

HIGHLIGHTS



NEWS IN THE FIGHT FOR CURES

WINTER 2020

At The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society (LLS), generous donors and volunteers make lifesaving advances possible.

Supporter's Corner

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“If it weren't for LLS, I wouldn't be here today. In 2006, at the age of 46 and with a five-year-old son, I was diagnosed with incurable stage 4 follicular lymphoma and was told I wouldn't likely survive long.

There weren't many treatments for follicular lymphoma, and after the most promising chemotherapy, I relapsed right away. Over the next 12 years, I was in constant treatment. I had six different kinds of treatments, each of them keeping me alive just long enough for the next treatment advance. I couldn't imagine my

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Accelerating Medical Advances One Patient at a Time

The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society (LLS) is teaming up with the world's largest organization of hematology experts, the American Society of Hematology (ASH), to help patients enroll in clinical trials.

For many cancer patients, a clinical trial is their best chance for a cure, yet only five to eight percent of adult cancer patients enroll in a trial during their treatment. The obstacles to clinical trial participation are varied, but most center on the complexity of identifying and accessing the most

appropriate trials. But clinical trials are critical: They offer individual patients access to potentially lifesaving new therapies while advancing treatment for all patients.

In 2016, LLS launched the Clinical Trial Support Center (CTSC) to help patients overcome these obstacles. Through the CTSC, patients connect with Nurse Navigators—specialists in blood cancers, clinical trials and patient education and support—who work

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▲ Gwen Nichols, MD, LLS Chief Medical Officer, is interviewed about the Clinical Trial Support Center and how the partnership with the American Society of Hematology benefits patients and physicians.

Supporter's Corner

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little boy growing up without a mom. And so I kept fighting.

LLS had a hand in every one of the treatments that kept me alive those 12 years.

Finally, CAR T-cell therapy came along, just in time. It was a new kind of treatment that reengineers immune cells to attack the cancer. But there were no early trials in follicular lymphoma so I had to wait. There was nothing left for me.

Then, in the spring of 2018, after two long years and just in time for my seventh round of therapy, a CAR T-cell trial opened at UCLA, and I was the first patient. I had eight pounds of lymphoma in me when they did the infusion of CAR T cells. Thirty days later, there were zero; the cancer was completely gone. I am still cancer-free 18 months later, and I am confident the CAR T cells are still working.

I am passionate about LLS because of how focused they are on their mission to beat blood cancers. More than 20 years ago, LLS started funding CAR T-cell research, and they kept funding it even when everyone else thought they were crazy. LLS is why this research succeeded. LLS saved my life.”



Laurie Adami,
Los Angeles, CA

New Grant Programs

In 2019, LLS launched two new grant programs to address areas of unmet need: funding for research into the biological underpinnings of cancer, and support to bring innovative clinical trials to patients at smaller medical centers.



The **Blood Cancer Discoveries Program** is devoted to groundbreaking early-stage research that can lead to advances in the treatment and cure of blood cancers. This new grant program was designed to encourage basic research, technological innovation and informatics pipeline development that can lead to an understanding of the mechanisms of blood cancers, the development of improved methods for detecting and monitoring cancer progression and the identification of novel therapeutic targets.

Expanding access to clinical trials, the **Impactful Medicine Providing Access to Clinical Trials (IMPACT)** program supports initiatives to bring trials to community health settings, particularly rural settings, and minority and/or economically disadvantaged blood cancer patients. Because many more clinical trials now use precision medicine, this program educates community-based hematologists/oncologists and accelerates development, initiation and completion of these clinical trials.

From basic science explorations of blood cancer to delivery of innovative new treatments in the clinic, these new grant programs illustrate one of the hallmarks of LLS's patient-focused mission: to look for gaps in knowledge and care and find ways to fill those gaps.

To support the area of greatest interest to you, contact us at 1-888-773-9958.

Accelerating Medical Advances One Patient at a Time

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with patients to connect them with the most appropriate clinical trials for their cancers.

