

Zhou receives psychosocial grant from ALSF



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Lynch syndrome patient conference is March 18



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Dancing for a Cure raises funds for cancer research



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Lindsey Crowley, Nicole Kuhnly, Maggie Merrill, (standing, left to right) and Rebecca Santiago, Kathryn Silva, and Gunjan Gupta (seated, left to right) are EMBRACE clinical coordinators for the Susan F. Smith Center for Women's Cancers.

For metastatic breast cancer patients, a welcome **EMBRACE**

Job title: EMBRACE coordinator.

Responsibilities: Work as part of the medical oncology team to introduce patients with metastatic breast cancer to supportive care services, educational resources, and research opportunities. Provide clinical and research support to patients and their physicians. Serve as liaison between a patient's Dana-Farber oncologist and local oncologist.

Since August, every patient with metastatic breast cancer seen at the Susan F. Smith Center for Women's Cancers at Dana-Farber has been assigned an EMBRACE coordinator, who acts as a main point

of contact with the Institute, both during and after consultation and treatment. The coordinators are part of the Susan F. Smith Center's EMBRACE (Ending Metastatic Breast Cancer for Everyone) clinical program established last year to meet the diverse needs of this group of patients.

"As its name suggests, the EMBRACE program was established to provide patients with a comprehensive group of services – starting with excellent treatment, and including support services such as psychosocial counseling, nutrition counseling, educational programs, and information

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Stem cell donor, recipient meet seven years after transplant

Sometimes the best things are worth waiting for. Charles "Chuck" Vanada and Tobias Gillmann, connected at last across 3,700 miles and one life-altering procedure, can attest to that.

In September 2009, Vanada – then a 48-year-old non-Hodgkin lymphoma patient – received a stem cell transplant at Dana-Farber/Brigham and Women's Cancer Center (DF/BWCC) thanks to Gillmann, 34, who six years before had added his name to a marrow donor database in his native Germany with links to the international donor registry. Donor and recipient learned each other's identities after a two-year waiting period set by their countries, but it was not until last month that they finally met at Boston Logan International Airport.



Seven years after receiving a stem cell transplant, Chuck Vanada (left) finally meets his donor, Tobias Gillmann.

"Thank you so much; I'm so grateful," Vanada said, grabbing Gillmann in a tearful embrace. "Five years is a long time," Gillmann replied, referencing the period they had communicated on Facebook before meeting in person. During Gillmann's five-day visit, which included sightseeing as well as a party thrown by Vanada's family, the pair continued building on a special friendship cemented by common interests as well as shared cells.

Both, for instance, are automotive enthusiasts: Vanada repairs and races stock cars with his son, Jacob, while Gillmann is a mechanical engineer who works for Mercedes-Benz. Both are also family men: Chuck and his wife, Debbie, have been married 32 years and have two sons (Jacob and Josh) and a grandson; Gillmann is married with an 8-year-old daughter, Lucy.

In fact, it's a photo of Gillmann holding Lucy, then 3, that was the first image Vanada had of his donor. "I remember looking at it and thinking, 'This is the man who saved my life, holding his little girl,'" says Vanada.

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Study points to benefit of exercise for patients with metastatic colorectal cancer

Patients with metastatic colorectal cancer may be able to lower the risk of the disease worsening, and improve their chances of survival, if they engage in moderate daily exercise, according to new research by Dana-Farber investigators.

The results of the research, presented at the American Society of Clinical Oncology's Gastrointestinal Cancer Symposium, contradict the widespread belief that, because the prognosis for patients with metastatic cancer is often poor, there is little benefit to be gained from

exercise, the study authors say.

"Research has consistently shown that increased physical activity can improve outcomes for patients with non-metastatic colorectal cancer," says the study's lead author, Brendan Guercio, MD, a medical student studying at Dana-Farber at the time the research was completed and now a medical resident at Brigham and Women's Hospital. "This is the first study to indicate that more exercise may benefit patients with metastatic forms of the disease."

