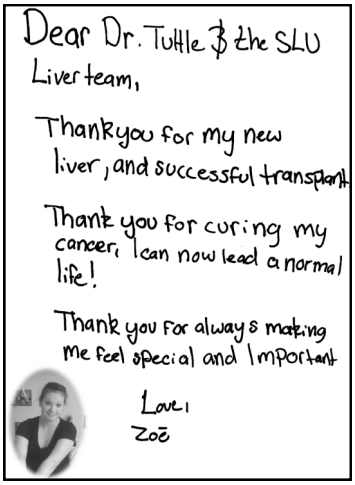
Issue #11
April, 2014

Friends & SLULC News

The Friends were "shining" like Diamonds at the 11th annual Diamonds Gala held November 16, 2013 at the Chase Park Plaza.

Guests were moved by the emotional story given by the mother and father of Zoe, a 12 year old girl diagnosed with cancer who received a liver transplant at age 13. Zoe is now cancer free and deep thanks were expressed to Zoe's organ donor and donor family, and to Dr. Betsy Tuttle and the SLU transplant team!

THANK YOU to Sponsors, Guests, Volunteers and our Planning Committee who helped raise over $300,000 for Friends of the Saint Louis University Liver Center's (SLULC) mission to support research at the SLULC and spread awareness of liver disease! The doctors and researchers continue with their quest to find better treatments to improve not only the quality of life for patients affected with liver disease, but hopefully one day lead to a cure!


Dear Dr. Tuttle & the SLU Liver team,

Thankyou for my new liver, and successful transplant.

Thank you for curing my cancer, I can now lead a normal life!

Thank you for always making me feel special and important

Love,
Zoe

Zoe, (left) with family

SAVE THE DATE—12th Annual Diamonds Gala
November 15, 2014 @ Coronado Ballroom
For information, visit:
www.friendsoftheslulc.org

FRIENDS SHINE LIKE DIAMONDS GALA

Special Sponsor Thanks!

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11th Annual Diamonds Gala
friends of the SAINT LOUIS UNIVERSITY LIVER CENTER
Friends shine like Diamonds

friends of the SAINT LOUIS UNIVERSITY LIVER CENTER
Cure Liver Disease Now

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE:


John Tavis, Ph.D.

CONGRATULATIONS TO DR. JOHN TAVIS 2013 NAOMI JUDD AWARD WINNER

Dr. Tavis is a professor at the Saint Louis University School of Medicine in the dept. of Molecular Microbiology and Immunology. He earned his Ph.D. at Pennsylvania State University in 1990. His laboratory research focuses on Hepatitis B virus (HBV) and Hepatitis C virus (HCV).

HBV and HCV are major causes of liver disease, including liver cancer, and together they cause nearly two million deaths each year worldwide. Dr. Tavis and his research staff are dedicated to finding a cure for the hepatitis B virus that would reduce liver cancer worldwide. He is hopeful that their findings may lead to drugs which, in combination with existing medications, could suppress the virus far enough to cure patients.

Dr. Tavis is the recipient of several distinguished honors in the field of research and is the author of many critical publications about viral hepatitis. He currently has several active research grants from the National Institutes of Health. Dr. Tavis has received two Saint Louis University Liver Center seed grants since 2005 and the support of these seed grants led to the awards of four NIH grants in support of his ongoing hepatitis research. Dr. Tavis states that *"without the Liver Center seed grant support and Adrian Di Bisceglie's clinical expertise, I would not have had a chance at receiving these NIH awards".*

Dr. Tavis and his wife, Maureen Donlin, PhD, have worked together on many of his research projects throughout the years. They are the proud parents of two sons, Steven and William.

Congratulations to Carter Finnell
2013 Volunteer of the Year

Carter Finnell

Volunteers are the backbone of the Friends organization and our voice in the community! The Volunteer award is presented each year to an individual who demonstrates support of the Friends mission "*to raise money to support the research efforts of the SLULC for the treatment and cure of liver diseases, and to promote understanding and awareness of liver disease".* The 2013 award was proudly presented to **Carter Finnell** at the Diamonds Gala in November.

Carter Finnell is the Owner of Marco Polo Outfitters, a custom gun shop located in Chesterfield, MO. It was a perfect teaming when the Friends created the first shotgun sporting event called Shoot for a Cure in 2009.

