



# THE LEADING *Edge*

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CARING AND CURING IS YOU

Spring 2013

## PROTEIN DEFICIENCY LINKED TO BREAST CANCER GROWTH IN AGING WOMEN



David Gius, MD, PhD

A study on prematurely aged mice on strict diets may help to vastly improve the prognosis of patients with hormone receptor positive breast cancer, the most common form of breast cancer in older women. For the past decade, microbiologist and radiation oncologist David Gius, MD, PhD, has studied longevity-associated proteins known as “sirtuins” and their connection to cancer. The result? The creation of a unique animal model that provides a promising platform

for developing treatments to combat this deadly disease.

“Receptor positive breast cancer has a strong statistical correlation to aging,” explains Dr. Gius, Zell

Family Scholar and Professor of Radiation Oncology at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine. Previously at Vanderbilt University’s Ingram Cancer Center, he joined Northwestern in August 2012. “More women die of receptor positive breast cancer than any other cancer, and most of them are 60 years and older.” Two subtypes of estrogen and progesterone receptor positive breast cancer exist: Luminal A and B. Women with the Luminal B subtype are most likely to succumb to their disease.

Some 15 years ago, researchers discovered the “molecular fountain of youth” properties of sirtuins. Linked to nutrition, these proteins come into play during calorie restriction. While at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in the early 2000s, Dr. Gius began exploring the effect of sirtuin deficiency and how it might lead to the growth of tumors. Using mice, his lab knocked out Sirt3, a sirtuin found in the mitochondria—the power generators in cells.

“We suspected the mice would age faster and would then develop age-related illnesses such as cancer,” says Dr. Gius. “They, indeed, developed Luminal B tumors.”

At Vanderbilt, Dr. Gius advanced his research, publishing his findings in high impact journals and embarking on several lines of inquiry

using the mouse model he created. His research focuses on finding signature genes to help identify the subgroup of women—currently as many as 60,000—whose receptor positive breast cancer is dependent on the age-related loss of sirtuin. Dr. Gius believes the deficiency of Sirt3 abnormally regulates an enzyme, which eventually leads to cancer. His group has made antibodies to molecular biomarkers believed to influence Sirt3 carcinogenesis. Now at Northwestern, Dr. Gius is taking his NIH-supported work to the next level.

“We are getting ready to start looking at human tissue samples in the cancer archives here,” he says, “to fish out those women whose cancer is caused by these aberrant genes.”

In other laboratory studies, Dr. Gius is testing chemical agents that could yield promising new drug treatments for women with receptor positive breast cancer. In collaboration with Seema Khan, MD, co-leader of the Breast Cancer Program at the Robert H. Lurie Comprehensive Cancer Center of Northwestern University, Dr. Gius also hopes to launch a nutrition-focused clinical trial in 2014. As fasting seems to turn on sirtuin, the proposed study will examine how dietary changes may affect the growth of cancer.

Excited to further his research efforts at Northwestern, Dr. Gius sees opportunities to lend his expertise to foster the work of up-and-coming breast cancer investigators. Among his many activities, he joins Dr. Khan as a member of the Lynn Sage Cancer Research Foundation (LSCRF) grant review and selection committee. This group of breast cancer leaders at Northwestern ensures that the foundation awards seed funding to launch worthy projects with the most potential to improve breast cancer detection and treatment. LSCRF has greatly assisted researchers in competing for larger grants. For every \$1.00 LSCRF has awarded to breast cancer research at Northwestern, \$4.00 is awarded by the National Cancer Institute and other external granting agencies. To bolster the supply of physicians with expertise in the research and treatment of breast cancer, LSCRF has also funded 45 fellowships in the areas of breast surgery, imaging, medical oncology, and reconstruction and obstetrics and gynecology.

Lynn Sage Cancer Research Foundation

To learn more about the foundation please visit [www.lynnstage.org](http://www.lynnstage.org), [facebook.com/LSCRF](https://www.facebook.com/LSCRF) or call 312-926-4274.

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*Dear Friends,*

As we honor our mothers this month, it is a perfect time to remember that the fight against breast cancer belongs to all of us. The battle against this disease is being courageously waged by so many women – not only those personally affected but also those who are equally heartbroken to hear the words “I have breast cancer” spoken by their daughters, daughters-in-law, sisters, cousins or friends.

