

# impactCancer

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The Ohio State University Comprehensive Cancer Center –  
Arthur G. James Cancer Hospital and Richard J. Solove Research Institute

*Doubling down on  
its goal to end  
cancer, Pelotonia  
announces  
record-breaking  
investment*



Introducing  
The Pelotonia Institute  
for Immuno-Oncology

The James  
THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY  
COMPREHENSIVE CANCER CENTER

PELOTONIA  
➔

The James

# IN THIS ISSUE

SUMMER 2019  
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The James

**THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY**  
COMPREHENSIVE CANCER CENTER



**4**  
**Widower Honors Late Wife**  
Funding research to help other women with ovarian cancer



**8**  
**Harold L. Paz, MD**  
Ohio State Names Executive Vice President and Chancellor for Health Affairs



**9**  
**Creating a Legacy in the Fight Against Cancer**  
Don and Angie Ward



**10**  
**Celebrating 25 Years**  
of Holistic Cancer Support Programs, Made Possible by Donors



**12**  
**From Grateful Patients**  
Celebrating National Doctors Day with words of appreciation



**13**  
**Expanding Cancer and Aging Clinic**  
Caters to unique needs of older adults



**14**  
**Pelotonia Fellowships Cutting-Edge Research**  
Training the next generation

**Cover Story**  
*Record Breaking Investment* .....6

**Recurring Features**  
*A Note from Drs. Farrar and Pollock* ....1  
*At The James* .....2  
*Event Recaps*..... 16  
*Community Partners* ..... 18  
*Upcoming Events*..... 21

# Welcome

**Welcome** to the summer issue of *impactCancer*. Immunotherapy is the next promising approach to cancer treatment and among our top research priorities. This issue's cover story highlights Pelotonia's gift that will move us into this new frontier of cancer therapy and prevention with the formation of the Pelotonia Institute for Immuno-Oncology (PIIO).

Also in this issue, we look at how one couple's philanthropy is helping push forward a clinical trial for ovarian cancer research. Jack Buttler is continuing their vision after his wife Joann's passing, understanding the importance of clinical trials in moving cancer treatment forward.

The impact of philanthropy appears throughout this issue, as we also share how the generosity of donors has made it possible for *JamesCare for Life* to offer holistic cancer support programming for the last 25 years. Last but not least, we celebrate Don and Angie Ward for their commitment to future research initiatives.

This issue also highlights our next class of Pelotonia Fellows, some of Ohio State's best and brightest students, whom we welcomed this past spring. They remind us—along with all the exciting work being highlighted in this issue—that together we will create a cancer-free world.

*William B. Farrar*

**William Farrar, MD**  
Interim CEO, James Cancer Hospital and Solove Research Institute



*R. E. Pollock*

**Raphael Pollock, MD, PhD**  
Director, The Ohio State University Comprehensive Cancer Center



## James MICU Earns Gold Beacon Award for Excellence



The James Medical Intensive Care Unit (MICU) has earned a gold-level Beacon Award for Excellence from the American Association of Critical-Care Nurses (AACN). Gold is the highest level Beacon Award that can be achieved. The Beacon Award, considered to be a milestone on the path to exceptional patient care and healthy work environments, honors individual units that distinguish themselves by improving every facet of patient care.



Units that achieve this three-year, three-level award with gold, silver or bronze designations meet national criteria consistent with ANCC Magnet® Recognition, the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award and the National Quality Healthcare Award. Other James units that have achieved a Beacon Award are the Blood and Marrow Transplantation Unit (gold level) and the Surgical Intensive Care Unit (silver level).

## NCI Grant Will Help Assess New Treatment for Deadly Brain Tumor

The National Cancer Institute (NCI) has awarded a five-year grant of nearly \$2.83 million to help a research team at the OSUCCC – James conduct a clinical trial that will assess a potential new treatment for patients with glioblastoma, a lethal primary brain tumor with limited treatment options.

The grant was awarded to a team led by co-principal investigators Vinay Puduvalli, MBBS, professor and director of the Division of Neuro-Oncology at Ohio State and member of the Translational Therapeutics Program at the OSUCCC – James, and Deepa Sampath, PhD, assistant professor in the Division of Hematology at Ohio State and member of the Leukemia Research Program at the OSUCCC – James.

The current standard treatment for glioblastoma—chemotherapy with a drug called temozolamide combined with radiation therapy—yields a median survival of only 16-18 months, underscoring the need for novel therapies involving drugs that can overcome tumor resistance to chemotherapy and radiation therapy.

## Novel Anticancer Vaccine Shows Promise in Phase I Study

Promising results from an OSUCCC – James phase I clinical trial on a novel peptide vaccine suggest an important potential benefit of this vaccine and warrant its continuing development for treating patients with metastatic or recurrent solid tumors that overexpress the HER-2 protein.

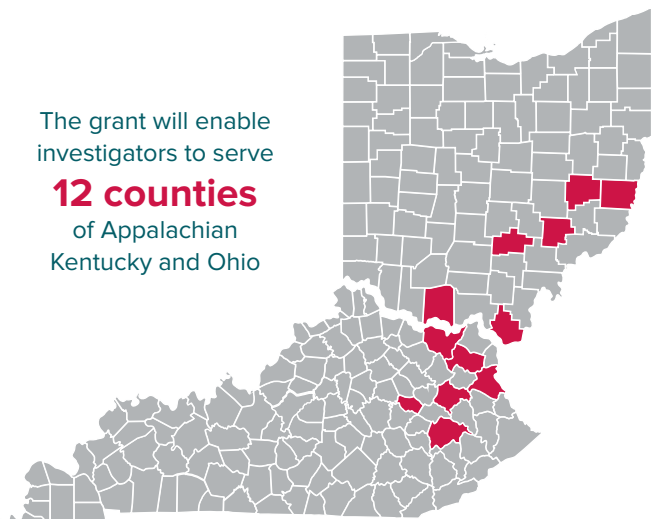
Led by principal investigator Pravin Kaumaya, PhD, a professor in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at Ohio State and member of the Translational Therapeutics Program at the OSUCCC – James, the trial demonstrates that the vaccine, called B-Vaxx, is well tolerated and can generate sustained anti-HER-2 immune response compared to humanized monoclonal antibodies, to which most patients develop resistance.

The present study shows preliminary indication that peptide vaccination may help patients avoid therapeutic resistance and offer a promising alternative to monoclonal antibody therapies such as Herceptin® and Perjeta®.

## Federally Funded Project Seeks to Reduce Colorectal Cancer Burden in Ohio & Kentucky Appalachia

A five-year, multimillion-dollar grant from the National Cancer Institute (NCI) will help investigators at the OSUCCC – James and the University of Kentucky collaborate to increase screening and follow-up for colorectal cancer (CRC) in central Appalachia, a medically underserved region of the United States that is recognized as a “hotspot” of CRC mortality.

