

Friends & SLU Liver Center News



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It was a "Circle of Friends Celebration" at the Friends of the Saint Louis University Liver Center's 10th annual Diamonds Gala" September 22nd in the Khorassan Room at the Chase Park Plaza.

KTVI FOX2's Morning Show Anchor John Pertzborn was the Emcee, Dr. Bruce Bacon and Mr. Paul Azzara presented awards, and Ms. Liz Harry introduced guest speaker, Dr. Brent Tetri who gave a heartfelt presentation "Highlights from the Lab: a Note of Gratitude" to our guests, all supporters of research at the SLU Liver Center.

This year's Gala raised over \$412,000 for the SLU Liver Center and the life-saving research and treatment provided to patients from all over the world. Dr. Ranjit Ray & Dr. Ratna Ray received the "Naomi Judd Award" for their outstanding accomplishments in clinical research for viral hepatitis and Lindsay Morris received the Volunteer of the Year award.

Dinner was followed by a lively auction and raffle. Dance music provided by Rocky Mantia & Friends rounded out this beautiful evening.



VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR



Lindsay Morris

It all started with "my mom said you may need help with the Friends' website..." Lindsay Morris was in her last semester at Webster University, soon to graduate with a degree in Information Systems and minor in Website Development, when I received her email.

Little did Lindsay know, YES, we needed help with our website and much more! Lindsay has made time weekly to work on the Friends' website. In March of this year, with Lindsay's help, we kicked off our "Keeping up with the Friends" e-blast newsletter! Lindsay also volunteered at our "Shoot for a Cure" fundraiser, and has joined the Young Friends of the SLU Liver Center Board of Directors.

Lindsay brings her wonderful talents and great sense of humor to the Friends' office and we're most grateful for all she contributes!

The Friends of the Saint Louis University Liver Center extend our sincere gratitude and appreciation to Lindsay for the **Friend** she has become!

Congratulations to 2012 Naomi Judd Award Recipients Dr. Ranjit Ray & Dr. Ratna Ray



Ranjit Ray, Ph.D.

Dr. Ranjit Ray was educated in India, receiving his PhD in Biochemistry from the University of Calcutta in 1985. He was recruited to Saint Louis University in 1993 as an Associate Professor and advanced to the rank of Professor in 2000 with dual appointments in the Department of Internal Medicine and the Department of Molecular Microbiology & Immunology.

He has published more than 100 peer reviewed papers in his field that have contributed significantly in understanding the molecular mechanisms of hepatitis C virus entry, host defense and pathogenesis of liver disease.

Based on his expertise, he has been a member of multiple NIH and NCI study sections and he is a regular reviewer of manuscripts for prominent journals.

He has a long record of NIH and NCI funding for his research and is currently funded by the NIH to study the mechanism of disease progression in hepatitis C. He also has five patents related to both hepatitis C and liver disease progression.

Congratulations Dr. Ranjit Ray!

Dr. Ratna Ray is a Professor in the Department of Pathology at Saint Louis University and a member of the SLU Liver Center. She has a longtime investigative interest in cancer biology. Her laboratory research has covered various aspects of Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) mediated pathogenesis for the last 15 years. Her work involves a variety of experimental approaches, including basic cell biology and molecular biology in understanding HCV mediated modulation of interferon signaling.

Dr. Ray made a significant contribution in understanding the cross-talk between HCV proteins and host cell factors. Recently, she initiated work on microRNAs in understanding the relationship with HCV mediated hepatocellular carcinoma. In addition, her laboratory is involved in chemoprevention and gene therapy research using breast, prostate and liver cancer as model systems. Her work is funded by NIH and the Saint Louis University Liver Center. Congratulations to Dr. Ray!!



Ratna Ray, Ph.D.

Volunteers are the backbone of the Friends of the SLULC!

How Can You Help the Friends of the SLU Liver Center? Be a Sponsor - Become a Volunteer

Whether you are interested in becoming a sponsor or want to answer phones, stuff envelopes or serve on a planning committee, we have volunteer opportunities available. You may volunteer as an individual or bring a group of friends. Please complete and fax this form to 314-576-3654 or mail to the Friends office. A representative will contact you soon!