Now, LLS is expanding this outreach. At the 61st ASH Annual Meeting, in December 2019, LLS and ASH announced a collaboration to deliver LLS's industry-leading clinical trial navigation service to ASH's more than 2,500 member clinicians in the United States and Canada.

Through a special portal on the ASH website, ASH member physicians have quick and direct access to CTSC Nurse Navigators. The physicians and their care teams, along with patients and caregivers, work one-on-one with LLS's CTSC Nurse Navigators, who provide personal assistance throughout the entire clinical trial process. Nurse Navigators work with the patients to navigate myriad trial sites, inclusion/exclusion criteria, and other potential barriers to enrollment. The nurses also work in collaboration with the patient's health care team to provide support, education and additional resources for the duration of the search, the enrollment process and the trial.

The collaboration is a win-win-win: ASH physicians provide critical clinical data to the CTSC, which in turn enables the Nurse Navigators to tailor their searches, speeding up the process and connecting more patients with the most targeted trial options.

To meet the increased demand for services, LLS is expanding the CTSC with additional staff, specialized technology and more patient support, which will be implemented over the next three years. The collaboration is generously sponsored by Champion sponsor, Amgen Inc.; Breakthrough sponsors, Genentech Inc. and Seattle Genetics Inc.; Presenting sponsor, Pharmacyclics LLC & Janssen Biotech Inc.; and Innovation sponsor, Foundation Medicine Inc.

“There are many obstacles preventing cancer patients from participating in trials, including accessibility, proximity and eligibility. Low participation can also be due to patients and their health care providers simply not being aware of appropriate clinical trials. We are very excited that ASH clinicians and their patients will have direct access to our Nurse Navigators, freeing up doctors to focus on patient care.”

— Gwen Nichols, MD, LLS Chief Medical Officer

The screenshot shows the LLS Portal interface on the ASH website. The header includes 'Home' and 'LLS Portal'. The main content area has a red background with a microscopic image of cells. The title 'American Society of Hematology' is prominent, followed by the subtitle 'A Collaboration with The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society's Clinical Trial Support Center'. Below this, there is a welcome message and instructions for physicians to refer patients. Three buttons labeled 'Resources', 'Refer', and 'Diagnose' are visible. At the bottom, there are logos for sponsors: Amgen Oncology, Genentech, Biogen, Pharmacyclics, Janssen Biotech, and Foundation Medicine. Contact information for ASH Headquarters is also provided.

▲ The web portal for ASH clinicians to directly access the LLS's CTSC launched in January 2020.

Precision Medicine Takes Center Stage

This past December, the American Society of Hematology (ASH) hosted more than 30,000 hematologists in Orlando, Florida, at the organization's 61st ASH Annual Meeting to share the latest advances in blood science and medicine. Precision medicine continues to provide new treatment options for patients.

New targeted therapies approved in the past two years alone are making precision medicine more of a reality for patients with acute myeloid leukemia (AML). Amy Burd, PhD, LLS vice president of research strategy, presented compelling data showing that giving a patient a drug based on his or her molecular profile rather than on a one-size-fits-all standard is shifting the paradigm in how AML patients will be treated in the future.

For patients with chronic lymphocytic leukemia, studies have shown a decided shift toward chemo-free combinations

of targeted medicines, including combinations of targeted therapies that work by blocking the activity of cancer-promoting genes, proteins or cellular pathways.

Chimeric antigen receptor (CAR) T-cell therapy continues to make dramatic advances, with several presentations showing promising results for patients with multiple myeloma, and emerging research demonstrating potential for mantle cell lymphoma.

Reporting on his LLS-funded study of the drug blinatumomab, Patrick Brown, MD, of the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, showed good outcomes for children whose acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL) had returned after treatment. While most children achieve complete remission from their first round of standard chemotherapy, those who relapse face a poor prognosis—something he seeks to change with this research.