# THE PHILANTHROPIST

### Generous Donors Empower Us to Improve Human Health

By investing in our talented physicians, scientists, students, and trainees at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine, you are supporting the people who ultimately make a difference in the lives of patients and families in Chicago and across the globe. You are providing essential resources to investigators who are exploring new ideas, testing novel therapies, and translating findings to help people suffering from neurodegenerative diseases, cancers, and other challenging health conditions. You are also making it possible for bright and ambitious students to pursue their dreams of becoming physicians and scientists. Your gifts truly push forward our mission to impact the practice of medicine through discovery and education. Thank you for so generously partnering with us to improve human health.

### **M Northwestern** Medicine<sup>®</sup>

Feinberg School of Medicine

### Advancing Feinberg's Commitment to Diversity

New Initiative Bolsters Efforts to Improve Representation in Medicine



Dr. Clyde Yancy

he Office of Diversity and Inclusion, or ODI, at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine is ushering in a new era of programs and resources for students and faculty from diverse backgrounds with the kickoff of a new, \$10 million fundraising initiative.

The initiative is intended to raise endowment support for ODI objectives, including scholarships and funds to support early career physician-scientists.

"To achieve the aspirational goal of health equity, we must increase the critical mass of medical professionals either self-identifying or culturally aligned with the under-represented communities we serve," said Clyde W. Yancy, MD, MSc, vice dean of Diversity and Inclusion, the Magerstadt Professor, and chief of Cardiology in the Department of Medicine. "We need new ideas, diverse ideas, new science, diverse science."

"In accordance with our mission, we aim to build a relentless force of diverse medical professionals with brilliant ideas capable of meaningful change and future leadership."

- Dr. Clyde Yancy

This year, the Office of Diversity and Inclusion is celebrating 20 years of serving medical students, faculty, and alumni at the medical school. In 2015, under the direction of Dr. Yancy, the office was recalibrated to serve not only as a resource for Feinberg students but also to more broadly implement strategies to enhance inclusion and promote diversity at Northwestern Medicine.

The office has since championed multiple initiatives to foster a culture of belongingness, inclusion, and acceptance. Programmatic outreach extends from Chicago high schools to early career clinicians and scientists at Feinberg School of Medicine. Its strategic focus includes recruitment, education, and partnerships with the goal of building diverse and exceptional talent in scholarship, clinical care, leadership, and community engagement.

### Giving Inspired by the Actions of a Colleague and Mentor

"Medicine is meant to be inclusive," says Julius W. Few, MD, '00 GME, a plastic surgeon and health system clinician in the Department of Surgery who recently committed \$300,000 to Feinberg to support plastic surgery trainees of diverse backgrounds.



Dr. Few was completing his plastic surgery fellowship at Northwestern in the late 1990s when he learned that faculty member and medical alumnus James A. Hill '71, '74 MD, '79 GME, was personally funding several students in the

ulius Few medical school. This was one of the first major diversity

efforts he remembers witnessing at Northwestern. Now, he said, he is impressed and inspired by the shared vision Feinberg Dean Eric G. Neilson, MD, and Dr. Yancy have for ODI.

"I was deeply moved by Dr. Hill's actions. As a person of color who has been part of the faculty for almost 25 years, I'm deeply motivated by the effort," he said.

Now, Dr. Few aims to pay it forward through gifts that help demystify the field of plastic surgery to medical students of color and simultaneously help ensure that healthcare providers are representative of the populations they serve. "So much comes from awareness," he said.

At ODI, the new \$10 million initiative will provide structured funding for endowed scholarships, such as the Feinberg Promise Scholarship Fund, and the Diversity and Inclusion Faculty Excellence Fund.

"Our goal is simple but even more necessary after the recent Supreme Court ruling," said Dr. Yancy, referring to the court's decision in June to end race-conscious affirmative action in college admissions. Dr. Yancy also supports ODI through his own generous giving.

"In accordance with our mission, we aim to build a relentless force of diverse medical professionals with brilliant ideas capable of meaningful change and future leadership," he said.

For more information about supporting the Office of Diversity and Inclusion at Feinberg, please contact Tiffany Scaparotti at tiffany.scaparotti@northwestern.edu or 312-503-3088.



New students attend the Office of Diversity and Inclusion's annual welcome reception in 2023.

### Gift for Parkinson's Disease Research a Tribute to Late Husband

Three years after receiving a Parkinson's disease diagnosis, Jacqueline Gilbert's husband, Howard, began a medically advised exercise regimen to ameliorate his symptoms.

Jacqueline, who goes by Jackie, then spent 17 more precious years with her husband, who received exercise care all those years at the Shirley Ryan AbilityLab (formerly the Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago).