In the study, 1,231 patients

participating in a clinical trial of chemotherapy for metastatic colorectal cancer completed a questionnaire on how many hours a week they engaged in various leisure-time activities, ranging from gardening to more strenuous pursuits such as jogging, hiking, and bicycling. Researchers then tracked respondents' health for the next three and a half years.

The investigators found that during that period, patients who engaged in moderate physical activity for 30 minutes a day had

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News of Note



Michael Goldberg

Goldberg wins early career award for ovarian cancer research

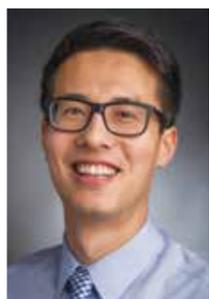
Michael Goldberg, PhD, has won a two-year early career award from the Ovarian Cancer Research Fund Alliance (OCRFA) to study potential immunotherapy strategies for treating ovarian cancer.

Goldberg, an investigator in the Department of Cancer Immunology and Virology, will receive \$100,000 in each of the two years he is a recipient of a Liz Tilberis Early Career Award, honoring the late president of OCRFA. This grant is a

renewal of the three-year award (\$150,000/year) that he had previously received from the organization. The organization announced in January a total of \$5.6 million in grants for 2017.

The aim of Goldberg's research project is to increase the proportion of ovarian cancer patients who respond to immunotherapy. In pursuit of this objective, his lab is studying the impact of standard-of-care chemotherapy on immune cells in the tumor microenvironment. Using animal models and patient samples, Christina Hartl (a graduate student in his group) has shown that chemotherapy leads to increased numbers and activity of a particular type of tumor-promoting immune cell. Their plan is to use antibodies to deplete these undesirable cells and to use small molecule drugs to block their ability to suppress the activity of tumor-fighting immune cells.

"We are hopeful that our preclinical data will lead to registration of a clinical trial that incorporates appropriate immunotherapy into standard-of-care practice, with a view toward generating curative outcomes," Goldberg explains. [T]



Eric Zhou

Zhou receives psychosocial grant from ALSF

Eric Zhou, PhD, is one of four researchers selected to receive a psychosocial grant from Alex's Lemonade Stand Foundation (ALSF).

Awardees of the Psychosocial Launch Grant, designed for early career researchers whose studies aim to explain and/or improve psychosocial outcomes of those affected by childhood cancer, will each receive up to \$100,000 over two years. During this time, Zhou will work with patients and their families to develop a web-based treatment for insomnia

in adolescent cancer survivors.

"We are conscious of the effects the fight against childhood cancer can have emotionally and behaviorally on children and their families," says Jay Scott, co-executive director of ALSF. "With these grants, we hope to make a difference in the quality of life and care for these children and their families."

ALSF is a nonprofit dedicated to finding better and safer treatments, and ultimately cures, for children with cancer. The foundation recognizes the importance of investing in research that enables better quality of care and life for children battling cancer and for their families. [T]

Silva honored with quarterly DAISY Award

Erin Silva, RN, BSN, of Dana-Farber/New Hampshire Oncology-Hematology, was recently recognized with a DAISY Award, a quarterly honor given to an



Erin Silva

extraordinary member of the nursing department. Silva received the award during a surprise ceremony earlier this month.

"Erin Silva is upbeat and always positive," one nomination reads. "She is devoted to her patients. Erin has gone the extra mile to call me at home to see how I am feeling. She is always caring and kind. Erin is an extraordinary nurse."

"Erin is pure sunshine, wrapped in competence, professionalism, and compassion," another nomination reads. "She truly makes what has been a nightmare of a situation into something that is bearable."

Silva graduated from Rivier University and joined Dana-Farber in 2012. "I absolutely love what I do," she says. "My patients are amazing."

Dana-Farber is one of approximately 1,500 hospitals that participate in the DAISY Award program. The DAISY Foundation (Diseases Attacking the Immune System) established the award in memory of J. Patrick Barnes, whose parents created the foundation in Patrick's memory after experiencing firsthand the skills, care, and compassion of nurses. [T]

Four chosen for Clinical Faculty Awards

Four Dana-Farber faculty members recently received Clinical Faculty Awards for 2017.