Making Mother's Day all that more meaningful to me is the fact that I am among the eight mother-daughter pairs on the Lynn Sage Cancer Research Foundation (LSCRF) board. LSCRF is the largest organization of its kind in the Chicago area and spans generations of supporters working together to advance breast cancer research, treatment and awareness. With your help, we not only continue to fund promising breast cancer research and educational initiatives, but we also have begun to further extend our reach into the Chicagoland community.

In Chicago, African-American women are struck by a disproportionate rate of breast cancer deaths. Responding to this alarming statistic, in October 2012 LSCRF was pleased to forge a unique partnership with the Barbara Bates Foundation to address the city's disparity of care in breast cancer. Funding will support the “Helping Her Live” program based at the Sinai Urban Health Institute. The HHL initiative reaches out to women in two medically underserved neighborhoods: North Lawndale and Humboldt Park. Focusing on routine mammography, follow-up of abnormal mammograms, and timely cancer treatment, the initiative also provides patient care navigators to help narrow the gap in breast cancer care for women of color. Additionally, we continue to partner with the Lynn Sage Comprehensive Breast Center, which serves 70,000 patients per year and provides care to many women regardless of their health insurance status. We are proud that, in recent years, the Lynn Sage Comprehensive Breast Center has become the largest program of its kind in the state of Illinois and the Midwest. In order to fulfill LSCRF's mission, we must serve the entire Chicagoland community, and these types of partnerships are crucial.

I also am proud of LSCRF's continued efforts to expand breast cancer awareness to the Chicagoland community through the Light the Way to Find a Cure® Campaign, which, in 2012, had a greater presence than ever before. Year after year, our campaign has continued to grow, this year with 169 buildings participating, furthering our reach in the Chicagoland community and spreading awareness throughout.

Most importantly, we thank YOU for your steadfast devotion to our cause. Your friendship and support makes it possible for LSCRF to grow and expand throughout and beyond our community, aiming for national presence and impact. With your help, we do all this wholeheartedly in memory of our friend Lynn, for one another, and for all of the mothers and daughters in the world.

Fondly,

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## LSCRF 2012 FUNDED RESEARCH GRANTS

- The Role of Aromatase Expression in the Development of Mammary Tumorigenesis – Hong Zhao, MD, PhD, Serdar Bulun, MD
- Cyclophilin A as a Target in Breast Cancer – Charles Clevenger, MD
- Progesterone antagonists for the prevention of breast cancer – Seema Khan, MD/Julie Kim PhD
- ATN-658, a Urokinase Plasminogen Activator Receptor (uPAR) Targeting Monoclonal Antibody for the Treatment of Metastatic Breast Cancer – Andrew Mazar, MD
- Novel Role of PDEF in Breast Cancer Progression – Ming Zhang, PhD
- A Novel Near-IR Fluorescent Porphyrazine to Improve Breast Cancer Surgery Outcomes Through Intraoperative Real Time Assessment of Breast Tumor Margins – Brian Hoffman, PhD
- Investigating the Role of a Novel THAP11-HCF1 Complex in Human Breast Cancer – Deabrata Chakravarti, PhD
- A Phase II Trial of Cabergoline in the Treatment of Metastatic Breast Cancer – Virginia Kaklamani, MD
- Pinpointing the Neuropathology of Cognitive Impairment in Breast Cancer Survivors – Joel Voss, PhD
- Validate a Lynn Sage Familial Breast Cancer Risk Screening Tool and Protocol – Julian Schink, MD

# SAVE THE DATE

## 22<sup>ND</sup> ANNUAL PLAY FOR THE CURE GOLF OUTING

June 17, 2013

Onwentsia Club, Lake Forest

Chairs  
Ryan Goldstein  
Brad Jarol

## 4<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL SUMMER COCKTAIL PARTY

July 11, 2013

Paris Club

Chairs:  
Allison Zisook Goldstein  
Brad Jarol  
Bari Anixter Mlodinoff  
Liza Sweitzer

## 2013 FALL BENEFIT LUNCHEON

October 3, 2013

Hilton Chicago

Chairs:  
Julie Barrish  
Nancy Resnick

Check [www.lynnsage.org](http://www.lynnsage.org) or [facebook.com/LSCRF](https://www.facebook.com/LSCRF) for updates on these events or call **312.926.7133** for more information.



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the courageous spirit of Lynn Sage, the Foundation supports innovative contributions to the understanding, research and treatment of breast cancer.