**Dr. Daniel Corcos** 

Howard Gilbert passed away at the age of 91 in January 2020. In his honor, Jackie recently made a generous gift to Parkinson's disease research led by Daniel M. Corcos, PhD, a professor of Physical Therapy and Human Movement Sciences at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine and in the McCormick School of Engineering. Dr. Corcos's research focuses on the benefits of exercise as therapy for people with Parkinson's disease.

Jackie and Howard Gilbert first met Dr. Corcos in 2011. Howard visited the laboratory of Dr. Corcos on multiple occasions and showed a keen interest in his research since Howard had first-hand experience of the benefits of exercise on his own Parkinson's symptoms.

#### Exercise as a Therapy for Parkinson's Disease

Dr. Corcos is currently involved in the Exercise for Cognitive Excellence in Parkinson's Disease, or EXCEL-PD, study. He is conducting this study with movement disorders specialist Nijee Luthra, MD, PhD, and Eric Johnson, an exercise specialist and founder of the Chicago-based Movement Revolution program that provides movement therapy to patients with neurological diseases. Together, they are investigating the effects of exercise on cognition and the underlying biological markers in the brain and periphery.

Dr. Corcos is the mentor of Dr. Luthra on an National Institutes of Health (NIH)-funded career development award. The prestigious grant provides funds to cover part of Dr. Luthra's salary as well as some funds for research.

"Jackie's gift allows us to supplement funds provided by NIH to use the expert Movement Revolution team to deliver a home-based, high-intensity endurance and resistance exercise program to people with Parkinson's disease and helps us purchase exercise equipment for participants," Dr. Corcos said.

The idea behind EXCEL-PD is to provide an exercise experience very similar to Howard Gilbert's. The gift allows the research team to include more participants in the study and to investigate a wider array of biomarkers than originally planned. These biomarkers may give insight into how exercise achieves its therapeutic effect.

"We expect this study will not only shed insight into how exercise benefits cognition but will also motivate participants in the study to continue to exercise long term," Dr. Corcos added.

In addition to his research at Northwestern, Dr. Corcos is the lead principal investigator of a multicenter clinical trial studying the effects of aerobic exercise on people living with Parkinson's disease. The trial, called SPARX3, is a phase 3 clinical trial and is the first of its scale to determine if exercise can slow down the progression of the disease.

"I know that there will be somebody who finds the key, or keys, to preventing Parkinson's from burdening more and more people," Jackie Gilbert said. "You know, rubella, all these other diseases have been conquered. There's no reason why Parkinson's won't be, too."

According to Dr. Corcos, one of the key benefits of maintaining a healthy and active lifestyle is that it reduces the negative impact of many other diseases besides Parkinson's.

"It is often referred to as 'the exercise pill," he said. "These diseases also affect people with Parkinson's disease. As such, when a cure finally arrives for Parkinson's, people will be well positioned to enjoy a healthy lifespan as they age since they will have reduced the negative effects of some other diseases."

For more information about supporting these efforts, please contact Vic Maurer at victor.maurer@northwestern.edu or 312-503-2417.

"We expect this study will not only shed insight into how exercise benefits cognition but will also motivate participants in the study to continue to exercise long term."

- Dr. Daniel Corcos



3

### **Commitment to Scholarships**

McKechnies Launch Scholarship in Honor of Dear Friend and Renowned Texas Internist



Dr. Bill Tompkins and his wife, Cheryl

Jim McKechnie, '74 MD, FAAOS, and Bill Tompkins, '74 MD, FACP, were college pals and then lifelong friends who spent many of their formative years together ahead of their independently successful medical careers.

The two were paired as chemistry lab partners while undergraduates at the University of Illinois in the 1960s, then both went on to attend medical school at Northwestern University. After graduating in 1974, they went their separate ways professionally but maintained a cross-country friendship—until Bill Tompkins passed away from amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, or ALS, in 2010. He was 61.

"His life was taken far too early by the cruel ravages of ALS," said Dr. McKechnie, an orthopaedic surgeon who practices in Mattoon, Illinois.

In honor of his dear friend, Jim and his wife, Karen, established the William E. Tompkins, MD Endowed Scholarship Fund in early 2023 to support students at Jim's and Bill's medical school alma mater.



Jim recalls the years he had with Bill with immense fondness. As college students, the two got up to a healthy dose of harmless shenanigans, such as breaking into lab spaces after dark to complete assignments. Bill was quiet and studious but had an infectiously innovative spirit, Jim said. During their senior year, Bill got hold of an old EKG machine that he modified and then practiced with on their peers. In medical school, they earnestly pursued Bill's goal of standing on as many Chicago rooftops as possible, including that of the iconic Ward Building. Security was more relaxed back then, Jim added.

Dr. Jim McKechnie

Not so much the partying types, most of their time together was spent studying. Occasionally, they would plan dinners at each other's family homes in the suburbs; Bill's parents were in Skokie, and Jim's were in Lansing.