The grant, part of the NCI Cancer Moonshot initiative to boost cancer research nationwide, will support a multisite project called Accelerating Colorectal Cancer Screening Through Implementation Science (ACCSIS) in Appalachia. The goal is to increase rates of guideline-recommended CRC screening, follow-up and referral to care among residents aged 50-74 in 12 counties of Appalachian Kentucky and Ohio. Principal investigators are Mark Dignan, PhD, MPH, a professor at the University of Kentucky, and Electra Paskett, PhD, MSPH, associate director for population sciences and leader of the Cancer Control Program at the OSUCCC – James.



# WIDOWER HONORS LATE WIFE

*by continuing her philanthropic vision,  
funds research to help other women  
with ovarian cancer*

**For the last 25 years of their careers, Jack and JoAnn Buttler of Blacklick, Ohio, were a husband-wife broker team focusing on financial planning. “We would always begin discussions with people we were just meeting by saying, ‘We do work together as a team, but know this does not work in a lot of other cases,’” laughs Jack. “For us it always worked very well. It was an integral part of our lives.”**

And even though, sadly, Jack lost his wife of 46 years to ovarian cancer in 2014, the two still function as a team through their shared philanthropy. Despite her difficult journey with the disease, JoAnn deeply respected the care she received from David O’Malley, MD, and the OSUCCC – James, and wanted to make a difference for other women with ovarian cancer.

In the weeks before her passing, during a tour of the new James, JoAnn told Dr. O’Malley of her intention to leave a gift from her estate for ovarian cancer research. Recalls Jack, “We were in the new chapel area on the first floor of The James, and JoAnn said, ‘I want to do something, but it’s probably not going to be very much in terms of what I’d like to be able to do.’ She said, ‘I’d like to give \$100,000 in the direction of ovarian cancer.’” They could see the surprise in Dr. O’Malley’s face. “She was pleased to hear that her gift was considered meaningful.”

Indeed, says Dr. O’Malley, who describes his reaction to JoAnn’s announcement as “humbled.” The JoAnn L. and John (Jack) A. Buttler Gynecologic Cancer Research

Fund (#135017) at the OSUCCC – James is a current use fund, meaning the funds can be spent down as needed—in this case to benefit ovarian cancer research. Drs. O’Malley and John Hays sought just the right opportunity to honor JoAnn’s legacy. They found it through a translational study aimed at determining how a new agent called MLN0128 would impact patients with ovarian cancer.

“We have a project with a very exciting agent called MLN, which was in a National Cancer Institute (NCI) trial with the OSUCCC – James and Dana-Farber Cancer Institute,” says Dr. O’Malley. “We had a lot of ideas about biomarker identification and wanted to identify patients with the best opportunity to respond, but now the NCI rarely supports these types of translational questions.” Dr. O’Malley and Dr. Hays, the clinical trial lead, presented their project idea to Jack, who agreed that it aligned with JoAnn’s vision.

The Buttlers’ research fund has enabled all the cancer tissue samples obtained from ovarian and endometrial patients at the start and finish of the clinical trial to come back to Dr. Hays’ lab, where they are being analyzed to determine how the drug affected patients. “This would not have been possible without the Buttlers’ funds,” says Dr. Hays, who notes that the quality of data from the clinical trial means they will likely push forward with phase II clinical trials. The information they receive from the tissue samples will help guide how the second trial is designed.

“We’re talking about taking something where we treated 20 to 30 patients in a small trial to a much larger trial with 80 to 100 patients,” says Dr. Hays.

“And if that is still successful, it pushes us that much closer to getting a new drug for these cancers.”

Dr. O’Malley believes that JoAnn—who participated in clinical trials during her own illness—would have approved. “JoAnn understood the importance of clinical trials in moving the treatment of cancer forward,” says Dr. O’Malley. “In discussions with us, part of what she wanted to do was to give back for the care she received here and try to improve outcomes for other women.”

For Jack, who was also treated at the OSUCCC – James for prostate cancer, it feels good knowing the fund his late wife created is going to help others by igniting discoveries. “We know it’s by inches but it’s making a difference,” says Jack, who is now a member of the James Ambassadors Society, the premier advocacy group for the OSUCCC – James. “Everything they’re doing seems to be having success.”

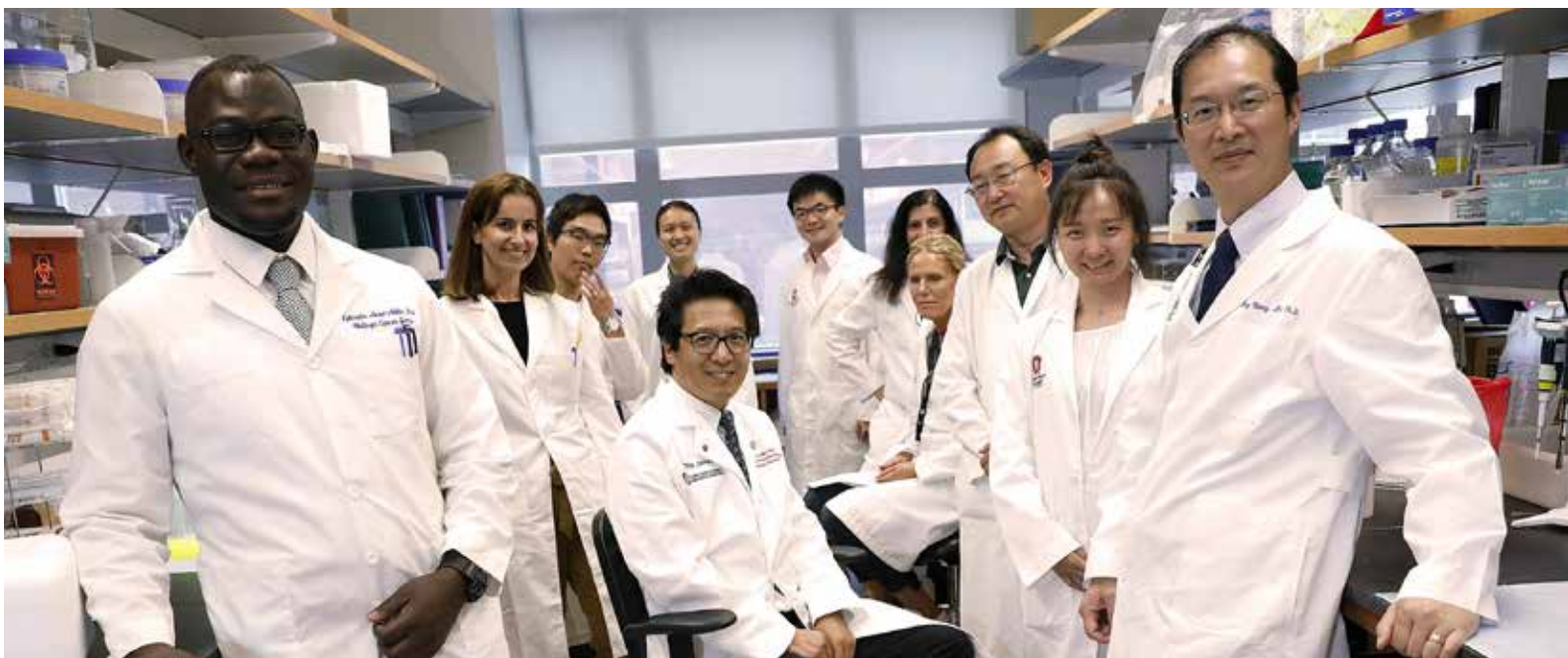
He is so impressed by Drs. O’Malley and Hays and their progress, having stayed in close contact with them in the years after JoAnn’s treatment, that he has also arranged for a planned gift that will add another \$100,000 to the fund. It’s something that continues to unite the close-knit couple, who worked side by side and raised two children in their more than four-and-a-half decades together.

