



GI RESEARCH  
FOUNDATION



AT THE FOREFRONT  
UChicago  
Medicine

Digestive  
Diseases  
Center

# GUT INSTINCT

MAKING SENSE OF IT ALL 2017 | Issue 7

A Newsletter of the Gastro-Intestinal Research Foundation and The University of Chicago Medicine Digestive Diseases Center

## A SEASON OF GIVING FOR GI RESEARCH

Anna Gomberg  
Administrative Director, IBD Center

The end of 2017 offered two exciting opportunities to support the GI Research Foundation, and donors, families and friends turned out in record numbers to show their commitment to GI research.

On Sunday, September 25th, the second Backyard Donor Appreciation Picnic was held at the Chicago VIP helicopter hangar, located on the southwest side of Chicago.

GI Research Foundation donors, friends, supporters and their families enjoyed a fun-filled welcome to the season, including backyard barbeque-style refreshments, a DJ, balloon animals, and face-painting, which were big hits with children of all ages. With a nod to the oversized venue, attendees played many giant versions of family games: darts, pool, chess, and Jenga. A raffle raised funds for the GI Research Foundation, offering Blackhawks, Bulls, and Sox tickets; a wine tasting; jewelry; artwork; and toys and games for children, including some giant stuffed teddy bears. Particularly sought after were dinners with David T. Rubin, MD, Medical Director, and board member Frank Matagrano, as well as a weekend trip to nearby tourist destination Galena, Illinois.

The venue provided open access to the many helicopters housed in the hangar, and attendees had fun taking photos inside the choppers, as well as watching them take off and land.



A young supporter enjoying the festivities

board president Eric Berlin, event chairperson and board member Katie Chudnovsky, and Dr. Rubin offered warm welcomes to the many donors and supporters who continue to support GI research at the University of Chicago Medicine, and offered a glimpse into the work behind new discoveries, treatments, and especially cures for debilitating digestive diseases.

Said Russell Cohen, MD, board member, "It is wonderful to see so many families here today, because truly, we know that digestive diseases affect not just the patient, but the patient's whole family. We know this, and know just how important the support of a family can be to a patient's journey to health and healing."

On Friday, November 3rd, a record 140 revelers raised \$29,000 at an occasion with an altogether different vibe, a cocktail party at nearby West Loop loft venue Prairie Productions hosted by the Associates Board. Attendees mingled, bid on silent auction items and contributed to raffles, and sampled appetizers as a DJ played

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# PATIENT SPOTLIGHT: BRAD GOODMAN

New age for liver transplants as a result of the recent discovery of a cure for Hepatitis C

Robert Mitchum  
Science Writer



BRAD GOODMAN

Brad Goodman knew he likely had a long wait for a new liver. For the past six years, the 36-year-old father of three was in and out of the hospital, fighting off bile duct infections caused by primary sclerosing cholangitis (PSC), a chronic, progressive liver disease. Those hospitalizations became longer and more frequent as the disease advanced. But hope came in the form of an unusual question from his UChicago Medicine team: would you accept a liver if it was positive for hepatitis C?

"The only thing I knew about hepatitis C was that people get liver transplants because they had it," Goodman said. "Once I was educated about it, there was no hesitation, not at all."

Hepatitis C is a viral disease afflicting an estimated 71 million people worldwide. Formerly, the infection was considered difficult to treat, requiring a year-long drug regimen that only cured about half of patients. But starting in 2011, a new class of antiviral medications dramatically improved outcomes, raising cure rates to nearly 100 percent.

Now, the progress in treating hepatitis is creating unexpected ripple effects in the world of organ transplants. Organs from hepatitis-positive donors were typically rejected by most transplant teams in all but the most desperate of cases, due to concerns over

## FAST FACTS

- » Approximately 99% of Hepatitis C cases can be cured within 12 weeks.
- » According to the US government's Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network, 20 people die each day waiting for a transplant.
- » The liver is the largest internal organ in the human body, weighing 3.5 pounds. Unlike many internal organs, it can regenerate.

the infection causing post-transplant organ loss. But a select few centers, including the University of Chicago, have reconsidered that philosophy in light of the new hepatitis drugs.

"Hepatitis C is the easiest thing we treat these days. We can cure almost everyone," said Michael Charlton, Professor of Medicine, Director of the Center for Liver Diseases, and Co-Director of the Transplantation Institute. "So if we take livers that are really healthy from young, heroic donors who had hepatitis C and offer those to patients who have these life-threatening or quality of life-altering conditions, they can get a transplant much sooner."





BRAD GOODMAN AND FAMILY

Currently, the University of Chicago Digestive Diseases Center is the only center in the city that takes hepatitis-positive livers. That distinction allowed Goodman to receive an organ that probably would have gone to someone much higher on the transplant list, Charlton said.