#### Making a Difference in Tomball, Texas

After medical school, Bill went on to complete his residency at Rush University. He then moved to the outskirts of Houston—to Tomball, Texas—where he became the first board-certified internist and spent the following three decades practicing internal medicine with a subspecialty in cardiology.

"Bill established a first-class cardiology practice in a town that did not have anything like that before, and he became a very revered and respected elder of the town as the years went along," Jim said. "He meant a whole lot to the people of Tomball."

In 1981, Bill Tompkins was named chief of staff at Tomball Regional Hospital, where he later served as chair of the Department of Medicine. In 1999, he became a fellow of the American College of Physicians.

Bill also greatly enjoyed mentoring students at the University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston, where he was named a "Top Doc" in 2003.

Well into his flourishing career, he began noticing changes in his muscle movement in 2006 and was soon after diagnosed with ALS. ALS is a progressive and fatal neurodegenerative disease with no cure and an average survival rate of three years.

"Life doesn't come with a fairness quotient to it, but it certainly did not seem fair that he was taken from us when he was," Jim McKechnie said.

Now, he and Karen hope to honor his lifelong friend with the scholarship in his name.

"Bill was sincerely deserving of being remembered and we felt this was an appropriate way of doing so," Jim said.

Bill Tompkins is survived by his wife, Cheryl, two sons, and one daughter.

For more information about supporting scholarships, please contact Vic Maurer at victor.maurer@northwestern.edu or 312-503-2417.

0

Tomball Regional Hospital, where Dr. Tompkins was named chief of staff and later served as chair of the Department of Medicine.

University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston, where Dr. Tompkins was named a "Top Doc" in 2003.

"Bill established a first-class cardiology practice in a town that did not have anything like that before.... He meant a whole lot to the people of Tomball."

- Dr. Jim McKechnie

### **Commitment to Scholarships**

### Medical Alumnus Honors Beloved Wife with Scholarship

edical alumnus Marshall Sparberg, '57, '60 MD, credits Northwestern for his long and rewarding career in gastroenterology. When his beloved wife,

Eve, passed away this past January, he turned to Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine to establish the Eve Gaymont Sparberg Scholarship in her name so that others could benefit from the medical school's resources and prestige.

This scholarship will provide support to one medical student over their four years of study at Feinberg.

"I owe a lot to Northwestern, very simple," said Dr. Sparberg, who has been affiliated with the school for more than 50 years. "Obviously, medical school is expensive. If a student can go to medical school based on scholarship, that's wonderful."

#### A Career and Marriage Deeply Rooted in Chicago

After graduating from Senn High School in Chicago's Edgewater neighborhood, Dr. Sparberg was admitted into the seven-year program at Northwestern, which enabled him to attend as an undergraduate for three years and spend the next four years in medical school. His tuition, too, was partially funded through scholarship support, including the James A. Patten Scholarship for Students Taking Combined Medical/College of Arts and Sciences Courses.

He parted with the institution only from 1960–67, during which time he completed rotating internships in Evanston, his residency in internal medicine at Barnes Hospital in St. Louis, and a fellowship in gastroenterology at the University of Chicago. He then served as a staff gastroenterologist in the U.S. Air Force at Wilford Hall Medical Center in San Antonio. Upon his return to Chicago, he led a successful career in private practice at Northwestern in the Streeterville neighborhood, steps from where he graduated medical school more than 60 years ago. Over the years, he was awarded an honorary professorship, and he now attends classes through the university's Osher Lifelong Learning Institute.

"I love Chicago," he said. "And I'm just not one of these guys that pulls up roots and goes someplace else. I had to do it for my training, but I love this city."

Dr. Sparberg met Eve Gaymont in the city in 1985, while she was married but separated from her first husband. Her brother introduced them. On their first date, they attended the Vincenzo Bellini opera "The Capulets and the Montagues" in 1985—and the rest was history.

Born in Hungary, Eve and her parents fled the Nazis the day before the start of World War II, when she was five years old. Although she and her parents reached safety in New York, she lost her grandparents to the Holocaust. "She could never talk about it," Dr. Sparberg said. "She literally could not go into the Holocaust Museum or anything else. It was too close to her."



Eve Sparberg and Dr. Marshall Sparberg

Partiament building in Budapest, Hungary

Eve Gaymont attended Sullivan High School in Chicago and graduated from Bradley University in Peoria in 1955. While raising her two children, Jodi and Steve, she earned a master's degree from Illinois State University, taught home economics at Bradley, and volunteered as a docent at the Peoria Art Museum. She worked in marketing for many years and later served as president of the Chicago Financial Advertisers.

She and Dr. Sparberg married in 1987. She eventually became the office manager for his medical practice where she worked for more than 20 years, earning a reputation for her compassionate and discerning presence. "She was a people person, very much so," Dr. Sparberg said. "She just bonded with all our patients."