The couple’s generosity of spirit is something Dr. O’Malley admires. “Jack and JoAnn are two very special individuals, with a goal of giving back through philanthropy. Unfortunately JoAnn succumbed to her disease, but to be able to continue in her legacy is so humbling.”

“We know it’s by inches but it’s making a difference.”

Jack Buttler





*Doubling down on its goal to end cancer, Pelotonia announces record-breaking investment*

The week before its 11th annual cycling event to end cancer, Pelotonia made a stunning announcement: The organization pledged a record-setting \$102,265,000 gift to the OSUCCC – James to create the Pelotonia Institute for Immuno-Oncology (PIIO). The PIIO will focus on immuno-oncology, which harnesses the body’s immune

system to prevent and treat cancer and to improve survivorship.

The largest-ever gift to Ohio State’s cancer center not only charts a new course for cancer research, but it shines a spotlight on Pelotonia and its dedicated community of riders and supporters, who together are utilizing the power of grassroots fundraising to embolden researchers in the fight against cancer. Indeed, the “2,265” within the gift total honors the number of

individuals who rode in the 2009 inaugural Pelotonia.

Ohio State President Michael V. Drake, MD, announced the gift during a July 26 celebration, where Pelotonia President and Chief Executive Officer Doug Ulman looked toward a new future for cancer research. “This institute will change and save thousands and thousands of lives. It’s the reason we ride. It’s the reason we raise money. It’s the reason this community has

come together for more than a decade to significantly reduce the impact that this disease has on all of our lives,” said Ulman.

Immuno-oncology is largely considered to be the next frontier of cancer therapy and prevention, with enormous potential for discovery. It is poised to take its place along with the current standards of treatment, including surgery, radiation and systemic therapies like hormonal and chemotherapy, said The Ohio State University Comprehensive Cancer Center Director Raphael Pollock, MD, PhD, who also spoke at the celebratory event.

Unlike the other treatment approaches, “The immunotherapeutic approach seeks to harness the body’s own immune defense against cancer rather than bringing something from the outside in that might directly attack the cancer itself,” Pollock said. “We anticipate these modalities will be combined in the majority of patients, working effectively to complement each other’s strengths while downplaying the weaknesses and toxicities.”

Cancer survivor Christine Sander credits that mixed-modality approach with saving her life. When the mother of two young children at first struggled to get basic information about her diagnosis from another health provider, she recalls telling her husband, “I think I’m dying, and there’s no one to help. I don’t know who to go to.” She was connected to OSUCCC – James hematologist Robert Baiocchi, MD, PhD, who told her, “We’re going to get you back to your happy life.”

With a combination of chemotherapy and an immunotherapy drug called rituximab discovered through immuno-oncology research,

Sander is now a survivor and a Pelotonia rider—having raised almost \$11,000 over the past four years. As she shared her story with the crowd at the PIIO gift celebration, she found it difficult to express the meaning Pelotonia has had for her. “It’s hard to find words to describe what Pelotonia has become in my life,” Sander said, adding that the gift announcement “has motivated me even more to continue to do my part.”

Thanks to Sander and the thousands of riders and volunteers who have participated in Pelotonia, the PIIO will position the OSUCCC – James to pioneer more treatments like the one that saved her life. World-renowned physician-scientist Zihai Li, MD, PhD, has been recruited as founding director of the PIIO, and the OSUCCC – James expects to add 32 faculty over the next five years to work within it and in collaboration with researchers at Nationwide Children’s Hospital.

The Pelotonia gift, along with a \$35 million commitment from the OSUCCC – James, will also enable multi-phase laboratory renovations, creating advanced cellular laboratory facilities, immune-monitoring and discovery platforms, immunogenomics, systems immunology, and other research areas for start-up initiatives and national collaborations with other academic centers and industry partners. The OSUCCC – James will use \$65 million of the pledged \$102 million to directly support the PIIO, while the balance will continue to support well-established initiatives, including Pelotonia Fellowships, Idea Grants, statewide research initiatives and equipment purchases.



Meet PIIO Founding Director Zihai Li, MD, PhD

World-renowned immuno-oncology clinician and researcher Zihai Li, MD, PhD, came to Ohio State from the Medical University of South Carolina, where he was a tenured professor and chair of the Department of Microbiology & Immunology, and co-leader of the Cancer Immunology Program at the Hollings Cancer Center. He is an elected member of The American Society for Clinical Investigation and The Association of American Physicians, and his research is supported by the National Institutes of Health and the National Cancer Institute. Dr. Li’s leadership in basic and clinical immunology research, including prevention and survivorship, will help the PIIO become a world-class institute.

During the Pelotonia gift celebration, Dr. Li said the investment will “put us on course for major, major advances in immunotherapies—therapies that will empower the body’s own defense mechanism, the immune system, to fight cancer.”

“This is an entirely new paradigm of cancer medicine,” Li added, noting that, “We are closer than ever before toward Pelotonia’s one goal of ending cancer and our cancer center’s shared vision of creating a cancer-free world.”



Speakers at the July 26 PIIO announcement event were (from left) Ohio State University President Michael Drake, MD; cancer survivor Christine Sander; PIIO Director Zihai Li, MD, PhD; OSUCCC Director Raphael Pollock, MD, PhD; and Pelotonia President and CEO Doug Ulman.





## Ohio State Welcomes Chancellor and Executive Vice President for Health Affairs

Paz has transformative vision for healthcare delivery in time of industry change

Harold L. Paz, MD, is the first to serve in the position of chancellor and executive vice president for Health Affairs at The Ohio State University. A nationally renowned healthcare leader with a unique combination of expertise in both academic medical centers and a Fortune 50 company, Dr. Paz is a recognized visionary who advocates a comprehensive model to address health and wellness of individuals and communities in a rapidly evolving society.

At Ohio State, Dr. Paz, who goes by Hal, will lead all seven health sciences colleges and the \$3.7-billion Wexner Medical Center enterprise, which includes seven hospitals, a nationally ranked college of medicine, 20-plus research institutes, multiple ambulatory sites, an accountable care organization and a health plan.