The key factor is educating patients about the virus and the significant strides made in treatment, said Sonali Paul, Assistant Professor of Medicine. Paul recently surveyed patients on the kidney transplant list about their willingness to take hepatitis-positive organs, and found that acceptance increased with more information.

“Hepatitis C is one of those viruses that’s very stigmatized and has been for so long, so I think patients really need to know what the virus is and how treatable it is,” Paul said.

Goodman said he appreciated the frankness and honesty with which Charlton and his other physicians -- including David T. Rubin and surgeons Talia Baker and Adam Bodzin -- presented him with the choice. As he looks forward to a very meaningful first holiday season post-transplant with his family, he expressed his deep gratitude for the team presenting him with this little-known option.

“It’s one of those things where if I wasn’t willing to take somewhat of an unorthodox route, I wouldn’t have gotten an organ,” Goodman said. “These people literally saved my life. I’ll feel

indebted until the day that I naturally die from something that’s not liver disease, to what they’ve done for us. Because they’ve repaired a family. It’s just jaw-dropping.”



Michael Charlton, MD, Professor of Medicine, Director of the Center for Liver Diseases, and Co-Director of the Transplantation Institute

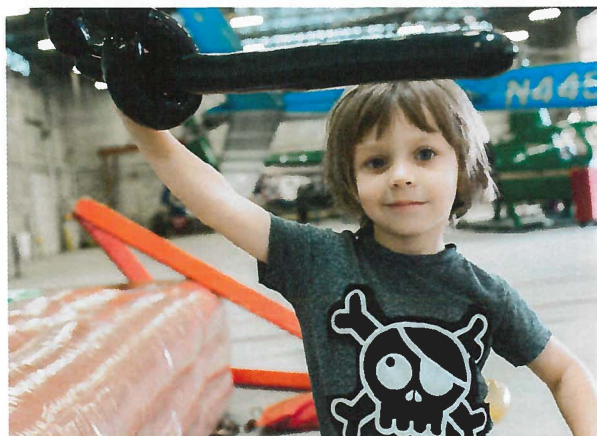
HEPATITIS C IS THE EASIEST THING WE TREAT THESE DAYS. WE CAN CURE ALMOST EVERYONE.



# 2017 FALL EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

Event organizer and Associates Board member Lauren Martin, Associates Board chair Brad Peterson, and Medical Director David T. Rubin, MD spoke, placing special emphasis on their critical mission to support early career investigators in digestive diseases.

Explains Brad Peterson, "This year's GIRF cocktail party was the start to the reboot of the Associates Board's fundraising goals and efforts. This event provided the energy to help propel the Associate Board forward in pushing its fundraising boundaries, and challenging us to keep doing more and more next year, and in the years to come. The purpose of all of this is to help support and provide funds to researchers, scientists and faculty at the University of Chicago in all areas of ground breaking digestive diseases research. With the end goal being to help find cures for these diseases that afflict so many of us on a day to day basis. It was truly inspiring to see all of the support from the attendees at this year's event!"



## ABOUT THE ASSOCIATES BOARD

Annually, the Associate's Board hosts a competition for GI Fellows and early career investigators, awarding those with the strongest proposals research grants. In 2017, they supported research in hepatitis C, antibiotic exposure and IBD, and the microbiome.

Organized by faculty Sonia Kupfer, MD, and Vanessa Leone, PhD, the most recent awards were given to the following investigators, researching an array of critical topics in digestive diseases.

Is antibiotic exposure in early life a risk factor for the development of Inflammatory Bowel Diseases?

**JUN MIYOSHI, MD**

Mentor: Eugene B. Chang, MD

Awarded: \$7,000

Patient and Provider Attitudes Towards the Use of Organs from Hepatitis C Positive Donors in the ERA of Direct Acting Antiviral Therapy