- **Bridging Boundaries Award:** Given to a clinician in a subspecialty who is dedicated to oncology and particularly skilled in interacting with other disciplines.
Awardee: **Michael Rosenthal, MD, PhD**, Imaging
- **Exemplary Care Award:** Given to a clinician who gives his or her heart and soul to patient care.
Awardees: **John Halporn, MD**, Psychosocial Oncology and Palliative Care, and **James Cleary, MD, PhD**, Medical Oncology
- **Institutional Citizenship Award:** Given to a clinician who gives his or her time to the betterment of the institution through committee work, outreach, and other activities.
Awardee: **Nadine McCleary, MD**, Medical Oncology

The awards were presented Feb. 12 at the clinical faculty brunch at the Boston Museum of Science. The awards and brunch are sponsored by the Clinical Faculty Council and Office for Faculty Development.

Clinical faculty nominate colleagues for the awards, which are decided by a committee of clinical faculty. [T]

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about research opportunities," says Eric Winer, MD, director of Breast Oncology at the Susan F. Smith Center, who, with colleague Nancy Lin, MD, clinical director of the Breast Cancer Treatment Center, conceived the program.

"EMBRACE coordinators ensure we provide a consistent approach for each patient who comes through the door, including those who might be coming for a second opinion," says Melissa Hughes, senior research project manager.

The coordinators' contact with patients begins at their first appointment and continues throughout treatment and follow-up care. At their initial meeting, the coordinator introduces the patient to the EMBRACE clinical program, the range of supportive care and educational services, as well as any research studies available at the Institute. Patients can participate in the clinical program regardless of whether they take part in any of the research studies.

"Every morning, coordinators and oncologists meet to review each patient on that day's schedule, including

any recent scans and tumor testing results, and develop a plan for the day," Hughes remarks. "The plan can include identifying potential clinical trials and approaching patients about specialized tumor testing for future trials. The coordinator will then talk to patients about enrolling in specific trials and handle tissue and testing requests."

After the appointment, coordinators send their patients a letter summarizing the trials they've agreed to participate in, along with the coordinator's contact information. Once a patient's tumor testing has been completed, the coordinator will let the patient know the results are in.

For patients who come to the Susan F. Smith Center for a second opinion following a metastatic breast cancer diagnosis, EMBRACE coordinators "will help patients' local oncologist and Dana-Farber oncologist work even more smoothly together," Lin says. "After the initial consultation, for example, the coordinator will send a letter to the referring oncologist summarizing the visit, follow up with tumor testing results, and serve as a central point of



contact for ongoing collaboration."

The six EMBRACE coordinators say they were attracted to the position by its combination of patient contact and role in clinical research. "It's an interesting way to get to know patients and be involved in cancer research by providing patients with information on clinical trials," says coordinator Nicole Kuhnly, who graduated from college last year and intends to go to medical school.

"As coordinators, we're an integral part of the care team," says Rebecca Santiago. "We have the opportunity to build relationships with them over time." Adds Maggie Merrill, "It can be very rewarding, when a patient is interested in participating in research, that we have a trial to offer them." [R]

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Visit the Dana-Farber website at **dana-farber.org** or the intranet at **dfcionline.org**.

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Dana-Farber Rink Rats raise nearly \$30K for research and patient care

On Feb. 4, more than a dozen Dana-Farber doctors, researchers, staff members, and supporters traded in their ID badges for Dana-Farber Rink Rats jerseys to take on the Boston Bruins Alumni team at the LoConte Rink in Medford, Massachusetts. The annual charity hockey game, benefitting the Jimmy Fund, attracted hundreds of spectators and raised nearly \$30,000.

"Dana-Farber Rink Rats is a special way to pair my love for hockey with my passion for supporting the Dana-Farber mission," says David Read, vice president of Ambulatory Care Operations and Medical Oncology. "We were thrilled to have Bruins alumni join us to conquer cancer."