“A comprehensive flagship university, Ohio State is at the forefront of defining the future and educating the next generation of healthcare professionals for a very different world,” he says. Dr. Paz is future-focused and intent on addressing the healthcare needs of Ohioans in innovative, personalized and integrated ways. His passion for identifying nontraditional healthcare delivery methods—from digital applications to virtual visits supported by artificial intelligence and machine learning—will position Ohio State to lead the way in meeting our patients where they are through state-of-the-art digital solutions.

Dr. Paz most recently served as executive vice president and chief medical officer at Aetna, where he provided clinical leadership for domestic and global businesses. Previously, he served as CEO of the Penn State University Hershey Medical Center, senior vice president for health affairs, dean of the College of Medicine and president/CEO of the Hershey Health System. He also has served as dean of the Robert Wood Johnson Medical School at Rutgers University and as CEO of the Robert Wood Johnson University Medical Group.

He and his wife of nearly 40 years, Sharon Press, a clinical psychologist, have two adult daughters. In alignment with “practicing what he preaches,” Dr. Paz exercises each day, often running. He also enjoys sailing, skiing, biking and fishing.

“OHIO STATE IS AT THE FOREFRONT OF **DEFINING THE FUTURE** AND **EDUCATING THE NEXT GENERATION** OF HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS FOR A VERY DIFFERENT WORLD.”

## Creating a Legacy in the Fight Against Cancer: Don and Angie Ward



Don and Angie Ward, longtime supporters of the OSUCCC – James, have committed to support future research initiatives at central Ohio’s only National Cancer Institute-designated comprehensive cancer center.

Embracing a lifelong spirit of giving, the Wards have consistently given to the cancer program since 2005 in support of research focused on genomics and breast cancer, as well as core facilities that are critical to modern research, such as the tumor registry and DNA sequencing technologies. They have also been outspoken community advocates for the OSUCCC – James, encouraging others to get involved in supporting cancer research.

“We are incredibly thankful for Don and Angie Ward’s leadership and generous support of cancer research initiatives at the OSUCCC – James. For nearly two decades, they have asked us: ‘How can we help? What can we do?’ They have been tremendous partners in moving some of our most

promising research forward,” says Raphael Pollock, MD, PhD, director of the comprehensive cancer center.

“Angie and Don are an inspiration to the entire staff at the OSUCCC – James, especially to our patients resulting from their continuing unsolicited contributions that will impact millions of lives locally, nationally and internationally. In short, they are the greatest,” adds David Schuller, MD, a former member of the James Foundation Board, director emeritus of the OSUCCC and CEO emeritus of The James Cancer Hospital and Solove Research Institute.

The Wards say that the Stefanie Spielman Fund for Breast Cancer Research inspired them to make their first gift to the OSUCCC – James.

“Our kids are about the same age as Chris and Stefanie, and we lived in a neighboring community. We’ve been following Chris’ career from the very beginning. We got to meet Stefanie on a tour of The James, and it was a special moment,” says Don, who has since been treated for cancer at the OSUCCC – James.

This new planned gift will be applied to the Cancer Strategic Support Research Initiatives Fund, which supports new and emerging research projects at the OSUCCC – James.

“People do small things that snowball and make a difference. Every dollar raised or donated for cancer research matters. Research means new treatments and hope for people affected by cancer. We believe in giving back, and we are thankful we are at a place in our lives that we can do that,” says Angie.

“It is exciting to see successful new medications and treatments being developed through research here and then progressing to benefit patients across the world. That makes us feel like our contributions are offering hope and making a difference in our community and beyond,” she adds.

*Don Ward lost his courageous battle with cancer earlier this summer.*

“PEOPLE DO SMALL THINGS THAT SNOWBALL AND MAKE A DIFFERENCE. **EVERY DOLLAR RAISED OR DONATED FOR CANCER RESEARCH MATTERS.**”

# CELEBRATING 25 YEARS

## of Holistic Cancer Support Programs, Made Possible by Donors

**When Joyce C. was diagnosed with cancer, she felt powerless. “It felt like a time when I didn’t have choices.”**

**She is thankful that JamesCare for Life, the OSUCCC – James department offering holistic support programs for those diagnosed with cancer and their caregivers, was there giving her a sense of power back from what a cancer diagnosis initially feels like. Supported through philanthropy, this year JamesCare for Life celebrates 25 years—and after a quarter-century of serving cancer patients, survivors, and their caregivers and families, the program is more in demand than ever.**

“The department has grown exponentially in the last ten years. We have a larger group of survivors to begin with, because people are living longer and better after a cancer diagnosis,” says Maryam Lustberg, MD, MPH,

medical director of the supportive care service line at The James. “Also, patients, survivors and advocates are speaking up and telling us it’s not just treatment that they’re interested in, but overall quality of life and making sure their diverse needs are met.”

When it was created in 1994, JamesCare for Life focused on patients’ needs right after diagnosis. Now, says Annie Trance, director, the department serves 350-500 individuals each quarter—about 75 percent of whom are survivors and 25 percent caregivers—through an increasingly diverse array of programming. “How we provide psycho-social support here at The James has evolved just like treatments have evolved to meet the changing needs of patients and families,” says Trance. “Cancer impacts every area of life. How we support patients has changed drastically because cancer treatment has changed drastically, and quality of life matters.”

JamesCare for Life’s wide-ranging programming is evidence-based, meaning it reflects the latest research within survivorship care and the cancer community. “Anything we’re offering is not just because we think it’s a good

idea,” says Trance. “It’s representative of research being done in cancer care to look at the interventions that support wellness and quality of life.” JamesCare for Life offers exercise classes, expressive arts programs, nutritional guidance including a vegetable garden, education and support groups, and other programs impacting mind, body and spirit. Caregiver-specific programming includes an online support group, bereavement programs that deal with grief and loss, and a vast video library addressing topics like managing stress and meal planning.

Additional offerings include programming geared toward young adults with cancer—a group whose stage of life includes major milestones and life transitions that create special needs when dealing with cancer. From fertility and reproductive concerns to career counseling and social opportunities, JamesCare for Life is helping to address these issues and creating a social environment where young adult cancer survivors can come together and connect. JamesCare for Life also manages the Heather Pick Music Program, through which musician-volunteers perform at The James to create a healing environment. They are



Grammy award-winning international recording artist Melissa Etheridge performed on June 22 at Hope Grows Here!, a special event presented by JamesCare for Life to honor those living with and beyond cancer.

live-streamed on the OSUCCC – James internal television station so patients may experience the performances from the comfort of their rooms.

