

HIGHLIGHTS



NEWS IN THE FIGHT FOR CURES

FEBRUARY 2021

Through The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society (LLS), generous supporters are helping patients through difficult times.

Supporters' Corner

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I've always believed “when you find yourself in a mess, you try to make it a message.” Just a few days after my twin sons, Nathan and Justin, turned four, we found ourselves facing our biggest challenge yet. Nathan was diagnosed with stage 4 T-cell non-Hodgkin lymphoblastic lymphoma. We went from celebrating their birthday in Disney World to chemotherapy infusions in a matter of weeks.

Nothing could have prepared us for how difficult Nathan's treatment would be. As a physician's assistant with 15 years in adult hospital medicine, I had no idea about the impact

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Bringing world-class clinical trials to underserved communities

In April 2021, The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society (LLS) will activate a new grant program devoted to addressing health care equity and gaps in patient access to clinical trials. Crucial to validating new breakthrough therapies, clinical trials provide hope for patients who have exhausted other treatment options or have a rare or difficult-to-treat disease. However, too many patients face complex barriers to participating in trials. In

particular, patients in minority and rural communities are significantly underrepresented.

LLS's new Influential Medicine Providing Access to Clinical Trials (IMPACT) grant program provides funding to build regional programs that expand access to clinical trials through a “hub and spoke” infrastructure. IMPACT pairs local providers with major clinical

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The screenshot shows the LLS Research Now website. The header includes navigation links: TEAM IN TRAINING, LIGHT THE NIGHT, MAN & WOMAN OF THE YEAR, STUDENTS OF THE YEAR, REGATTA, PENNIES FOR PATIENTS, LIFESTYLE, BIG CLIMB, COMMUNITY, CAREERS AT LLS, ENGLISH. The main content area features the LLS logo and a navigation menu with links for ABOUT LLS, PATIENTS & CAREGIVERS, RESEARCHERS & HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS, HOW TO HELP, and DONATE. The central focus is a section titled "LLS RESEARCH NOW! Blood Cancer Prevention & Survivorship" with a sub-headline: "How you and LLS are advancing blood cancer research in the quest for cures." Below this is a video player showing a zoom call with four participants: Lee Greenberger (top left), Smita Bhatia (top right), Grant Challen (bottom left), and Areej El-Jawahri (bottom right). Social media icons for Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and YouTube are visible on the right side of the video player.

▲ In a recent LLS Research Now zoom call, Lee Greenberger, PhD, LLS chief scientific officer (top left), interviewed (from top right) Smita Bhatia MD, MPH, Grant Challen, PhD, and Areej El-Jawahri, MD, about how research is opening up new ways to improve diagnosis and treatment to extend survival, improve quality of life and even prevent cancer altogether. See story about LLS Research Now on back page.

Supporter's Corner

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of treatment on children or the lack of funding to support progress.

My wife and I were determined to help other families going through similar struggles, so it seemed fitting to establish the Super Herber Bros Foundation. Nathan loves Nintendo, and playing video games was a mainstay that got him through treatment.

Super Herber Bros Foundation gives us a way to make something good out of all that Nathan has been through by partnering with LLS to help patient families, especially those who need extra support or travel assistance.

We held our first fundraising event "Crushing Koopas and Childhood Cancer" at the end of 2019. That gave us the momentum to keep fundraising during the pandemic. Over the summer, we partnered with a local pool company to host our first Cannonballs for Childhood Cancer. Now, we're planning our next in-person Mario Kart Tournament for late 2021.



Herber Family: Nathan, his father Andy, older brother Grant, mother Becky and twin brother Justin.

New award celebrates research achievements

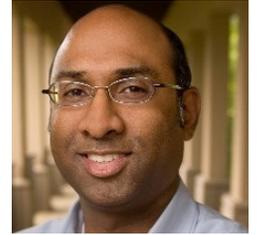
Early-career researchers give us new windows into what is possible for the future of cancer research. These innovative scientists infuse fresh ideas and energy into the field. Equally important are programs that help launch the researchers' careers through funding and recognition of their achievements.

For more than 50 years, LLS has been investing in early-career researchers through our Career Development Program (CDP), one of our largest funding mechanisms. Now, LLS has established the CDP Achievement Awards to recognize the outstanding contributions LLS-funded scientists are making to the field.

This year, LLS celebrates four researchers with the second annual CDP Achievement Awards. Ravindra Majeti, MD, PhD (Stanford University), and Daniel Starczynowski, PhD (Cincinnati Children's Hospital), have been named co-winners of the Scholar CDP Achievement Award, in recognition of their contributions over the five years of their LLS support. The Fellow Award has been given to Matthew Witkowski, PhD (New York University) and the Special Fellow Award to Akihide Yoshimi, MD, PhD (formerly of Memorial Sloan Kettering and now at the National Cancer Center Research Institute in Tokyo Japan).

The prestige of these awards arises in part from what is essentially a two-step process: researchers must be selected for funding at the outset of the CDP program. They then must complete a second rigorous application at the end of their grant period outlining significant publications and other accomplishments.

"I am honored and humbled to be selected," says Dr. Starczynowski. "With this distinction, and the funding my lab has received over the years, LLS and its donors have had an indelible impact on our research program."