The Sparbergs shared a love of the opera, concerts, and traveling. During their years together, they traveled around the world, including several trips to Budapest to visit Eve's remaining relatives. She was remembered at her memorial service as being a force of nature with an adventurous spirit.

She was 88 when she passed. Now, Dr. Sparberg hopes to honor her with the scholarship fund to benefit bright students pursuing degrees in medicine.

"Dr. Sparberg's gift is a touching tribute to Eve," said Marianne Green, MD, the Raymond H. Curry, MD, Professor of Medical Education and vice dean for Education. "We are immensely grateful to the Sparbergs for their long history of support for Feinberg's exceptional students and their promising futures."

For more information about supporting scholarships, please contact Vic Maurer at victor.maurer@northwestern.edu or 312-503-2417.



Dr. Marshall Sparberg's 1960 class photo



Dr. Marshall Sparberg (far left) and other retired alumni doctors meet for a RODEO—Retired Old Docs Eating Out—lunch.

### Honoring a Cardiologist's Personal Approach to Patient Care

Longtime Patient's Gift Supports David J. Mehlman, MD Fellowship in Echocardiography



Dr. David Mehlman and his wife, Arlene Alpert-Mehlman

ardiologist David Mehlman, MD, has built a legacy of providing personalized care to his patients and of training generations of cardiologists to nourish the fundamental skills of their trade.

Dr. Mehlman has fine-tuned his philosophy around patient care over the 43 years he has been on faculty at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine. Building meaningful relationships, he explained, enables him to manage patients' health issues over the long term, spanning years or even decades.

"It takes time to establish rapport with a patient, but the results are rewarding beyond measure," he said.

Such was the case for Robert "Bob" Asher, a Chicago native, businessman, and prominent member of the American Jewish community who passed away at the age of 94 in January 2023. His son, Dan, credits Dr. Mehlman for his father's exceptional quality of life and prolonged heart health during the nearly four decades he was his patient.

"The quality and duration of his life both were increased by his relationship with Dr. Mehlman," Dan Asher said. "The way he approaches care should be the beacon and template for cardiology."

At Feinberg, Dr. Mehlman is a treasured faculty member and mentor. To honor him and his work in academic medicine, Bob Asher donated extensively to the new David J. Mehlman, MD Fellowship in Echocardiography. Dan, too, has made generous contributions, and their gifts together have boosted the fund by nearly \$150,000.

The fund is more than halfway fulfilled. After it is fully endowed, the new fellowship will exist in perpetuity, establishing a long-lasting legacy championed by many of Dr. Mehlman's current and former patients in his honor.

Dan praised Dr. Mehlman's approach to care while recollecting his father's experience as a patient.

"It wasn't just medical care; it was person care. He was always caring for my dad as a person," Dan said. "It was one of those things where I could go to sleep at night knowing that he was in absolutely the best possible hands he could be in."

Dr. Mehlman noted that Bob Asher came under his care after he had already found great success in manufacturing. At this phase in Bob's life, he was deeply involved with his family and advocating for the Jewish community, locally and internationally. While Bob was a patient in cardiology, he also had additional health needs that intersected other fields of medicine. Despite this, he still maintained an outsized presence in the world through his activism.

"Maintaining Bob's ability to participate fully in his many interests is testimony to the effectiveness of his successful healthcare," Dr. Mehlman said. "At its best, the practice of medicine is the most invigorating team sport."

#### **Emphasis on Echocardiography**

The David J. Mehlman, MD Advanced Echocardiography Training Fellowship will support the advanced training of early career cardiologists in echocardiography, a technique for visualizing and analyzing heart tissues and structures using sound waves.

"As far as I am concerned, at the present time, echocardiography is the foundation of all clinical cardiology, and its basic knowledge is a requirement of all cardiologists," Dr. Mehlman said.



Bob Asher, shown here at a speaking engagement, was a patient of cardiologist Dr. David Mehlman for more than 30 years. He passed away in January 2023.



"It wasn't just medical care; it was person care. He was always caring for my dad as a person."

- Dan Asher

An echocardiogram is an ultrasound of the heart. The resulting visual image reveals vital insights into the performance of a person's heart, helping physicians diagnose and treat heart disease.

For many patients, receiving an echocardiogram is the point of entry for heart diagnosis. A careful, nuanced reading can mean the difference between reassurance and surveillance or medical management. Dr. Mehlman is an expert in echocardiography, speaking on its importance at annual conferences for decades, and he designed the Mehlman Fellowship to train advanced echocardiographers.

As a junior faculty member at the University of Chicago Medicine in 1979, Dr. Mehlman came to Northwestern Memorial Hospital for three months to study under James Talano, MD, the echocardiography laboratory director, since there were no equivalent opportunities in echocardiography at that time at the University of Chicago.