Dana-Farber president and CEO Laurie H. Glimcher dropped the first puck. Bruins players included 14-year Bruins defenseman Terry O'Reilly, six-year forward Reggie Lemelin, and Bruins stars and TV broadcasters Andy Brickley and Bob Beers, among many others. [\[C\]](#)



Dana-Farber staff, family, and friends cheered on the Rink Rats during the annual charity hockey game.

Survey finds anxiety is common among partners of young breast cancer survivors

New research by Dana-Farber investigators underscores the emotional toll cancer can exact on patients' family members and caregivers. A survey of partners of young breast cancer survivors found that 42 percent experienced anxiety even several years after their partner's diagnosis, study lead author Nancy Borstelmann, MPH, MSW, director of social work at Dana-Farber, reported at the 2017 American Society of Clinical Oncology Cancer Survivorship Symposium in San Diego.

The findings, part of a growing body of research on the effects of a cancer diagnosis on those close to patients, reinforce the need for greater caregiver support and education, the study authors say.

"Cancer doesn't just happen to one person; it has an impact on the entire family," Borstelmann says. "As the number of breast cancer survivors continues to grow in the U.S., interventions targeting the concerns of partners – and entire families – are needed to help them cope with the inevitable and often unanticipated changes that come with a cancer diagnosis."

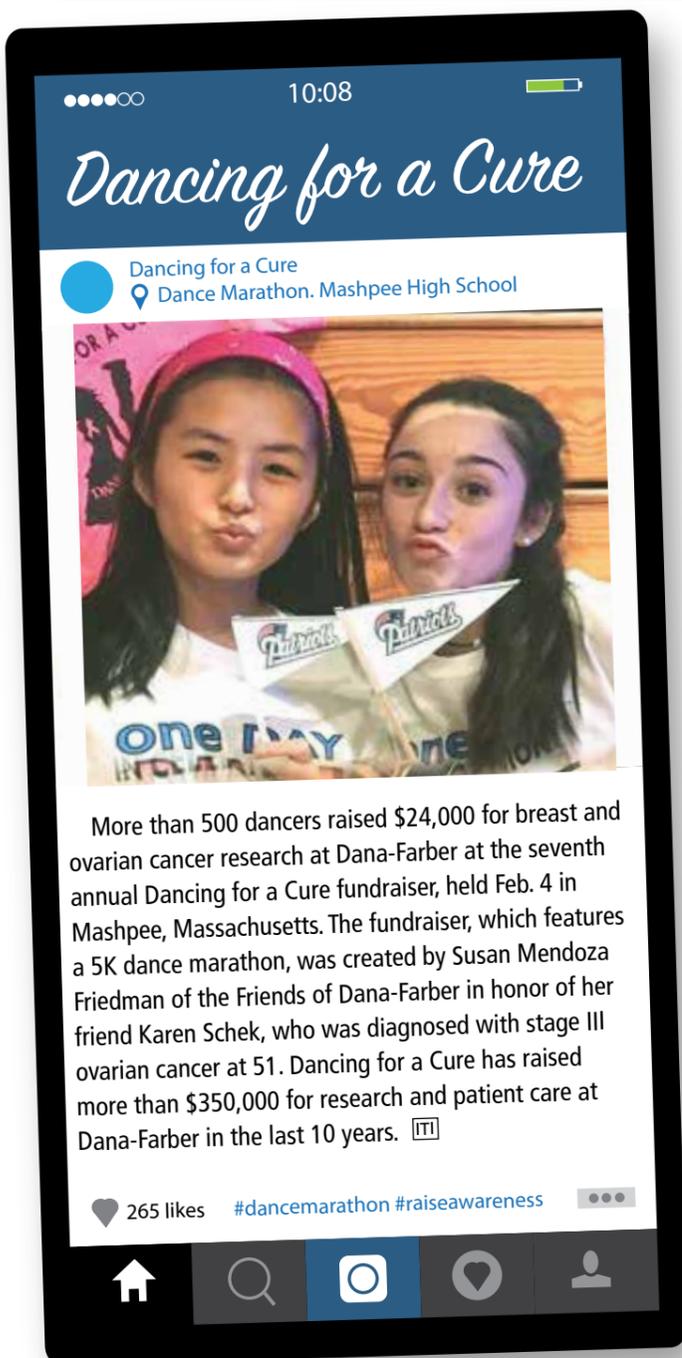
Borstelmann and her colleagues surveyed 289 partners of breast cancer survivors who had received their diagnoses at age 40 or younger. Of the respondents – most of whom were male – more than 30 percent reported some concern with aspects of their relationship with the patient, and more than 40 percent reported experiencing current symptoms of anxiety. Partners who