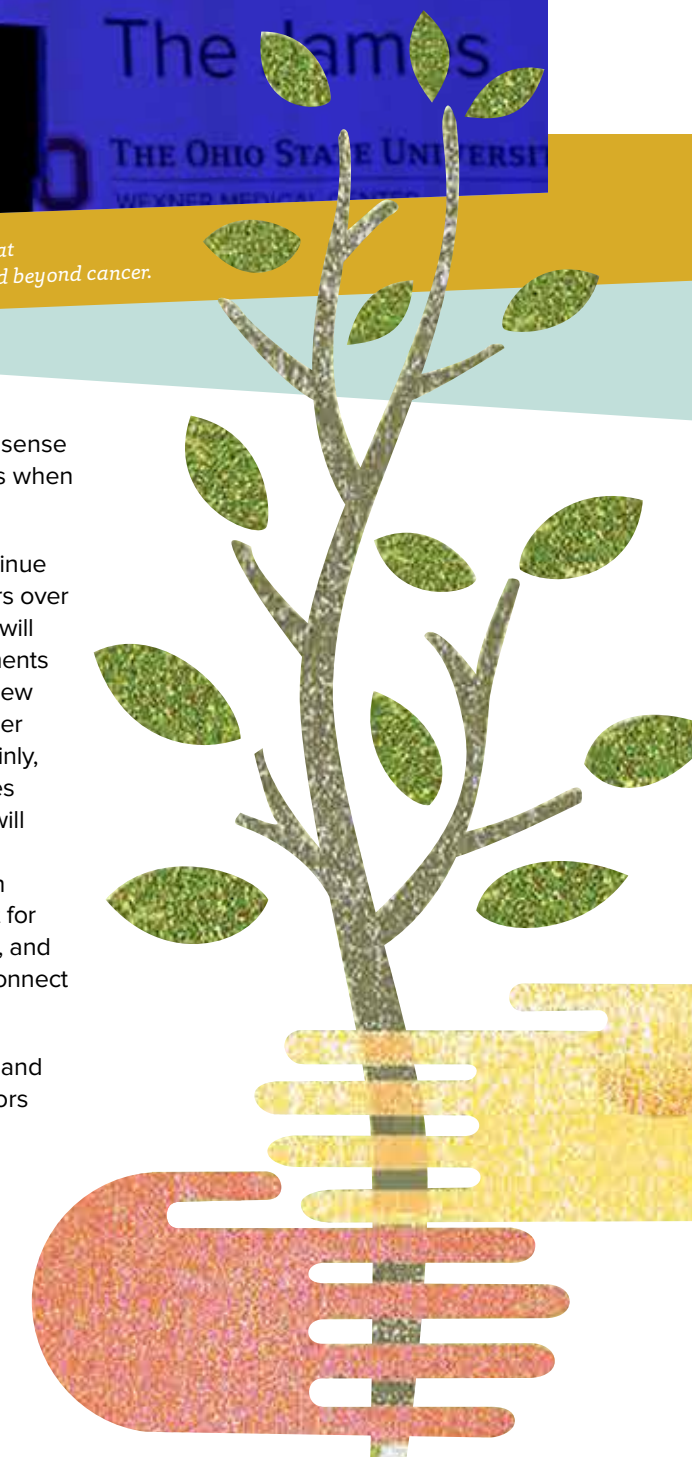
Philanthropy from grateful patients, families and others, has made these programs possible. “It’s been wonderful to partner with people who want to give back in a meaningful way,” says Trance. “Philanthropy has enabled us to grow as a department and to expand the types of care and intervention we offer our patients.” Donations also ensure the programming is offered to anyone dealing with cancer, free of charge. “It’s important to us that we have a focus on community outreach. We see ourselves as engaging in the community and being a partner in educating the community on survivorship, cancer risk prevention and the types of support available as well,” says Trance.

Patient Jennifer B., for one, is grateful for the support. “It doesn’t matter if you are currently going through treatment or if you have been out of treatment for five years—it’s a resource for not only the patient or survivor but also the caregiver,” she says. “It’s nice to go to events where we are surrounded by families who are going through something similar, so it’s

not abnormal. It’s nice to have a sense of community and lean on others when it’s a difficult time.”

How will JamesCare for Life continue to support patients and caregivers over the next 25 years? The offerings will continue to evolve as new treatments emerge and research identifies new holistic methods for helping cancer patients and survivors. And certainly, says Dr. Lustberg, “Virtual services are the way of the future. There will be additional resources through tele-technology and digital health that will make it more convenient for survivors with busy lives, families, and school and work obligations to connect and benefit.”

Getting the word out to patients and caregivers is critical. “Any survivors reading this article should know that it’s OK to reach out,” says Dr. Lustberg. “Cancer doesn’t have to be an isolating experience. There are lots of resources available, and we hope people will take advantage of them.”



“I want to thank Dr. Shah for all she’s done to care for me and for her research on medullary thyroid cancer. I’m confident that she’ll make tremendous strides in finding a cure for this cancer.”

ERIKA W.

“Dr. Hays, Thank you for being a skilled doctor with a kind heart and gentle way. You have delivered wonderful and devastating news to me and my husband over the last couple of years – always with a plan and with such heart I know I can trust in your care. I feed on hope and am sure that is why as a metastatic stage IV cancer patient I am a survivor. You help kill my disease and feed by spirit, allowing the chance for great healing!”

NANCY S.

“I feel blessed to be Dr. Byrd’s patient. I cannot thank him enough for his dedication to the study of Leukemia and the beyond excellent care and kindness he has shown me.”

LYNN K.

From the work they do in the lab to the work they do at the bedside to save and improve lives, our talented physicians are working to create a cancer-free world. Their patients celebrated **NATIONAL DOCTORS DAY** with words of appreciation.

# FROM GRATEFUL PATIENTS

“Dr. VanDuesen is the best! What can I say? God sent Dr. VanDeusen to me! He is smart, compassionate and knowledgeable about the latest treatments. He gives me hope with a metastatic diagnosis. I have so much more life to live, and my dreams and hope are alive because of my special doctor.”

LINDA P.

“Dr. Woyach is saving my life. I was diagnosed with cancer the day I retired. Dr. Woyach is calming yet reassuring and this far I’m alive—one can’t beat that.”

LYNN A.

“Dr. Prevedello, I want to say thanks for the skill and care you showed toward me. Having a brain tumor is a pretty scary thing. Once I met you, I had no fear of my surgery. I knew I was in the hands of a surgeon and his team who would care for me and that I would have the best possible outcome. I did! Thank you and God bless you and your staff.”

NANCY R.

“Thank you Dr. O’ Malley for all of the excellent care you gave me. I am three years in remission with my ovarian cancer, thanks to you and your great team. You are one of the best doctors.”

TERRY M.

“Dr. Old is an amazing doctor. He saved my life the first day we met. He saved my life the second time a month later. I’m alive and cancer-free thanks to him.”

ELAYNA B.

## EXPANDING Cancer and Aging Clinic

CATERS TO UNIQUE NEEDS OF OLDER ADULTS

As the boomer generation ages, the number of older adults with blood cancers has grown. For many of these patients, the best chance for a “cure” involves intensive treatments traditionally thought to be too harsh for people over age 65.