Throughout his training at Northwestern, he honed his own skills in echocardiography and became familiar with Northwestern Memorial Hospital. When a position became available in 1980, he jumped at the opportunity and has been at Northwestern ever since.

"It is intentional that I have stayed at Northwestern Medicine for decades, because I made the initial investment to establish rapport with so many patients," Dr. Mehlman said.

His hope for the echocardiography fellowship is that bright, newly trained cardiologists can learn under the expertise of Northwestern faculty members, who in turn can evaluate the trainee's performance—much like they did for him—and train the next generation of Northwestern cardiologists.

Dr. Mehlman also has his eye on the future of echocardiography, noting that these fellows will be well-equipped to adapt as the field evolves and the technology becomes more sophisticated.

Dan Asher noted Dr. Mehlman's thoughtful nature in the context of his father's care.

"The moment you spend a little while with him, you realize that he is genuine in his care for humanity," he said. "I think the world's a better place for having him there and thinking and fighting for it. He reminds me of the very best my father was."

For more information about supporting the fellowship, please contact Kathleen Praznowski at kathleen.praznowski@northwestern.edu or 312-503-0762.

#### **UPCOMING EVENTS**

Lynn Sage Breast Cancer Foundation Fall Benefit 2023: An Evening of Collaboration for Breast Cancer Research

October 19, Theater on the Lake, Chicago Info: Nicole Langert at 312-503-1656, nicole.langert@northwestern.edu For more information, click here

Harold E. Eisenberg Foundation's Annual Dinner November 7, The Hilton Grand Ballroom, Chicago Info: Nicole Langert at 312-503-1656, nicole.langert@northwestern.edu

For more information, click here

Feinberg Alumni and Donor Dinner at Cucina Venti

November 14, Mountain View, CA Info: Meghan Monaghan at 312-503-1091, meghan.monaghan@northwestern.edu

Feinberg Alumni and Donor Dinner at Wayfare Tavern

November 15, San Francisco, CA Info: Meghan Monaghan at 312-503-1091, meghan.monaghan@northwestern.edu

### New Stulberg Professorship to Boost Osteoarthritis Research



A patient undergoes a total knee replacement surgery at Northwestern Medicine.



Dr. David Stulberg

Since the 1970s, orthopaedic surgeon S. David Stulberg, MD, has seen new medical research transform the lives of patients with various forms of joint disease—but he says he hasn't seen any promising leads for his many patients afflicted with osteoarthritis.

To try to stem the tide of this vast and growing patient population, Dr. Stulberg, clinical professor of Orthopaedic Surgery, and his wife, Jann, recently gifted \$3 million to

establish the S. David Stulberg, MD, Professorship in Orthopaedic Surgery and Degenerative Joint Disease in the Department of Orthopaedic Surgery.

The goal, Dr. Stulberg said, is to empower an investigator to lead efforts at Northwestern to better understand and treat osteoarthritis, even in its early stages. His hope is that the new Stulberg Professor will mobilize and inspire other Northwestern researchers in epidemiology, genetics, and biochemistry to collaborate around the shared goal of finding treatments for osteoarthritis.

#### The Blight of Osteoarthritis

Osteoarthritis affects more than 32.5 million adults in the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control or CDC. It is one of more than 100 types of arthritis but the most common. It occurs most frequently in the hands, hips, and knees, and it is one of the most expensive chronic health issues.

While joint replacement surgery usually helps patients with osteoarthritis, it requires a significant commitment to rehabilitation and recovery and poses a great cost to healthcare payers. Still, Dr. Stulberg completes joint replacements for hundreds of patients each year.

"The good news is that joint replacement is a very effective way of treating advanced arthritis," he said. "The bad news is that, in my entire career, there's been no significant impact on the cause or treatment that reduces the progression of the disease."

In other words, even with an early diagnosis, patients don't have any direct course of action to prevent the disease from worsening. Unlike chronic conditions such as diabetes or heart disease, there are no

blood tests or early interventions that can pinpoint the disease's progression and improve the patient's outlook. The disease does appear to be inherited, but without efficient treatments, patients are left to endure the disease until surgery is the best remaining option.

Dr. Stulberg has more than 40 years of experience treating patients with osteoarthritis, and he hopes that the new Stulberg Professor can make strides in our understanding and prevention of the disease.

"I've done a large number of joint replacements on the sons and daughters of previous patients," Dr. Stulberg said, emphasizing the urgency for breakthroughs.

Dr. Terrance Peabody, chair of the Department of Orthopaedic Surgery and the Edwin Warner Ryerson Professor of Orthopaedic Surgery, credited Dr. Stulberg's long and distinguished career as evidence of the good that can come from investigation within the field.