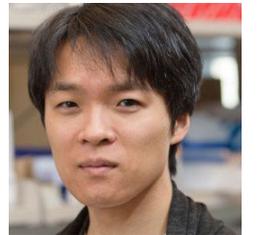
Ravindra Majeti, MD, PhD



Daniel Starczynowski, PhD



Matthew Witkowski, PhD



Akihide Yoshimi, MD, PhD

To help LLS keep the science moving forward, please contact us at 914.821.8803.

Bringing world-class clinical trials to underserved communities

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research and treatment centers to reach out to underserved communities with education about and access to experimental new therapies.

Three IMPACT sites will launch in April. Each five-year project is designed to increase enrollment of patients from geographically, ethnically or economically underserved communities. While clinical trial costs are supported by the “hub” institution with some funding from pharmaceutical companies, LLS IMPACT funding will provide support to build out their program’s infrastructure in order to grow awareness, education and access to clinical trials.

Originally intended to activate in July 2020, the program was delayed due to funding shortfalls caused by COVID-19; thanks to philanthropic investors, LLS is able to open IMPACT at these sites:

Mayo Clinic Rochester, MN

Reaching more than 30 sites, the project will serve largely rural communities, minorities, economically disadvantaged and underrepresented groups. Patients will receive all treatment locally, including access to over 10 novel clinical trials; patients with more complex needs will travel to Mayo Clinic for screening and therapy.

Vanderbilt University Medical Center, TN

Through a network that reaches throughout one of the poorest areas of the rural south, medical and administrative teams will leverage community-engagement programs, implement technology to match patients with clinical trials and develop a provider-engagement program.

Weill Cornell Medicine Meyer Cancer Center, NY

Focusing on patients in nearby Queens and Brooklyn, Weill Cornell’s model will provide access to community education and outreach; education for

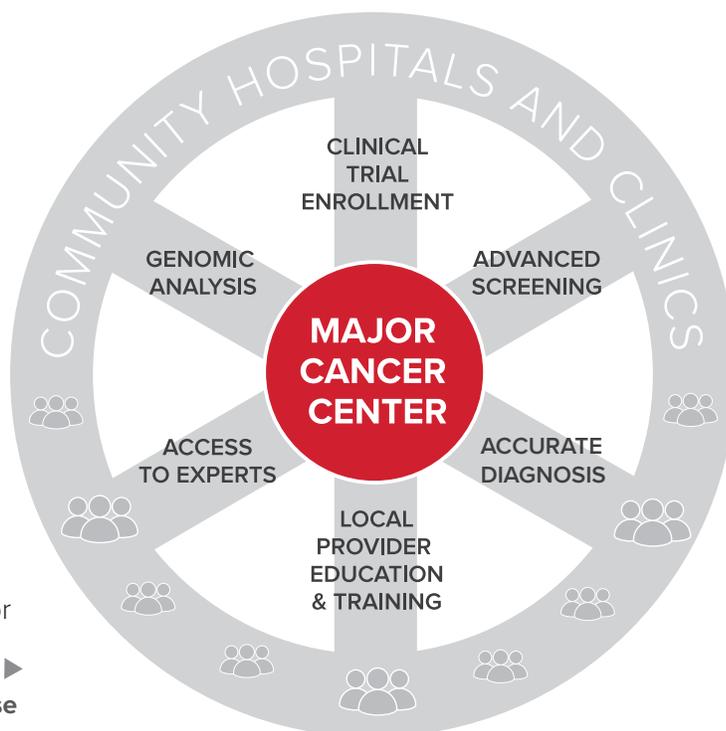
As illustrated in this graphic, through the hub and spoke model, major cancer centers reach out to diverse communities with world-class- treatment and trials. ▶

“IMPACT grants have the potential to reach even more patients—and those who are often the most in need—with education and access to experimental new therapies. It will also speed breakthroughs. Everybody wins.”

— Lee Greenberger, PhD, LLS Chief Scientific Officer

community physicians; coordinated data collection and patient follow-up; and more than 10 state-of-the-art clinical trials.

Now that the funding for the program launch has been secured, LLS is actively seeking additional philanthropic support to open more sites in other regions across the country.



Understanding COVID-19 and blood cancer

As part of the launch of the Michael Garil LLS National Patient Registry, LLS is undertaking an urgent initiative to understand the effectiveness of the new COVID-19 vaccines for blood cancer patients.

Compared to the general population, and even other cancer patients, blood cancer patients have more severe disease and worse outcomes when infected with COVID-19. Although emerging data suggests that blood cancer patients, due to their illness or current treatments, may not develop an adequate antibody response to the virus, with the diversity of blood cancers, there is not enough data to identify which diseases or therapies put patients most at risk.

As a rule, blood cancer patients were disqualified from the COVID-19 vaccines trials. And while some medical centers and physicians may now be conducting studies as they provide the vaccine to patients, there

is no unified platform to gather data across the blood cancers among patients across the country. So, LLS is mounting this effort through its National Patient Registry.

The Registry is an opt-in platform for blood cancer patients to share their medical data to enable real-time, real-world research in the immediate and later side effects and outcomes of blood cancer and its treatments. Consolidating a patient's often diverse medical data into one record, the platform accomplishes two goals: it provides patients a streamlined interface to access all of their medical information; and it provides researchers access to their de-identified data for specific studies.

We invite blood cancer patients to enroll in the LLS National Patient Registry at [LLS.org/registry](https://www.lls.org/registry) to provide valuable data on their experiences with and responses to the COVID-19 illness and/or the vaccines.