But research at the OSUCCC – James suggests that biologic age—not literal calendar years—determines a person’s fitness for treatment.

“There are many factors that influence the process of aging. Determining how functional a person really is involves a robust assessment of global health that spans everything from physical and mental health to other medical conditions and social support at home.

“All of these factors influence a person’s health and should be considered when determining if chronologically ‘older’ patients can tolerate chemotherapy or stem cell transplant as part of their treatment,” says Ashley Rosko, MD, a hematologist and researcher at the OSUCCC – James. “A 70-year-old who has exercised, never smoked and has no other health conditions could be as ‘fit’ as a 55-year-old who has led a less-healthy life.”

Rosko and her colleagues saw an unmet need in supporting older adults facing cancer and launched a geriatric oncology clinic tailored to blood cancer patients in February 2016. The clinic features innovative research on aging paired with subspecialty evaluations by a pharmacist, case manager, nutritionist, physical therapist and audiologist, all in one visit.

In its first two years, this clinical model flourished, providing comprehensive assessments, treatment and follow-up to more than 150 patients. Now the OSUCCC – James has expanded this multidisciplinary care model to include patients with solid tumors (medical oncology). The Cancer and Aging Resiliency (CARE) Clinic, as it is now called, began accepting community referrals in fall 2018. Rosko will continue to lead the hematology clinic, while Carolyn Presley, MD, MHS, will lead the oncology clinic.

### Translational Research

The comprehensive program includes a strong translational research effort led by Christin Burd, PhD. Her team studies the process of aging and how it impacts a person’s ability to tolerate cancer treatments. The goal is to define objective markers of biologic age that could be measured through a simple blood test and then integrated into the patient-



“This knowledge could help physicians and patients make more informed choices about treatment options and design interventions . . .

*so patients can thrive and maintain independent living as long as possible”*

assessment process to better inform treatment decisions. In addition, the cancer specialists providing treatment to patients are pursuing new clinical trials. One example is a Pelotonia-funded study led by Presley to evaluate the aging immune system, treatment response and functional decline among older adults with lung cancer. The research study seeks to determine which types of lung cancer treatment result in worsening disability and functional decline, and to identify tests that can predict which older adults will develop worsening disability and functional decline.

“This knowledge could help physicians and patients make more informed choices about treatment options and design interventions to prevent or delay functional decline so patients can thrive and maintain independent living as long as possible,” says Presley.





# Prestigious Pelotonia Fellowships Spur Students' Cutting-Edge Cancer Research

From a quick scan of the room at a recent luncheon welcoming the newest class of Pelotonia Fellows, it quickly becomes apparent that these students are among Ohio State's best and brightest. They chat about things like genetic mutations and natural killer cells, and they swap stories about how they schedule their classes to maximize the time they can spend in the laboratory.

They come from different backgrounds—like Youssef Youssef, MD, a postdoctoral fellow originally from Syria, and Emma Crawford, an undergraduate student from Canton, Ohio—but they have one thing firmly in common: They are working hard to end cancer. And as recipients of the prestigious Pelotonia Fellowship, the 21 undergraduates, 11 graduate students and six postdoctoral fellows in this latest class will have the resources they need to spend more time in the laboratory.

Since the Pelotonia Fellowship Program's founding a decade ago with proceeds from the transformative grassroots bicycle tour with the goal of ending cancer, the fellowship has become a highly sought-after award for Ohio State students at all levels of study. Students undergo a competitive application process, akin to the process of applying for a grant from a funder like the National Institutes of Health, and their applications are reviewed and scored by a committee of

OSUCCC – James researchers. Recently, the program began offering written feedback for all applicants to help new fellows fine-tune their research proposals and to offer constructive criticism for those whose projects didn't make the cut.

With three review cycles each year, it's a lot of work, but as Rosa Lapalombella, PhD, director of the Pelotonia Fellowship Program, says it's worth it. "In every cycle we look forward to expanding our portfolio because the cancer center is comprehensive; it's about the potential of having people from completely different disciplines working to create a cancer-free world."

*"It's about the potential of having people from completely different disciplines working to create a cancer-free world."*

Improving lives is what motivates incoming Fellow Youssef Youssef. After receiving his MD in Syria, he did a clinical rotation at the Cleveland Clinic before coming to the OSUCCC – James to volunteer in the laboratory of Aharon Freud, MD, PhD, while paying the bills with a job making pizzas. He was then

matched with a pathology residency. Becoming a postdoctoral fellow and receiving the Pelotonia fellowship means Youssef can focus entirely on his research: targeting TBL1 protein in diffuse large B-cell lymphoma, an aggressive form of non-Hodgkin lymphoma. "We have a drug that targets this protein and shows high efficiency in killing cancer cells while leaving the good immune cells unaffected," says Youssef. "Currently we are working on the mechanism by which this drug is killing cancer cells so we can improve it and move it to the clinical trials phase." The Pelotonia Fellowship not only looks great on the aspiring physician-scientist's curriculum vitae, but it frees up other funding that enables his faculty mentor to hire other researchers, leading to faster breakthroughs for lymphoma patients.

In addition to the research requirements of the fellowship, recipients are encouraged to ride in Pelotonia. "It's the least we can do to give back when they are giving us so much," says Emma Crawford, a senior majoring in biology. The fellowship is enabling her to research melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer. She is studying how pigmentation, or the presence of melanin and its derivatives, affects melanoma initiation and progression. "The evidence is showing that melanin could be playing a mutagenic effect in addition to its initial protective role in melanoma. If we can show this trend and determine this mechanism, we might be able to provide treatments that are more specific and effective," says Crawford, who will ride 25 miles in the 2019 Pelotonia.



Likewise, Pelotonia riders and fundraisers are encouraged to get involved in the Fellowship Program. Says Lapalombella, "When we do the application review process, we always invite 'High Roller' riders or others from the community to sit in our meetings. We want them to know how rigorous the process is so they know that every time they donate to Pelotonia, it's a good investment."

Pelotonia High Roller and 16-year L Brands employee Leslie Paxton has ridden in every Pelotonia since the second one, last year completing the 200-mile ride. She attended the May 16 Pelotonia fellows luncheon to learn about the fellows' research and give them encouragement. "All the work you are doing gives me hope," she told a group of fellows, after hearing about their ambitious research goals.

Joe Appgar, chief operating officer at Pelotonia and an 11-year cancer survivor, offered encouragement from the podium as he welcomed this latest class. "The Pelotonia Fellowship Program is one of the things we're most proud of. We believe we're investing in people pursuing their dreams," he told the fellows. "Support each other, think big, do things differently, ask questions—do everything you can to make yourselves better. You all are going to change the world."

## Training the Next Generation

The Pelotonia Fellowship Program supports promising Ohio State students in any discipline who want to conduct cancer research under the guidance of faculty members.