"The new Stulberg Professorship presents an enormous opportunity for Northwestern to pursue meaningful breakthroughs in our understanding and treatment of osteoarthritis, which affects millions of people and negatively impacts their quality of life," Dr. Peabody said. "We are thrilled about the research avenues that Dr. Stulberg's gift has afforded us and look forward to building a research, clinical, and educational osteoarthritis program of national reputation."

Named and endowed professorships, like the new Stulberg Professorship, represent the highest honor a university can bestow upon its faculty. These positions represent the pinnacle of academic achievement and excellence and are reserved for the most distinguished and productive physicians and scientists. They carry great prestige and impact for the benefactor, the appointed holder of the professorship, and the university and medical school.

"Given the prevalence of the disease and significance of the symptoms once it occurs, reinforced efforts are needed to reduce its impact on patients," Dr. Stulberg said. "My hope is that the new professor can really shake things up and make a difference in the field through leadership at Northwestern."

For more information about supporting the Department of Orthopaedic Surgery, please contact Andrew Christopherson at andrew.christopherson@northwestern.edu or 312-503-3080.



Joe Stefani and Josh Van Swol



Shreya Budhiraja (second from left) chats with Vineeth Thirunavu, Victor Arrieta, MD, PhD, and Leah Billingham, PhD. All MBTI junior lab members' projects have benefited from Josh Van Swol and Joe Stefani's philanthropic support.

### **Fueling the Future of Brain Tumor Research**

In 2019, Josh Van Swol of Palatine, Illinois, was diagnosed with glioblastoma. Like so many individuals facing brain cancer, his life was altered forever after.

Josh's outlook was promising early on, as he initially received treatment at the prestigious Mayo Clinic in Phoenix while traveling with his partner, Joe Stefani. When the two returned home to Chicago, Josh came under the care of neuro-oncologist Rimas Lukas, MD, an associate professor of Neurology. Joe had heard from a neurosurgeon in the family that Dr. Lukas is known as being one of the best in the field. Dr. Lukas provides expertise and care within the Lou and Jean Malnati Brain Tumor Institute of the Robert H. Lurie Comprehensive Cancer Center of Northwestern University at Northwestern Memorial Hospital (MBTI).

"The capabilities of the MBTI when it came to treatment, but also research, gave me hope during a difficult time," Josh said.

Since Josh became a patient of Dr. Lukas, he and Joe have donated regularly to the MBTI, which has matched some of their gifts. Most recently, they gifted \$100,000 to support pilot glioblastoma research projects led by trainees.

To this day, Josh wears a tumor-treating fields or "TTFields" device about 75 percent of the time. The portable device, which fits over the head, delivers a continuous dose of low-intensity electric fields to prevent the return of his brain tumor. The sensitivity of the device to heat and sunlight sometimes requires careful planning, but Josh and Joe are able to live their lives with relative normalcy. They travel around the world together, and they co-run Desert Cactus, an e-commerce brand that works with sports teams and universities across the country.

#### A Focus on Burgeoning Ideas

Josh and Joe's approach to philanthropy has evolved since they began supporting cancer research at MBTI. Initially, they solely supported higher-level research projects investigating genotypes similar to those found in Josh's glioblastoma, but they have since shifted their focus to supporting early-stage projects in order to jumpstart the next era of brain cancer research.

"When it comes to research, I think people like to get from A-to-Z right away," Joe said. "And for us, we see it as a long-term thing. We hope we can provide one more piece of the puzzle."



While exploring novel ways they could support cancer research, they discovered that scientists' early-stage projects often face financial barriers that can prevent or delay them from pursuing funding from prestigious research supporters like the National Institutes of Health or NIH. With that in mind, they set out to help scientists investigating an array of new approaches rather than singular, existing research initiatives.

"Gifts like these are incredibly important in our fight to uncover new treatments for patients with brain tumors. Cancer research isn't cheap, and as Josh and Joe have observed, costs can be prohibitive for scientists to get new and innovative projects off the ground. Supporting pilot research projects does just that, and the impact of their aid is incredibly far-reaching," Dr. Lukas said.

"This philanthropy helps address a number of important needs," he added. "It helps support rapid investigation of novel ideas, allows for the generation of data in preparation for NIH-funded grant proposals, and fosters the development of the future generation of brain tumor researchers."

For more information about supporting the Malnati Brain Tumor Institute, please contact Terri Dillon at terri-dillon@northwestern.edu or 312-503-4837.



Shreya Budhiraja

#### **RESEARCH IMPACT**

Shreya Budhiraja, a second-year medical student scientist mentored by Atique Ahmed, PhD, professor of Neurological Surgery, received a grant funded by Joe Stefani and Josh Van Swol for her research project investigating the role of R-loops in glioblastoma progression.

R-loops are structures that normally form on DNA while cells grow and divide, but in excess, they can cause cell death. Since cancer cells proliferate so rapidly, they are known to have higher levels of R-loops—but for as-yet unknown reasons, they do not experience cell death typically associated with R-loop abundance.