- ☐ *Yes, I am interested in learning more about sponsorship opportunities! Please contact me with more information.*
- ☐ *Yes, I am interested in volunteering! Please contact me with more information.*

Name _____ Home Phone _____ Work Phone _____

Address _____ Cell Phone _____ Email _____

City, State, Zip _____ Best way to reach you _____

Times you are available to volunteer: _____

Please join us at an upcoming 2013 Friends event...

“SHOOT FOR A CURE”

at Strathalbyn Farms Club – Saturday, May 11th

“Shoot for a Cure” is the Friends annual summer sporting clays event featuring an afternoon of clay target shooting (50 and 100 shot courses available), appetizers, dinner and drinks, and live auction followed by a bonfire.

There are also activities scheduled throughout the afternoon for those not participating in shooting sports who want to come and enjoy a beautiful day of rest and relaxation at Strathalbyn.

Strathalbyn Farms Club is a private club located on 140 pristine acres in the Weldon Springs area of St. Charles County. For more information or to register, visit friendsoftheshluc.org/events/spring-event



THAT 80'S PROM

at Plush – Saturday, April 27th



Benefitting Young Friends of the SLU Liver Center

11TH ANNUAL DIAMONDS GALA

at the Chase Park Plaza – Saturday, November 16th

The “Diamonds” Gala is the Friends annual signature fundraiser, which supports the research efforts of the world-renowned Saint Louis University Liver Center. All money raised by the organization stays in the St. Louis area to perform life-saving research and treat patients in St. Louis.

The evening's festivities includes a cocktail reception, sumptuous dinner, fabulous live & silent auctions, along with the presentation of the annual “Naomi Judd Award” and “Volunteer of the Year Award”.

The 11th Annual Diamonds Gala will be held at the historic Chase Park Plaza in the beautiful Khorassan Room. For more information or to register, visit friendsoftheshluc.org/events



2012 Year in Review

Shoot for a Cure!



Circle of Friends Celebration



Diamonds¹⁰ Gala



We're always looking for new
friends



Young Friends



Saint Louis University Liver Center Research Grant

The SLULC Research Grant primarily supports two types of research activity: seed and bridge grants. Both seed and bridge grants are expected to yield data that the applicant will use as the basis for an extramural grant or contract application. A total of 19 SLULC grants totaling **\$ 536,740** have been awarded since 2005. To Date – Return on Investment (ROI) for all SLULC grants awarded since 2005 is **18.1**.

Congratulations to the following four Liver Center investigators who were most recently awarded. There are an additional five seed grants (totaling \$125,000) which will be awarded soon. More information will follow in the Friends spring newsletter - be on the lookout!

Ratna Ray, PhD - SLULC Seed Grant - \$25,000

Hepatitis C virus infection of primary human hepatocytes and microRNA modulation

Dr. Ray is working to understand the mechanism of hepatitis C virus persistence and disease progression in humans. Her laboratory is interested in studying the interaction between hepatitis C virus proteins and host factor(s) in disease progression.

Mark Schnitzler - SLULC Seed Grant - \$25,000

Developing a Database to Support Outcomes Research and Cost-Effectiveness Evaluation in Liver Transplantation

Soon after earning his PhD, Dr. Schnitzler began working primarily in health economics, policy, and epidemiology in solid organ transplantation. He is the founder and Director of Transplant Outcomes and Policy Research (TOPR) housed within the Saint Louis University Center for Outcomes Research (SLUCOR).

Brent Tetri, MD - SLULC Seed Grant - \$25,000

Exploring the pathogenesis of nonalcoholic steatohepatitis (NASH)

Dr. Tetri has an active research interest in the mechanisms of pancreatic fibrogenesis and treatment of fatty liver disorders.

David Wang, PhD - SLULC Seed Grant - \$25,000

Role of SHP in regulating biliary cholesterol secretion

Dr. Wang has demonstrated a record of productive and successful research projects in an area of high relevance for the biochemistry of lipid metabolism, the physical chemistry of lipids, and the pathophysiology of cholesterol gallstones and cholestasis.



Ratna Ray, Ph.D.



Mark Schnitzler, Ph.D.