Since the program began in 2010, the Pelotonia Fellowship Program has awarded:



522

TOTAL FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENTS TOTALING MORE THAN \$17 MILLION

244

UNDERGRADUATES

154

GRADUATES

118

POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWS

6

PROFESSIONAL STUDENTS



## Buckeye Cruise for Cancer



The 12th annual Buckeye Cruise for Cancer sailed with great success at the end of February—raising a record \$3.2 million dollars for the OSUCCC – James!

Former Buckeye athletes such as JT Barrett, Rex Kern and Katie Smith were among more than 3,000 Buckeyes who sailed on Royal Caribbean’s Independence of the Seas. Highlights of the week included a recognition of the more than 300 cancer survivors on board, Buckeye-themed fun at the pool, and presentations from OSUCCC – James leadership and researchers. The week was capped off by more than 1,000 cruisers and Bahamas residents participating in a walk/run throughout downtown Nassau, followed by a concert on board that featured country music star Jake Owen.

A critical method of fundraising on board is the *Fund a Need* auction, which helps purchase research equipment available for use by the OSUCCC – James’ more than 340 cancer researchers. The 2019 cruise raised \$400,000 toward funding for a Cell Therapy Process Development Lab, including a trio of devices. Before a researcher’s idea can be used to treat a patient, the processes for manufacturing the cells must be scaled up, optimized and brought into compliance with FDA regulations. The addition of a second Cell Therapy Laboratory that is focused on this process development stage, along with a trio of clinical-grade manufacturing devices, will allow the cell therapy team to develop new processes without interrupting the clinical manufacturing of a rapidly growing number of patient cell therapy products.

The 2020 Buckeye Cruise will sail out of Miami, Fla., on Feb. 16 on Royal Caribbean’s Explorer of the Seas, returning Feb. 21. The 5-night cruise will feature a stop at the new “Perfect Day at CocoCay.” For sponsorship opportunities and up-to-date information, please visit [buckeyecruise.com](http://buckeyecruise.com) or call Travel Partners in Dublin at 614-792-6204. You can also reach out to Ashley Clark at [Ashley.Clark2@osumc.edu](mailto:Ashley.Clark2@osumc.edu) to learn about other ways you can help support this cause.

**Record total raised in 2019**  
**\$3.2M**

**Total raised during *Fund a Need* auction**  
**\$400,000**



## Celebration for Life



More than 155 donors and friends gathered at Smith & Wollensky Restaurant at Easton Town Center on May 18 for the 18th annual Celebration for Life, chaired by Judy and Steve Tuckerman. The event benefits The James Fund for Life, an annual fund at Ohio State that is chaired by Abigail and Les Wexner and supports the purchase of leading-edge technology for studying and treating cancer.

This year’s Celebration for Life raised \$1,261,948.91, bringing the total raised to more than \$20.1 million since the fund was established in 2002.

A new \$5 million commitment over the next five years was announced at the event to purchase technology for the new West Campus Ambulatory Facility.

**Total raised in 2019**  
**\$1,261,948.91**

**Total raised since 2002**  
**\$20.1M**



Ohio State President Michael V. Drake, MD, Sharon Press, PhD, Ohio State Executive Vice President and Chancellor for Health Affairs Harold L. Paz, MD, event honorary chairs Carol and David Schuller, MD, and event chairs Steve and Judy Tuckerman



FRY OUT CANCER



**More than \$22,000 raised**  
 supporting the Pediatric Brain Cancer Research Fund and  
 The Ovarian Cancer Research and Education Fund

The 5th annual Fry Out Cancer was held Thanksgiving week 2018. Each year, supporters pick up their fully prepared fried turkey on Thanksgiving Day.

A new partnership with Columbus Culinary Institute provided more helping hands, enabling Fry Out Cancer to fry over 100 turkeys—an increase of 40 turkeys over the prior year.

Fry Out Cancer also hosted a blanket-tying event for their more than 100 volunteers two days before Thanksgiving. They made more than 75 fleece blankets for patients going through chemotherapy at the OSUCCC – James.

“My wife’s grandmother passed away from ovarian cancer, and we have dear family and friends whose son passed away from pediatric brain cancer,” says Matt Freedman, founder of Fry Out Cancer. “So these are causes that are close to our hearts.”

[www.fryoutcancer.org](http://www.fryoutcancer.org)

Community Partners are passionate individuals, groups and corporations who share our vision of creating a cancer-free world. Hundreds of Community Partners are raising critical funds to further research, education and patient care at the OSUCCC – James. This past year, more than \$3.4 million has been raised through corporate initiatives, promotions and local events.

CIAO CIAO TO CANCER



**More than \$50,000 raised**  
 supporting The Urban and Shelley Meyer Fund for  
 Cancer Research and Buckeye Cruise for Cancer

Luciana and Tom Ramsey hosted the inaugural Ciao Ciao to Cancer, along with the help of the Susi Family, owners of The Berwick. The Italian-themed dinner party held at St. Charles Preparatory High School on Feb. 2 raised more than \$50,000. No guest left hungry after enjoying an over-the-top Italian buffet that included antipasto, tortellini, Italian meatballs, skewers, bruschetta, Italian sausage, ravioli, tiramisu, cannoli, cookies and more!

Guests were treated to music and dancing by The Eddie Polino Band, a reverse raffle with a \$10,000 prize, a wine pull, a duck pond, and silent and live auctions. Plans for next year’s event are underway so we can get one step closer to saying “Ciao Ciao to Cancer.”

ROCKIN' TO BEAT LEUKEMIA



**\$20,000 raised**  
 supporting acute myelogenous  
 leukemia (AML) research

Nearly four years after 17-year-old Lauryn “Lu” Oliphant lost her battle with acute myelogenous leukemia (AML), her family continues to pay tribute to her by hosting events in her honor.

The Rockin’ to Beat Leukemia musical event was created with Lu’s love for music in mind. Music was a pillar in Lu’s life that got her through many things, including cancer treatment.

This 3rd annual family-friendly event, held March 2, featured live music by the band The Martini Affair and a night of raising awareness and funds for AML. Proceeds from event tickets, commemorative T-shirts, a silent auction, raffle drawings and donations will benefit AML research where Lu was treated: the OSUCCC – James and Nationwide Children’s Hospital.

Scott and Theresa Oliphant established a memorial fund through the Fairfield County Foundation in Lu’s honor. In addition to Rockin’ to Beat Leukemia, the Oliphants host an annual golf outing, Hitting the Links 4 Leukemia.

To date, Lu’s Memorial Fund has raised nearly \$80,000.

[www.lumemorialfund.com](http://www.lumemorialfund.com)

GIVING DAYS AT THE LOX BAGEL SHOP



**\$3,000 raised**  
 supporting sarcoma research

The newly opened lox bagel shop in the Short North launched a series of Giving Days on May 8 as a way to introduce the community to the shop’s team and donate 20 percent of the day’s sales to the charity of a team member’s choosing.