Shreya's research has uncovered a gene, THOC1, that may be protecting glioblastoma cells from the excessive R-loops, enabling the tumor to grow. The project aims to determine whether targeting the protective role of THOC1 could boost glioblastoma cell death and prolong survival.

"With their gracious support, I was able to take my experiments to a new level—from in vitro models to in vivo models—allowing for greater reproducibility and strength of the project's findings," she said. "The funding also allowed us to delve deeper into understanding the mechanism of these findings, creating a new avenue for drug exploration."

### **Our Community in Action**

More than 300 friends and philanthropists gathered for the **Minds Matter** benefit on May 5 at the Ritz-Carlton, Chicago, to celebrate and support advancements in brain tumor research and care, raising more than \$500,000.



Bill and Viviane Evanoff, members of the MBTI Advisory Council

The benefit is an annual fundraiser for the Lou and Jean Malnati Brain Tumor Institute (MBTI) of the Robert H. Lurie Comprehensive Cancer Center of Northwestern University at Northwestern Memorial Hospital. Net proceeds support brain tumor research and patient care.



Pictured left to right: Dean Harrison, executive chairman of Northwestern Memorial HealthCare; Jean and Marc Malnati of the Marc and Jeanne Malnati Family Foundation; Jean Malnati-Miller (front) of the Lou Malnati Cancer Research Foundation; Amy Heimberger, MD, PhD, co-director of the MBTI and the Jean Malnati Miller Professor of Brain Tumor Research; Roger Stupp, MD, co-director of the MBTI and the Paul C. Bucy Professor of Neurological Surgery; and James P. Chandler, MD, co-director of MBTI and the Lavin/Fates Professor of Neurological Surgery.

More than 1,000 friends and supporters of The H Foundation came together on July 22 at the **21st Annual Goombay Bash** presented by Becknell Industrial, held at the Aon Grand Ballroom at Navy Pier. This year's Caribbean-themed event raised more than \$900,000 to support basic science cancer research at the Robert H. Lurie Comprehensive Cancer Center of Northwestern University.



Friends and supporters of The H Foundation celebrated advances in cancer research and raised funds at the annual Goombay Bash that will support Lurie Cancer Center.



Terry Bradshaw, a co-host and analyst on Fox NFL Sunday, served as the celebrity guest of honor at the 21st Annual Goombay Bash, held at the Aon Grand Ballroom at Navy Pier.

The newly formed Associate Board of Lurie Cancer Center held a cocktail reception on July 20 at Woodwind restaurant in Chicago. Throughout the year, these dedicated young professionals raised \$150,000 to support cancer research at the Robert H. Lurie Comprehensive Cancer Center of Northwestern University.



Members of the Associate Board of Lurie Cancer Center pose with research grant awardee Dr. Kehinde Adekola, seventh from left.



Kehinde U.A. Adekola, MD, MS, associate professor of Medicine in the Division of Hematology and Oncology (left), was presented the \$150,000 Innovative Research Scholar Award. She is pictured here with her husband, Tunde (middle), and last year's award recipient, Marcelo Bonini, PhD.

10

## INNOVATION SPOTLIGHT

**Empowering Feinberg's Unsung Heroes** 

Each day, our faculty, students, and trainees at Feinberg dedicate time to innovative new ideas and programs that will move the needle in medicine and science. Here, we spotlight some of the exciting work that often happens behind the scenes and beyond daily clinical care.

Thank you to all of the donors who contribute to these efforts, now and in the future. Your philanthropy fuels these projects and programs enabling their very existence and empowering them to grow for the benefit of patients today and tomorrow.

#### Advancing Clinical Trials in Gynecologic Cancer



patients with gynecological malignancies. He is an associate professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology in the Division of Gynecologic Oncology. Dr. Roque has conducted research focusing on the correlation between obesity and endometrial cancer and is currently the principal investigator for a research project aimed at understanding the effects of cisplatin-based Heated Intraperitoneal Chemotherapy (HIPEC) on ovarian cancer DNA damage and repair. Understanding the molecular changes that occur in ovarian cancer cells as a result of HIPEC may help identify new treatment strategies that could be used in combination with HIPEC. He is also interested in identifying biomarkers to better predict and provide therapeutic alternatives to patients with platinum-resistant/refractory ovarian cancer who don't have many therapeutic options. Additionally, Dr. Roque greatly values equitable gynecologic oncology healthcare. He intends to increase outreach strategies and expand the enrollment of racial and ethnic minority groups in clinical trials.

Dario Roque, MD, is a gynecologic oncologist with

extensive experience in the clinical management of

For more information about supporting the efforts above, contact Jordan Sund at 312-503-2706 or jordan.sund@northwestern.edu.



