



GI RESEARCH  
FOUNDATION



AT THE FOREFRONT

UChicago  
Medicine

Digestive  
Diseases  
Center

# GUT INSTINCT

MAKING SENSE OF IT ALL 2018 | Issue 8

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

## 2018 GI RESEARCH FOUNDATION BALL

Anna Gomberg

Administrative Director, IBD Center

The GI Research Foundation's 57th annual Ball, the *Laugh-a-Ball*, was a triumphant night of support for the future of research in digestive diseases at the University of Chicago Medicine. Co-chaired by philanthropists Katie Chudnovsky, Beatrice G. Crain, and Aaron Rosdal, the evening raised over 1.4 million dollars for GI research, with funds raised to support for the Translational Core, a foundational cornerstone of scientific research at the University of Chicago Medicine.

With a nod to the paramount importance of patient care, patient stories took center stage. Brad Goodman shared his experience of his life-saving, hepatitis-C-positive liver transplant (see *Gut Instinct: Issue 7*), offering an inspiring story of hope for those waiting for transplants and living with PSC.

Erika Kielhorn Hefke, now a nurse, detailed her journey from pediatric Crohn's disease patient, to early immunotherapy recipient, to colon cancer survivor. Hefke attributes her successful treatment and recovery to her physicians and surgeons, including Blase Polite, MD, who exemplified the "UChicago difference."

Explained Hefke, "At UChicago, the GI oncologist offered two options for my aggressive tumor. National standards called only for surgery. Based on the genetics of my cancer, he suggested complementing surgery with 12 rounds of chemo. Dr. Polite's protocol is now the national guideline, and I believe his unconventional advice — paired with my surgeon's expertise — saved my life."

In his remarks, Medical Director, David T. Rubin, MD, honored Digestive Diseases Alumni Award recipients Laura Raffals, MD (Junior Alumni award), and Robert Bresalier, MD (Walter L. Palmer Senior Mentor award) (see remarks, page 2).



Attendees at the GI Research Foundation's 57th annual ball

Guests were delighted by comedian Jim Gaffigan, whose trademark good-hearted and wry observational humor was met with lots of laughs from all those in attendance. Once again, Larry King's Orchestra provided an energetic soundtrack for the evening, and the Chicago Honey Bear Dancers got the crowd moving on the dance floor.

In a memorable and exciting moment, after the traditional fundraising portion of the evening had concluded, emcee Steve Weiss, with the help of auctioneer Greg Dellinger, opened bidding again, continuing to the \$100 and \$50 level, enabling nearly everyone in attendance to raise their paddle and contribute to GI research.

The GI Research Foundation's newest employee, Elise Kozal, attended the Ball for the first time, and was floored by the experience. Said Kozal, "I was truly shocked and touched at the energy in the room. This spectacular ballroom was filled with such splendor and compassion. It felt as though it were a large family gathering. We've received nothing but positive feedback from our guests, so I'd say the night was a great success!"

INSIDE  
THIS ISSUE

2 David T. Rubin, MD,  
Director's Remarks

4 2018 Ball Highlights

8 IBD SuperFriends

# THE FUTURE WILL BE BRIGHTER THAN THE PAST

*A Message from David T. Rubin, MD*

Medical Director, GI Research Foundation, Co-Director, Digestive Diseases Center



David T. Rubin, MD, GI Research Foundation Medical Director, addressing attendees at the 57th Annual Ball.

*[Director David T. Rubin's speech from May 19th is excerpted here]*

I was interviewed on a podcast recently, and the host asked me how it is that I face chronic diseases with such optimism on a daily basis?

My reply was that when you are taking care of people who are sick, providing them with expertise along with hope is an essential part of being a good doctor.

But I went on to say that my colleagues and I work in an environment in which we not only strive to achieve the health our patients deserve, but also strive to advance scientific research. We are working to provide them with better care, and importantly, we provide them with the confidence that the future will be brighter than the past.

The progress we've made in understanding digestive diseases indeed has been extraordinary. Of course, that is not to say that we don't have a lot more work to do. In fact, as the pace of scientific discoveries accelerates, my colleagues and I share a pressing need to push the boundaries of our understanding, apply new tools to solve old medical problems, and to be the leaders in the field on behalf of our patients and their families.

It's urgent for us to do this because it is urgent for you to benefit

## A NIGHT TO REMEMBER

- » Nearly 550 GI Research Foundation supporters attended.
- » 1.4 million dollars were raised to find cures for digestive diseases.
- » Funds raised will be used in part to support the Translational Core of the Digestive Diseases Center.

from it.

In prior years at the GIRF Ball I have spoken about the “research imperative” at the University of Chicago, and the unique environment there. This has continued, with our ongoing collaborations with Argonne National Labs, the Marine Biological Labs in Massachusetts, and the Centers for Research Informatics and Data Science.

This year has been an amazing year for us and for our colleagues. The Digestive Diseases faculty and collaborators published more than 250 new scientific articles and brought in an impressive number of new research and education grants. We launched a



landmark study using wearable biosensors to monitor physical activity and sleep in patients with IBD and predict relapses before the patients realize they are happening.