identified using maladaptive coping strategies, such as emotional withdrawal, denial, blame, and aggression, were more than twice as likely to report experiencing anxiety than those with more adaptive behaviors.

While many survey respondents reported dealing with additional life stressors such as parenting and financial concerns, these factors were not as strongly associated with higher levels of anxiety as maladaptive coping. The researchers also found that partners without a college education tended to have higher anxiety levels than college-educated respondents.

"It may be important to intervene earlier with partners identified as having more coping challenges and other potential stressors," Borstelmann says. "The relationship of lower education and higher levels of anxiety suggests that interventions may need to be tailored to ensure partners have information they need and understand, as well as support for effective coping."

"As members of the cancer care team, we can all take immediate steps to help ensure that the mental health and other concerns of partners and families are addressed," she continues. "It may seem like a small thing, but asking a partner, 'How are you doing?' has an impact, and can open the door to important conversations about how things are going at home and with the patient-partner relationship." [\[T\]](#)



LYNKED IN

March 18: Lynch syndrome patient conference

Join the Center for Cancer Genetics and Prevention for Lynked In, a one-day conference for Lynch syndrome patients and families, to learn more about genetic testing, cancer prevention, and how to communicate with family members about this genetic condition. The event takes place from 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. in the third floor conference center of the Yawkey Center. To register, call 617-632-6164 or email DFClaskgenetics@dfci.harvard.edu.

Connecting and empowering Lynch syndrome families

Colorectal cancer risk genes more common than previously thought



A study among more than 1,000 colorectal cancer patients at Dana-Farber has revealed that a surprisingly high number of them, comprising about 10 percent of the total, carry inherited genetic mutations thought to increase the susceptibility to gastrointestinal and other cancers.

The research supports an expanded role for genetic testing of inherited risk for colorectal cancer, say the authors, with the aim of identifying more individuals in whom the disease might be prevented or caught earlier.

Physicians have long known that about 3 percent of colorectal cancer patients who have a genetic condition known as Lynch syndrome are at high risk for the disease. “But data from our study say we should be at a much lower threshold for genetic testing in colorectal cancer patients, because we’re missing another 7 percent of people with hereditary risk,” says Dana-Farber’s Matthew Yurgelun, MD, lead author on a report in the *Journal of Clinical Oncology*.

“It’s time for colorectal patients to have the same awareness about genetic testing that exists for other cancers, such as breast and ovarian cancer,” says Sapna Syngal, MD, MPH, corresponding author on the paper. She is director of research in Dana-Farber’s Center for Cancer Genetics and Prevention in the Division of Population Sciences.

“More than a million people in this country have Lynch syndrome, but the vast majority of them are unaware that they carry it,” Syngal says. “Every patient with colorectal cancer should raise the idea of genetic testing with their physician, and every physician should raise that idea with their patients, because it has implications not only for patients, but for their family members.”

Broader genetic testing could improve follow-up care for patients after therapy is completed. “If you have a genetic mutation that puts you at risk not only for colorectal but for pancreatic or breast cancer, you need to be followed for those

cancers,” Syngal says. Similarly, family members with an inherited mutation could be regularly screened not just for colorectal cancer but other forms of cancer for which the mutation raises risks.

Colorectal cancer is the second most common cause of cancer death in the United States. Colonoscopy screening, however, often detects these cancers very early and may prevent them by removing pre-cancerous polyps.

“We’ve known for a long time that inherited factors often play into somebody’s risk of developing colorectal cancer,” says Yurgelun. “We’ve typically relied on factors like having a strong family history of the disease, or being diagnosed with the disease at a young age, to guide who gets genetic testing for well-described hereditary syndromes, such as Lynch syndrome.”