Dr. Jaime Garcia-Añoveros



### Pioneering Research in Restorative Hearing

Jaime Garcia-Añoveros, PhD, a basic research scientist and professor of Anesthesiology, Neurology, and Neuroscience, is making important headway in hearing loss research. Dr. Garcia-Añoveros' research focuses on the development, function, and degeneration of sensory receptor cells. His work led to the discovery of pain sensory systems in the cochlea, transduction channels for touch and pain, and degeneration-causing mutations in somatosensory neurons and hair cells. Dr. Garcia-Añoveros has made landmark discoveries pertaining to the way the cochlea generates its two types of inner and outer hair cells—the sound detectors that permit hearing—and how they get innervated, which is essential for communicating the sense of hearing to the brain. His goal for the next decade is to fully uncover how inner and outer hair cells are separately generated and how they are positioned to serve their distinct functions in hearing. This fundamental knowledge will eventually inform the development of regenerative therapies for the restoration of hearing to the deaf.

For more information on supporting the efforts above, contact **Mary Kreller** at **312-503-0742** or **mary.kreller@northwestern.edu**.



Dr. Yvonne Lee

#### **Examining the Pain Experience**

Yvonne C. Lee, MD, MMSc, is the Helen Myers McLoraine Professor of Rheumatology and an associate professor of Medicine, Division of Rheumatology and of Preventive Medicine, Division of Epidemiology. Dr. Lee is the principal investigator of a National Institutes of Health (NIH)-supported research project studying how rheumatoid arthritis leads to changes in central nervous system pathways responsible for sensing, transmitting, and regulating pain. The NIH provided Dr. Lee with the Supplements to Advance Research (STAR) award, which will provide vital additional funding and resources for her research. Dr. Lee is focused on investigating the experience of pain by those with systemic rheumatic conditions and developing effective pain management and prevention strategies. She seeks to characterize the relationship between pain regulation, pain experience, and drug responses in patients through prospective observational studies and clinical trials. Dr. Lee's goal is to manage and ultimately mitigate the experience of pain for those living with rheumatic conditions.



#### Developing a Cell Map of the Human Lung

Alexander V. Misharin, MD, PhD, is an associate professor of Medicine in the Division of Pulmonary and Critical Care and has recently developed a comprehensive cell map of the human lung. This map is the largest single-cell lung atlas to date and is an important new resource for lung investigators. Using the Human Lung Cell Atlas, Dr. Misharin and collaborators were able to reveal rare cell types within the lung and point out important cellular differences in humans. His investigation of single-cell types identified commonalities among lung fibrosis, cancer, and COVID-19. Dr. Misharin and his team pioneered a new system for lung disease investigation, as researchers will now be able to track and map cell data. The atlas will generate new ways of understanding lung disease and can help highlight potential therapies for managing lung conditions. His goal is to continue constructing reference maps for all human cells. He and his colleagues believe these maps will provide us with better strategies for diagnosing, observing, and treating disease.

For more information on supporting the efforts above, contact MaryPat Mauro at 312-503-1090 or marypat.mauro@northwestern.edu.

For more information on supporting the efforts above, contact **David G. McCreery** at **312-503-6099** or **david.mccreery@northwestern.edu**.

#### **M Northwestern** Medicine<sup>®</sup>

Feinberg School of Medicine

420 East Superior Street Arthur J. Rubloff Building, 9th Floor Chicago, IL 60611

If you would like to receive future issues of this publication electronically, or if you would like more information about any of the stories in this issue, please email Lauren Robinson at lauren.robinson@northwestern.edu.

If you do not wish to receive fundraising materials from Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine, please call 312-503-0789. feinberg.northwestern.edu/giving

© September 2023 Northwestern Medicine.

Northwestern Medicine is a registered trademark of Northwestern Memorial HealthCare and is used by Northwestern University.

Volume 10, Issue 2 (September 2023)

# THE PHILANTHROPIST

#### Inside This Issue

Advancing Feinberg's Commitment to Diversity New Initiative Bolsters Efforts to Improve Representation in Medicine	2
Gift for Parkinson's Disease Research a Tribute to Late Husband	3
<b>Commitment to Scholarships</b> McKechnies Launch Scholarship in Honor of Dear Friend and Renowned Texas Internist	4
<b>Commitment to Scholarships</b> Medical Alumnus Honors Beloved Wife with Scholarship	5
<b>Honoring a Cardiologist's Personal Approach to Patient Care</b> Longtime Patient's Gift Supports David J. Mehlman, MD Fellowship in Echocardiography	6
New Stulberg Professorship to Boost Osteoarthritis Research	8
Fueling the Future of Brain Tumor Research	9
Our Community in Action	10
Innovation Spotlight	11

A publication for supporters and friends of Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine

feinberg.northwestern.edu/giving

