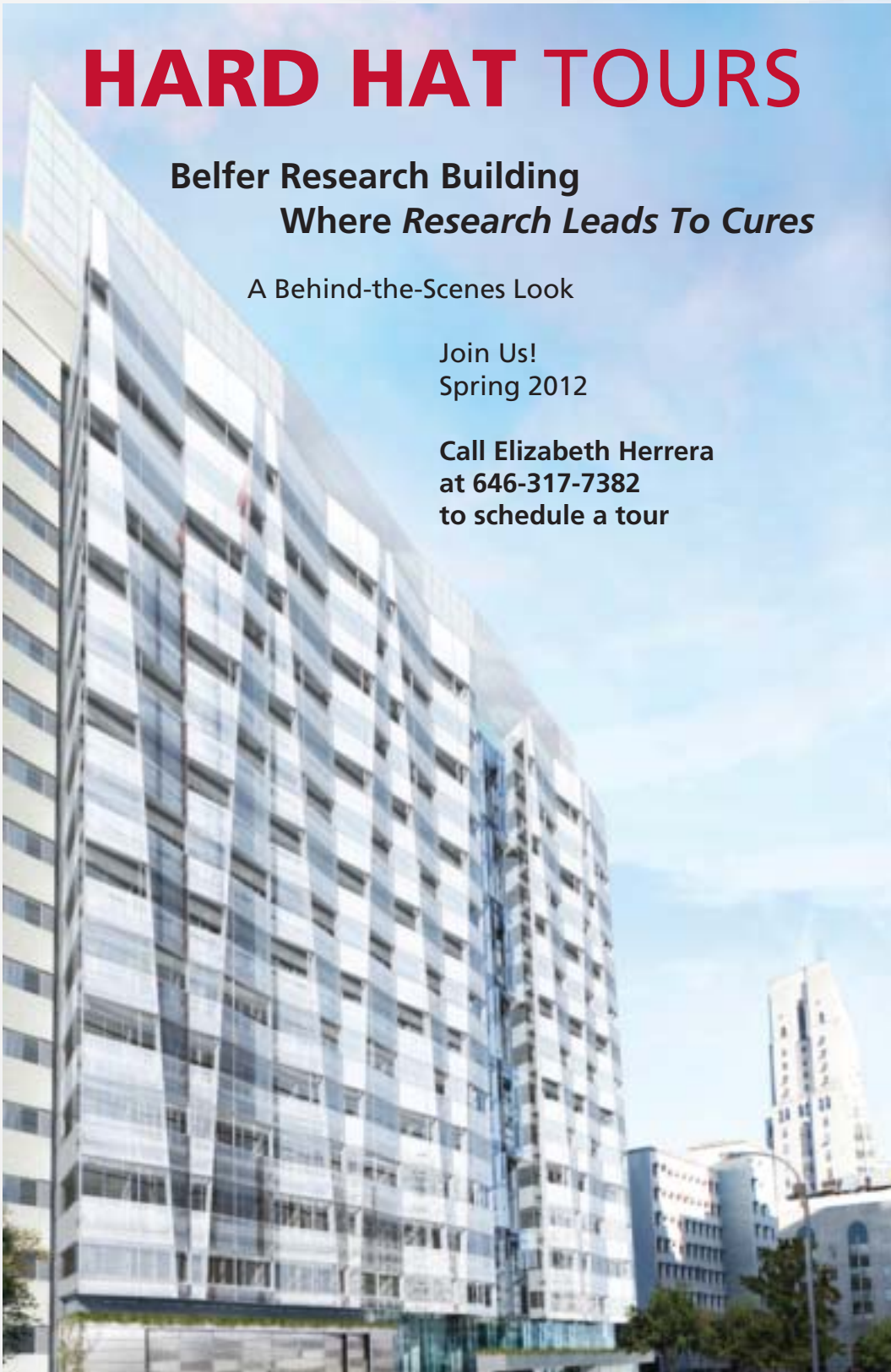
For more information, please visit: [med.cornell.edu/mdphd/](http://med.cornell.edu/mdphd/)

Our scientists at Weill Cornell are beginning to deliver on the promise of using stem cells to treat a wide array of illnesses: cardiovascular disease; diabetes; cancer; spinal cord injuries; stroke; epilepsy; neurological disorders such as Parkinson’s disease and Lou Gehrig’s disease; arthritis; seizure disorders; vascular disease; skin disorders; and wound healing.

The goal is to eventually design personalized cell-based therapies.

Stem cells are immature cells that have the power to self-renew and can be coaxed to develop into specialized tissues to repair or replace damaged tissue and organs.

It is because of the generosity of The Starr Foundation that breakthroughs in stem cell research, and in cancer research, are already making a significant difference in human health.



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# LOSING WEIGHT



Dr. Louis J. Aronne and Frederick J. Iseman

It was Frederick J. Iseman’s very first appointment with Louis J. Aronne, M.D., and he knew he had found the right doctor.