**SONALI PAUL, MD**

Mentor: Elbert Huang, MD

Awarded: \$7,000

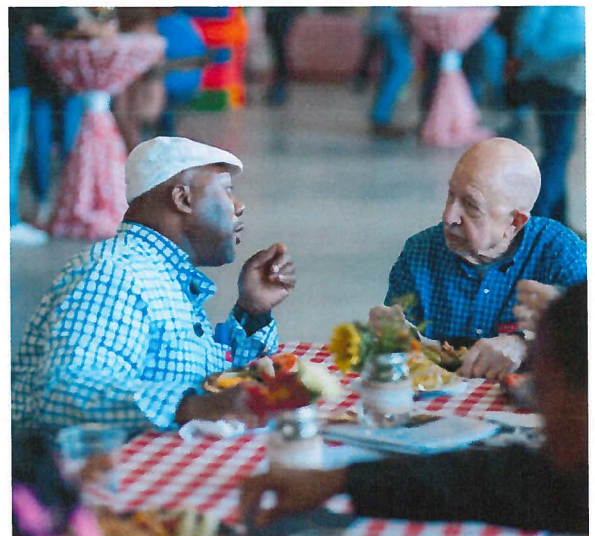
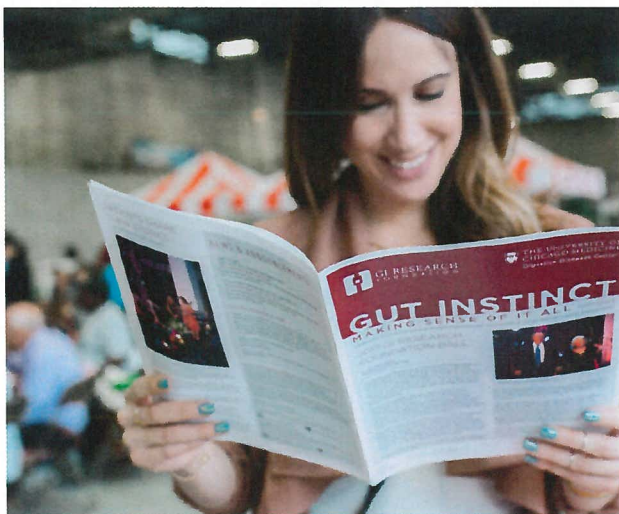
Exploitation of Commensal Gut Bacteria as Route to Chronic Inflammation by Antimicrobial Peptide Resistance

**ASHLEY SIDEBOTTOM-WILKINSON, MD**

Mentor: Dionysios Antonopoulos, MD

Awarded: \$7,000

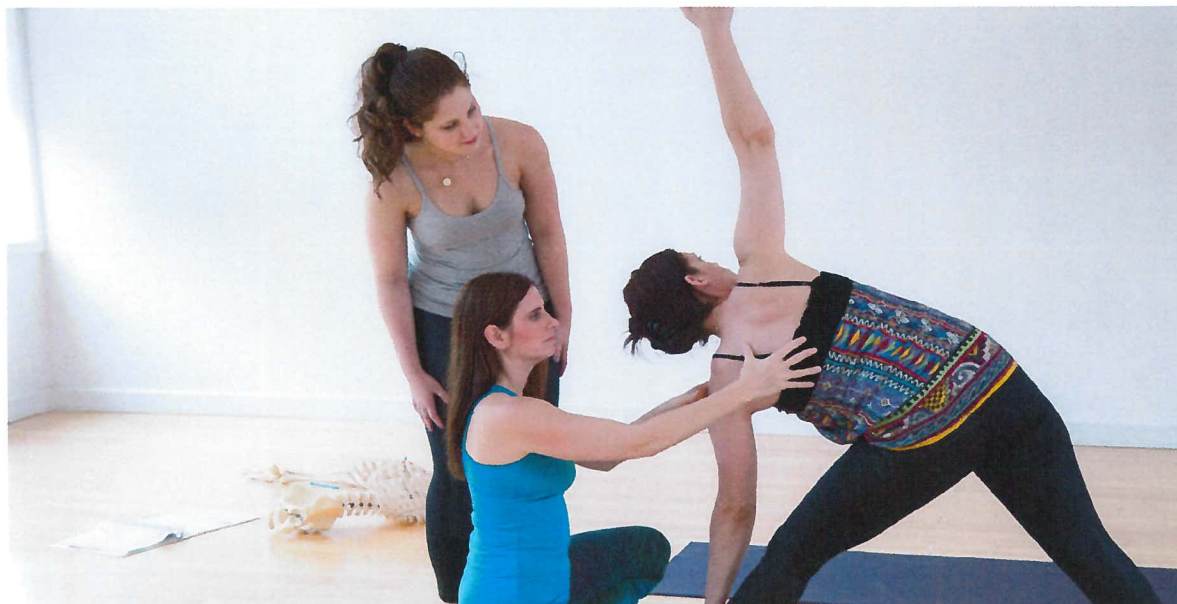




# MEDITATION, YOGA AND IBD

Anna Gomberg

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Yoga practitioners living with IBD reap many benefits with regular practice..

A new online resource to teach yoga, breathing, and meditation is now available from the GI Research Foundation to further improve the lives of patients living with Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis.

Led by board member Biana Lanson, MD, and yoga instructor Gina Nolan, the GI Research Foundation developed a series of online videos and audio tracks, which can be found at [ibdyoga.com](http://ibdyoga.com). The trainings range from a few minutes to full-length active practice sessions, and are available free of charge on the website as a service to the IBD community.