Brent Tetri, Ph.D.



David Wang, Ph.D.

Childhood Liver Disease and Extrahepatic Biliary Atresia



Jeffrey Teckman, M.D.

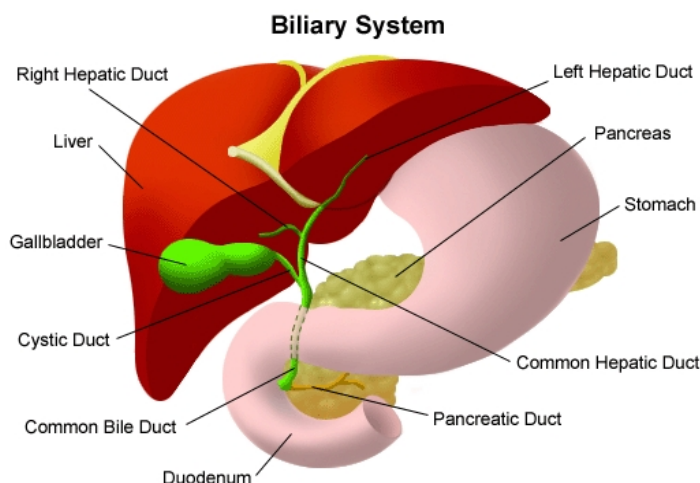
Liver disease in children is very different from liver disease in adults. This is the case in not only the type of diseases that are found in children but in the consequences as well. Childhood diseases can not only put the organ affected at risk, but often pose a greater risk than adult onset disease to other body systems that are still growing and developing and are therefore more susceptible to injury. Normal growth and

development in childhood is,

of course, critical to becoming a fully functional adult. Studies show that severe disease in childhood can also leave other organs more vulnerable to adult diseases later in life, such as heart disease. Childhood diseases can also reduce final adult height, can reduce adult Intellectual function and can have social repercussions, including reduced earning potential and reduced marital success. In addition, since children are not independent in terms of life function, successful treatment of children is much more dependent on family structure and involvement of the family than is adult disease. If doctor's appointments or tests are needed, children cannot bring themselves or bear the costs themselves. They are dependent on adults with the ability, motivation, finances, resources and time to assure that the child is present for the tests required. Similarly, children are not typically able to be independent in obtaining or administering their own medications. If the family does not understand how to give the medications, is not fully informed of the treatment needed, or does not have the financial resources to get the medications then the child will not be treated.

One of the most problematic pediatric liver diseases is extrahepatic biliary atresia. This is a condition which affects about 1 in 8,000 births and results in irreparable damage to the bile duct. The bile duct is the tube which connects the liver to the intestine. If this tube is functioning normally, then a liquid, called bile, can flow from the liver to the intestine. This process is critical for the removal of waste from the body and for proper digestion. If the flow of bile is interrupted, not only can waste removal and digestion be affected, but eventually the liver will cease to function.

In biliary atresia the flow of bile is permanently blocked within the first few weeks of life, although the underlying cause of the damage to the bile duct in this disease is still unknown. There are no medications available to reverse this process. Once the diagnosis is made in a baby, then the treatment proceeds to a major surgery in which a specialized pediatric surgeon attempts to form a connection between the liver and the intestine. Unfortunately, even with the best expertise and technology, this surgery still leaves the infant at risk for severe liver disease. About 30% of these infants develop severe liver disease within the first year of life and require immediate liver transplantation to save their lives. Another 30% of these babies will do well for a few years, but still get sick and require liver transplantation before they begin school. Only a minority of these children reach age 18 with their own liver still functioning, and even in many of these cases severe liver damage is still a high risk. These children may also have a variety of other health problems and require careful monitoring. Biliary atresia is a common, but difficult problem seen by the pediatric hepatologists at the Saint Louis University Liver Center through Cardinal Glennon Children's Medical Center. In an effort to make progress in this disease, members of the Saint Louis University Liver Center sit on a national steering committee of the world's largest study of biliary atresia, called the Childhood Liver Disease Research and Education Network. This study, funded by the National Institutes of Health, is working to better understand the cause of this disease and is conducting treatment trials to improve the treatment outcomes.