The first Giving Day was in honor of team member Gabby Ramsey, who chose to support sarcoma research at the OSUCCC – James. Gabby and her family are annual participants in Pelotonia, Buckeye Cruise for Cancer and a number of other cancer-related charitable events. “My uncle passed away from sarcoma at a young age. After speaking with Dr. Raphael Pollock on the Buckeye Cruise for Cancer about the lab’s research and learning how underfunded this particular cancer is, it was a clear choice,” says Gabby.

Learn more about becoming a Community Partner:

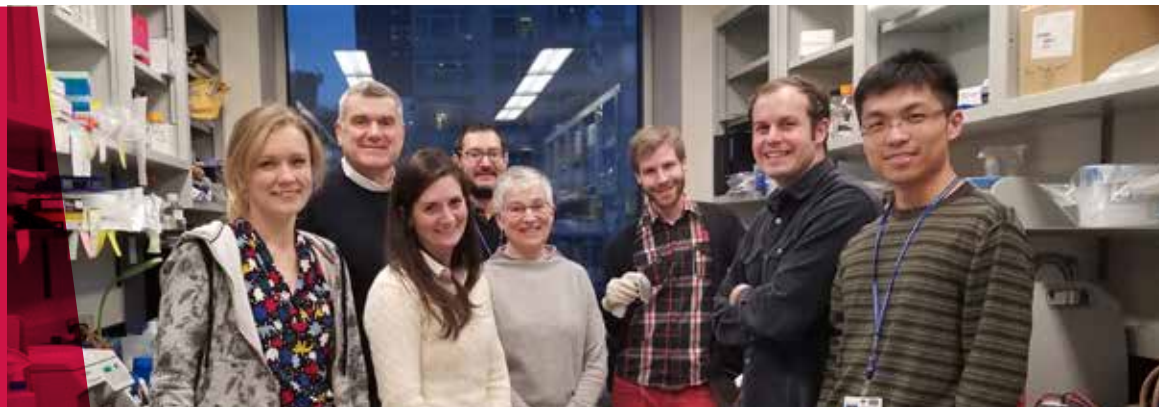
[go.osu.edu/JamesCommunityPartners](http://go.osu.edu/JamesCommunityPartners)  
[communitypartnerevents@osumc.edu](mailto:communitypartnerevents@osumc.edu)  
 614-293-2120

RECIPIENT OF THE  
2018 BLOCK LECTURESHIP JUNIOR FACULTY AWARD

# GINA SIZEMORE, PhD

## MY PERSONAL ACCOUNT

The Block Lectureship Junior Faculty Award was established in 2018 and is given to a promising OSUCCC – James junior faculty member. The awardee establishes a mentor/mentee relationship with the Block Lectureship Awardee, visiting the institution of the Block awardee multiple times over two years.



**Congratulations** to the recipient of the 24th Herbert and Maxine Block Lectureship Award for Distinguished Achievement in Cancer.

NOVEMBER 4, 2019



**ELAINE FUCHS, PhD**

Investigator, Howard Hughes Medical Institute, The Rockefeller University, Rebecca C. Lancefield Professor

**"Stem Cells in Silence, Stress and Cancer"**

To learn more about the Block Lectureship, visit [cancer.osu.edu/blocklectureship](http://cancer.osu.edu/blocklectureship)

**I was granted an amazing gift as a junior faculty member. I was selected as the inaugural recipient of The Herbert and Maxine Block Lectureship Junior Faculty Award. I have the distinguished honor of being mentored over the next couple of years by the 2018 Lectureship Awardee, Craig Thompson, MD, president and CEO of Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center. Dr. Thompson is a world leader in cancer metabolism and immunity—both integral components of the cancer microenvironment.**

As an assistant professor in the Department of Radiation Oncology at Ohio State and a member of the Molecular Biology and Cancer Genetics Program at the OSUCCC – James, I have the incredible opportunity to work on a very important translational research question: breast cancer-associated brain metastases.

Women who develop brain metastases as a result of their breast cancer face a barrage of treatments, and even with aggressive therapy, only half are alive a year later. We are addressing this clinical failure through highly innovative research that integrates tissue culture and mouse modeling of the brain metastatic tumor microenvironment—these are the noncancer cells that weave through the tumor tissue. Work done by us and others over the last decade has shown that this microenvironment plays a direct role in cancer progression. Our goal is to identify new effective therapeutic strategies that

target not just the cancer cells, but also this surrounding microenvironment.

My current research program is funded by the National Cancer Institute through a K22 Transition Career Development Award, as well as through a Young Investigator Award from the METAvivor Foundation. As these titles suggest, I am still “young” and “developing.” To be truly successful in biomedical research, you must learn to overcome a great number of obstacles. In addition to securing funding, these obstacles include publishing high-impact research papers and being an effective leader of your research team. One very important way to continue down a successful road is to employ the help of senior mentors—individuals who have “made it.” Once you have your own lab, establishing a strong mentoring relationship can sometimes be challenging.

Since receiving the award, I have traveled to Memorial Sloan Kettering to meet with Dr. Thompson and the members of his laboratory. We have since established a collaborative research program in which my team is working with his team to further understand how the microenvironment leads to cancer progression. A big thank you to the Block family and all those involved with The Block Memorial Lectureship for this opportunity.

*Photo: 2018 Block Lectureship Junior Faculty Award Winner Gina Sizemore, PhD, (third from the left) visited the lab of Craig B. Thompson, MD, (second from the left), president and chief executive officer, Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center. Dr. Thompson was the 2018 Block Lectureship Award Recipient.*

# UPCOMING EVENTS

Sept 6

**FAITH THOMAS FOUNDATION PRESENTS THE 6TH ANNUAL RED DIAMOND GALA**

September 6  
The Boat House at Confluence Park

[faiththomasfoundation.org](http://faiththomasfoundation.org)

*Proceeds benefit the Sickle Cell Anemia Research and Education Program Fund*

Sept 14

**ST. MARYS TAILGATE FOR CANCER**

September 14  
Eagles Parking Lot

[tailgateforcancer.com](http://tailgateforcancer.com)

*Proceeds benefit the Urban and Shelley Meyer Fund for Cancer Research*

Sept 22

**STEPS FOR SARCOMA 5K WALK**

September 22  
CAS (Chemical Abstracts Service)

[stepsforsarcomaevent.com](http://stepsforsarcomaevent.com)

*Proceeds benefit the Steps for Sarcoma Walk/Run Fund*

Oct 4

**TEE IT OFF FOR BRAIN TUMORS**

October 4  
Golf Club of Dublin

[Kevin Farrell — k.farrell6464@yahoo.com](mailto:k.farrell6464@yahoo.com)

*Proceeds benefit Neuro-Oncology*



To see all community events that benefit the OSUCCC – James, please visit [go.osu.edu/JamesCommunityPartners](http://go.osu.edu/JamesCommunityPartners).

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