Project leader, IBD patient, and yoga enthusiast, Lanson, explains, "I wanted to bring these resources to other patients, after I experienced just how much my own personal yoga practice improved my life and my IBD."

Many research studies show that the use of relaxation techniques like yoga, deep breathing, and meditation as complementary therapies can help patients feel better and achieve better outcomes. In one such study, after just eight weeks of yoga practice, fewer participants with ulcerative colitis reported joint pain and they also experienced lower levels of anxiety. Participants practicing yoga regularly reported lower levels of abdominal pain. After twelve weeks, significant differences were observed in anxiety, depression, lifestyle, and IBD symptoms between those in the study practicing yoga and those in a control group.

Yet for patients with IBD, it can be intimidating or logistically challenging to get to the gym or yoga studio, and in the studio, these techniques are not always tailored to those living with chronic illness.

The resource offers benefits for physicians and researchers as well, providing a safe and effective complementary therapy option for clinicians to offer their patients. Likewise, for researchers, the web resource affords the opportunity to further explore their utility.

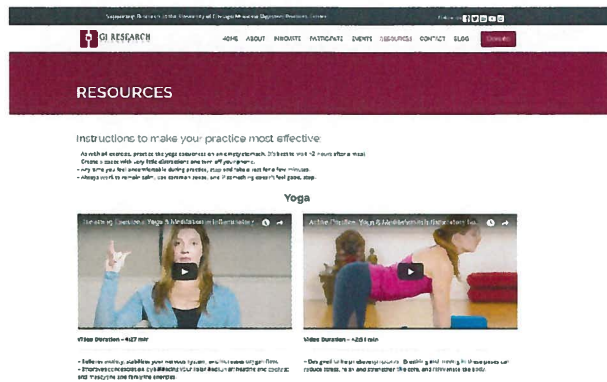
Three types of trainings are available on the website, and are all conducted by a licensed yoga instructor, walking practitioners through short breathing exercises, longer active yoga practices, and meditations, including a guided meditation specifically for GI pain and symptom relief.

GI Research Foundation Medical Director David T. Rubin, MD, explains, "we want patients to be true partners with their medical teams in their treatment plans. For many patients, outlets like yoga, breathing techniques, and meditation have been shown to be very helpful in supporting their medical therapy, and helping them to achieve their personal goals."

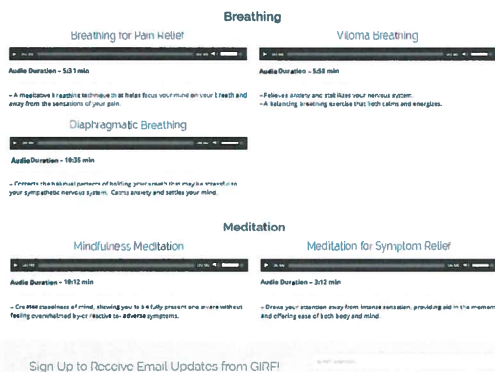


# IBD YOGA WEBSITE

A First Look



Full length training videos are available on ibdyoga.com



Audio tracks for breathing exercises and meditations.



Yoga Instructor Gina Norman

## NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

SAVE THE DATE:

2018 GI RESEARCH FOUNDATION ANNUAL BALL

**SATURDAY, MAY 19, 2018**

Don't miss this year's gala event!

Visit [giresearchfoundation.org](http://giresearchfoundation.org) for the latest information.

EDUCATIONAL SEMINAR FOR PATIENTS AND FAMILIES

**WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2018**

An evening seminar featuring the multidisciplinary team from the Inflammatory Bowel Disease Center. *Free. Orland Park*  
[ibcenter.uchicago.edu](http://ibcenter.uchicago.edu)

YEAR END GIVING

Please consider the GI Research Foundation as you make decisions about end of the year or annual donations. Donations are tax deductible, and can be made via the GI Research Foundation's website: [GIRF.org](http://GIRF.org). The Board wishes all our members a happy and healthy holiday season, and offers sincere gratitude for your generous support.

### ABOUT THE GASTRO-INTESTINAL RESEARCH FOUNDATION:

A non-profit dedicated to raising funds to support the physicians and scientists at The University of Chicago Medicine Digestive Diseases Center in their efforts to provide outstanding care, train future leaders and perform innovative clinical and laboratory research in order to treat, cure and prevent digestive diseases.

### THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO DIGESTIVE DISEASES CENTER

is a collaborative, multidisciplinary network of physicians, researchers, and allied health professionals who share a legacy of innovation and a common purpose: to improve the lives of patients who suffer from digestive diseases.

### CONTACT INFORMATION

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