“I had already begun a program of exercise and weight loss, but I wanted to make sure it was sustainable. Lou had been recommended to me as the most medically astute scientist and physician working in the area of nutrition,” Mr. Iseman recalls.

“When we met, I found somebody who could brief me both on the latest biotech research on weight loss, and at the same time advise me on what not to eat for breakfast,” he says.

**“A lot of people feel that if you have to be treated by someone like me, you have no willpower, you’re looking for the easy way out. That’s simply not true. We now know that people who can’t lose weight just have a tougher problem to tackle. It may be something we doctors now know about, or it may be something we don’t know about because the research has not yet been done. We still have so much more research to do.”**

**Dr. Louis J. Aronne**  
Clinical Professor of Medicine  
Weill Cornell Medical College

## Weight Loss Treatment: A Whole New Game

Dr. Aronne, Clinical Professor of Medicine at Weill Cornell, is Director of the Comprehensive Weight Control Program at NewYork-Presbyterian/Weill Cornell Medical Center.

Research by Dr. Aronne and other physician-scientists in the last five years has helped lead to more complex, realistic and successful approaches to weight loss. Gone are the days when the best your doctor could do was tell you to eat less, exercise more, and shore up your will power.

Medicine prescribed for other conditions – such as Type 2 Diabetes, high blood pressure, mood problems, or migraine headaches – can cause weight gain. So can inflammation in a key part of the brain,

the hypothalamus, which can cause resistance to leptin – a hormone that is a key part of the weight regulating mechanisms. When that happens, signals between the fat cells, the intestine and the brain are disrupted “so the brain can’t tell how much fat is stored and how much food is coming in,” says Dr. Aronne.

## The Feed Forward Mechanism

And when systems fail, and we start to eat fattening foods, it triggers another problem – a “feed forward mechanism” that begins to “disinhibit other systems in the body, which then drive more eating,” says Dr. Aronne.

“At Weill Cornell, we’ve done 50 trials of new medical treatments, and new surgical options that are less invasive than bariatric surgery – and we are applying what we’ve learned to our patient treatments,” says Dr. Aronne.

These treatments usually involve “combination therapies” tailored to each patient, which have the best results.

Researchers in the field of obesity and diabetes are learning how to crack those codes. “But there is so much we still don’t yet know, and I feel fortunate to be at Weill Cornell, which is the perfect place for this kind of research,” says Dr. Aronne.

## 4 Weight Loss Rules Mr. Iseman Lives By

- #1.** Always carry with you something healthy to eat. Don’t get trapped without it.
- #2.** When you stay in a hotel, make sure that they empty the mini-bar before you arrive. Avoid “mini-bar suicide.”
- #3.** Know the economics of carbohydrates. “Carbs like pizza, pasta and bread are cheap to produce and high margin to sell, very profitable. Protein is expensive. That is why the world is thrusting cheap high margin food in your face all the time.”
- #4.** Exercise as a strategy – not just to lose pounds. “If you put in the hours to burn the calories, the idea that you would waste it all by choosing to eat food that in minutes loads them back up is less appealing.”

## No Wildebeests to Hunt

Mr. Iseman, Founder, Chairman and CEO of CI Capital Partners, lost 24% of his body weight and is now happily “in the normal range” of weight.

But he also found that working with Dr. Aronne turned into an education far beyond his own personal weight loss journey.

“Lou taught me that the human body has evolved in a condition of constant food shortages. It has only been in the last century or two that a substantial portion of the planet has moved from food deficit to food surplus. As a result, our body chemistry is based on functioning and preserving weight and conserving fat in a near-starvation environment,” says Mr. Iseman.

“So when you drop a chunk of weight, your leptin tells your brain it no longer has a safe level of fat cells – it’s saying, in effect, you might starve because ‘the water hole is dry, the wildebeests aren’t out there yet to hunt, so you’d better store fat until you can find something to kill and eat, or until the rains come and something grows,’” he says.

## Destroy Your Complacency

His education was also pragmatic and personal. “Lou briefed me on exactly what one is up against in the brain/nutritional/fat cell/exercise cycle.

“And he guided me carefully through each stage of weight loss. At the stage where I was about to plateau, he gave me a wise and helpful warning: ‘Don’t just watch your weight, watch your size.’ I spent two months at the same weight – never budged one pound. But I didn’t care. I was exercising and reducing fat while building muscle; I got trimmer; I had to give away my shirts.

“What I really appreciate about Lou is that he has great equanimity. He is not overly optimistic, not overly pessimistic. He’s not judgmental, and he is pleasantly surprised by progress.”

For Mr. Iseman, this experience transformed not only his body size, but also his attitude.

“When losing weight, your attitude has to change from ‘I have accomplished something’ to ‘I am someone who has something to accomplish.’ You need to constantly destroy your complacency,” says Mr. Iseman.

For Dr. Aronne, his work with patients is a partnership. “As with many of my patients, I can get the ball rolling. From there, each patient has to draw on motivation and persistence. Fred has done a great job of that.”

*Milestones* is a publication of the Office of Institutional Advancement at Weill Cornell Medical College.

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