At the University level, the Duchossois Family Foundation donated 100 million dollars to create the Duchossois Family Institute. This institute promotes the use of science in order to maximize good health and the economic, social, and personal benefits it delivers.

There are obvious benefits of this new institute for those of us in the digestive diseases group and in fact, some of our faculty are leaders of this new initiative. I know Dr. Joe Kirsner and Dr. Walter Palmer would be proud to see the progress we have made and amazed at how much their two-person academic GI unit has grown.

Finally, in two weeks, our latest recruits to the GI Section will arrive from Montreal. PhD scientist Luis Barreiro is bringing his large lab of eight other investigators to join us and will add incredible expertise in what is known as “host genetics.” This will round out our group of established eminence in immunology, led by Professor Bana Jabri and in the microbiome, led by Prof Gene Chang. The fact that Luis has uprooted his family and convinced his large and productive lab personnel to move with him is in large part due to the environment and collaboration that he can pursue here.

Our colleague Gene Chang has said that there is literally no question we can't answer now if we have the right tools and the

right people. Then he usually asks me to get the tools! Tonight you are our agents of change. We have the right people; please help us get the right tools.



Sy and Nancy Taxman

WHEN YOU ARE TAKING CARE OF PEOPLE WHO ARE SICK, PROVIDING THEM WITH EXPERTISE ALONG WITH HOPE IS AN ESSENTIAL PART OF BEING A GOOD DOCTOR.

# 57TH ANNUAL BALL HIGHLIGHTS

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Scott Attar and Ball Co-Chair Katie Chudnovsky



Patient Brad Goodman



Ball Co-Chair Bee Crain



Comedian Jim Gaffigan



Sy and Nancy Taxman



The Honey Bear Dancers

# 55TH ANNUAL BALL HIGHLIGHTS

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Ball Co-Chairs Katie Chudnovsky, Bee Crain, and Aaron Rosdal



Michael and Deb Cogan and family; Valerie and Lee Shapiro



Russell D. Cohen, MD and family



Mary Ann Thompson, RN, and Linda Kulig, RN



The Larry King Orchestra



Erika Kielhorn Hefke, patient speaker



Walter L. Palmer Senior Mentor Award Recipient Robert Bresalier, MD, and his wife.



The University of Chicago Medicine nursing team.

# IBD SUPERFRIENDS

A new program from the University of Chicago Inflammatory Bowel Disease Center will help patients with Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis connect with other patients

IBD SuperFriends is a peer-to-peer network for Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis patients at the University of Chicago Medicine. Born out of the Patient Advisory Board, and supported by grant funding from Takeda, with additional support from Pfizer, this unique program brings together expert and novice patients from all walks of life.

Explains co-leader, Rachel Hendee, "The goal of the program is simple: we want to connect expert patients to patients who are new to this, and try to help them navigate the many challenges they will face. It promises to be a unique approach to building a community of patients that we hope will be rewarding to all those who participate."

Experienced patients living with Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis can vouch for the reassurance that they received (or would have liked to receive) from talking to someone "like them" during different points on the path to healing: after getting an initial diagnosis, considering surgery, and learning about medications.

The program on August 25th will be a detailed half-day training to outline helpful tools and processes for new mentors, including information about how to share their stories, active listening skills, and dos and don'ts for navigating what can be an emotionally charged experience. Following the program mentors will be matched with patient mentees with similar circumstances, with whom they will email, talk, meet or text—one time, or on a regular basis.

A handbook of materials has been created to help ensure that the program continues following its initial grant-funded phase, and program leadership hopes to support additional meetings in the future.

"I have gotten so much out of telling my story," explains IBD SuperFriends co-leader, Grace Kelmer, "It feels so good to be able to help others with the challenges that I have had, so they can learn from my experiences."

## NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

### GI RESEARCH FOUNDATION ANNUAL MEETING

**THURSDAY, AUG 16, 2018**

The annual meeting of the GI Research Foundation Board of Directors.

### IBD SUPERFRIENDS TRAINING SESSION

**SATURDAY, AUG 25, 2018**

Interested in being an IBD SuperFriend patient mentor? Attend this morning program to learn more for the program leaders of the Inflammatory Bowel Disease Center. *Free.*

### EDUCATIONAL SEMINAR FOR PATIENTS AND FAMILIES

**WEDNESDAY, SEPT 12, 2018**

An evening seminar featuring the multidisciplinary team from the Inflammatory Bowel Disease Center. *Free.*

[www.uchospitals.edu/IBDEventSept2018](http://www.uchospitals.edu/IBDEventSept2018)

### SAVE THE DATE:

2019 GI RESEARCH FOUNDATION ANNUAL BALL

**SATURDAY, JUNE 1, 2019**

Don't miss next year's gala event! Visit [giresearchfoundation.org](http://giresearchfoundation.org) for the latest information.

### 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.*

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