Cardinal Glennon Pediatric Gastroenterology 314-577-5647

SLU Professor Receives \$1.4 Million Grant to Study Alpha-1 Liver Disease in Adults

Jeffrey Teckman, M.D., professor of pediatrics and biochemistry and molecular biology at Saint Louis University, has received a \$1.4 million grant from the Alpha-1 Foundation to investigate the natural history and progression of Alpha-1 Antitrypsin Deficiency, an inherited disease that can cause liver damage in children as well as adults.

The multi-center Adult Clinical and Genetic Linkage Study aims to understand the Alpha-1 liver disease in adults and answer various questions about effective methods of treatment. The study will be conducted at SLU, University of Florida, Gainesville and University of California, San Diego.

"Alpha-1 can cause life-threatening liver disease, and even cancer in some patients. But we can't predict in which patients it will develop or how fast liver damage will progress if it occurs," said Teckman, who serves as the director of the Division of Gastroenterology and Hepatology at SSM Cardinal Glennon Children's Medical Center. "This study will be helpful to understand how quickly it gets worse and what will be the science behind understanding that process."

Alpha-1 liver disease was discovered almost 50 years ago, but researchers have not yet identified many of the basic questions that will lead to possible treatment options. The study will be helpful in providing information about the progression of Alpha-1 liver disease in patients to companies that are looking to develop pharmaceuticals and other treatments.

"This is an important step in building knowledge about the disease," Teckman said. "And this knowledge will help us develop better treatment."

Adrian Di Bisceglie, M.D., chair of the department of internal medicine at Saint Louis University will also be involved with the study.

Teckman has worked with the Alpha-1 community for 15 years. Two years ago, the Alpha-1 Foundation developed a task force dedicated to finding out more about the liver disease. During the committee meetings, Teckman and other researchers identified the need to study a group of adults in order to discover basic questions about Alpha-1 liver disease to drive research for new treatment. Earlier this year, Teckman also published a paper in which he presents an approach for hepatologists to manage adult patients with Alpha-1 deficiency.



Jeffrey Teckman, M.D.

This study will have some similarities with The Childhood Liver Disease Research and Education Network (ChILDREN) study, in which Teckman and the others have been monitoring 300 children with the Alpha-1 condition for 10 years, the largest group of kids with Alpha-1 being studied in the world. Each year, some of Teckman's patients travel from various parts of the country, including Florida, Texas, Michigan and Wisconsin, to participate in this study.

Established in 1836, Saint Louis University School of Medicine has the distinction of awarding the first medical degree west of the Mississippi River. The school educates physicians and biomedical scientists, conducts medical research, and provides health care on a local, national and international level. Research at the school seeks new cures and treatments in five key areas: cancer, liver disease, heart/lung disease, aging and brain disease, and infectious disease.



PBC Alliance Message of Appreciation

During this Blissful season, we are proud to have had the satisfaction of beginning the PBC Alliance with all the hopes and goals of our Mission:

"to Care for the needs of PBC patients, Advocating for new technology and treatment, funding Research; and providing Education for PBC patients, medical professionals and the community."

This was made possible through the support and guidance of Dr. Bruce Bacon and Friends of the SLU Liver Center.



Truly Thankful,

The PBC Alliance Founding Members:
Joan Houston, Patti Silvey, Deb Sobel,
Becky Woolverton and the
PBC Alliance Members

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University Hospital 
when it's
CRITICAL

What's on the Calendar?

April 27, 2013 "That 80's PROM" benefitting the Young Friends of the SLULC.org. Interested in being a sponsor or participating in the event?

Email: YFSLULC@friendsoftheshlulc.org

May 11, 2013 Shoot for a Cure, Strathalbyn Farms Club in St. Charles, MO. To register or for more info, visit: friendsoftheshlulc.org/events/spring-event

November 1-5, 2013 AASLD (Assoc. for the Study of Liver Diseases), Washington DC

November 16, 2013 11th annual Diamonds Gala at The Chase Park, Khorassan Ballroom. To register or for more info, visit: <http://friendsoftheshlulc.org/events>

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SHOOT FOR A CURE

May 11, 2013

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