The study involved a much wider scope of genetic investigation than is usually performed, using a test panel from Myriad Genetic Laboratories to look for mutations associated with inherited cancer risk. Analyses were performed on blood samples from 1,058 people with colorectal cancer who had received routine clinical care in recent years. The samples were not pre-selected for situations such as a family history of the disease or diagnosis at a young age.

The path to broader genetic testing is becoming easier because costs of these tests have dropped so dramatically, adds Yurgelun. “If we can find a larger fraction of the population in whom we can identify a risk ahead of time, for them and even more importantly for their healthy family members, and then intervene to prevent cancer or reduce cancer risk, this testing may easily become cost-effective because the potential payoffs are so high,” he says.

Dana-Farber co-authors on the paper include Matthew Kulke, MD; Charles Fuchs, MD; Hajime Uno, PhD; Robert Mayer, MD; Deborah Schrag, MD, MPH; Jeffrey Meyerhardt, MD; and Kimmie Ng, MD. [RS](#)



Sapna Syngal, corresponding author of the study

Metastatic colorectal cancer, continued from page 1

a 16 percent lower risk of the disease worsening than those who didn’t exercise or exercised less. The 30-minutes-a-day group also had a 19 percent lower risk of dying from any cause than did the others.

It isn’t yet clear, from a physiological standpoint, how exercise creates this benefit, Guercio says. Laboratory research has found that insulin may affect the biology of colorectal cancer, possibly making it more aggressive in people with high levels of insulin or

insulin resistance. Regular exercise can lead to lower insulin levels.

“Patients consistently ask about other things to consider in addition to standard treatments, and this is the first prospective data that I am aware of for the role of exercise impacting survival in a metastatic colorectal cancer population,” says Jeffrey Meyerhardt, MD, MPH, clinical director of the Center for Gastrointestinal Oncology at Dana-Farber and senior author of the study. [RL](#)

Stem cell donor, continued from page 1

The strong bond formed by the men is the result of a selfless act Gillmann undertook in 2003. A colleague in Germany had blood cancer, so a campaign was held to sign up potential stem cell donors. Six years later, Tobias learned he had a patient match, so he went through the collection process, which he describes as “quick and easy.” (Only later would he learn his match was in the United States.)

That night, the cells were flown to Boston, where Vanada – whose cancer was spreading after 10 years of semi-remission – was waiting. The healthy cells from Gillmann were infused into Vanada’s bloodstream, where over the next several weeks they formed healthy red and white blood cells.

“Every day, we depend on people like Mr. Gillmann to come forward with such kindness and generosity,” says Joseph Antin, MD, chief and program director of adult stem cell transplantation at DF/BWCC and Vanada’s oncologist. “The curative potential of unrelated donor stem cell transplantation can only be realized when people take the time to join the registry and provide this fantastic resource.”

Now that they have connected in person, Gillmann and Vanada plan to continue being part of each other’s lives. In April, when Tobias’ daughter receives her first Communion, Chuck and Debbie will travel to Germany to celebrate.

After all, what are brothers for? [SW](#)

For more information on the National Marrow Donor Program’s “Be The Match” registry, call 866-875-3325 or email nmdpdonor@dfci.harvard.edu.

Chefs for Jimmy raises more than \$90K

More than 30 western Massachusetts culinary greats and hundreds of guests came to the table to fight cancer at Chez Josef in Agawam for the 27th annual Chefs for Jimmy presented by Winer Levisky Group of UBS Financial Services Inc. Local chefs presented samplings of their best dishes, and the room sparkled to reflect the theme of “Denim and Diamonds.” This year’s event raised more than \$90,000 for the Jimmy Fund’s mission to conquer cancer at Dana-Farber.

Chefs for Jimmy is hosted annually by the Jimmy Fund Council of Western Massachusetts in honor of Neal Webber, a long-time supporter of the Jimmy Fund. Dana-Farber Trustee Barbara Sadowsky is co-chair of the event. [CM](#)