Carter began with making a product donation to our auction, then lent his shotgun sporting expertise to the event, and has increased his commitment each and every year. What started as a product donation has developed in to recruiting sponsors, volunteers and both individual and corporate teams. Carter has been a driving force on our Planning Committee the last 4 years, which helped lead us to our first ever, sold out event in 2013!

Carter brings his positive attitude and strong, energetic work ethic to our Planning Committee and we are most grateful for all he contributes!

The Friends of the Saint Louis University Liver Center extend our sincere gratitude and appreciation to Carter for the support he has provided and for the *Friend* he has become!

Volunteers are the backbone of the Friends of the SLULC!

How Can You Help the Friends of SLULC?
Be a Sponsor - Be 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: _____

The Search Is On for a Hepatitis B Drug, Thanks to A Million Dollars in NIH Grants to SLU

Scientists Will Scour Drug Libraries for One to Do the Trick

Two grants from the National Institutes of Health will allow Saint Louis University researchers to build on breakthroughs in understanding the hepatitis B virus and begin the search for a drug to cure – not just halt – the illness.

John Tavis, Ph.D.
Professor of molecular microbiology and immunology at SLU

Last year, John Tavis, Ph.D., professor of molecular microbiology and immunology at SLU published research demonstrating a way to measure and then block a previously unstudied enzyme, RNAseH, to stop the virus from replicating. Armed with that knowledge, Tavis now has the early data and funding to begin the search for a drug that may help to cure patients with hepatitis B.

Current hepatitis B drugs can treat but not cure the infection for most people. Because the majority of liver cancer cases worldwide are caused by hepatitis B virus, a cure would dramatically cut liver cancer rates.

The assay Tavis found in last year's research is the measuring tool that allows researchers to gage the RNAseH enzyme's activity. It is how they will be able to tell if a drug will block the enzyme's function, and therefore stop the virus. However, until they perfect this measuring tool, they cannot efficiently look for drug candidates to eliminate the hepatitis B virus.

Tavis describes the next stage of the research process as an engineering problem. "We must re-engineer the assay to be faster and of a better quality," Tavis says. There are two problems researchers must resolve in order to move forward.

"First, the current assay is too slow," Tavis said. "It runs on a gel, which is good for studying how things work, but it isn't fast enough to look for new drugs. So, we'll convert it from a gel-based radioactive assay to a faster and easier flores-cent format. "Next, the enzyme is currently at low concentration and not pure enough. So, we'll make the protein better, in terms of quantity and purity."

Once researchers have completed meticulous optimizing of both the enzyme and the assay, they will be ready for a small pilot test to screen drug candidates from known drug libraries. At this point, they will hand the work over to robots, which will screen tens of thousands of potential drug candidates.

"To get the assay ready for the robots, we have to know how we're going to interpret what we find, to know how to detect what is a hit. That's what this process is about."

Additional work funded from a second grant will involve screening for active enzyme from as many hepatitis B virus genotypes as possible. There are eight known genotypes of the hepatitis B virus, each further apart genetically than a person is from a mouse. Researchers will aim to find drug candidates that work for as many of the virus's genotypes as possible.

Tavis will partner with Marvin Meyers, Ph.D. director of medicinal chemistry at SLU's Center for World Health and Medicine (CWHM) and David Griggs, Ph.D., director of biology at the CWHM.

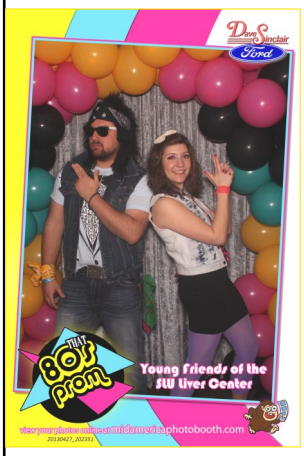
The CWHM is dedicated to the development of medicines to treat diseases that affect the world's poor and underserved populations. The center consists of a multidisciplinary team of former pharmaceutical company scientists with extensive translational research experience. They have the skills to discover and develop small molecule drugs, and they are experienced in advancing such agents into clinical trials.

Initial research funding for Tavis's work included grants from SLU's President's Research Fund, the SLU Cancer Center, and the Friends of the Saint Louis University Liver Center which allowed him to gather enough data to publish initial findings and attract NIH funding.

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.

Written by Carrie Bebermeyer

fun with Friends in 2013



11th Annual Diamonds Gala
friends of the SAINT LOUIS UNIVERSITY LIVER CENTER
Friends Shine like Diamonds

Join us in 2014

FEATURING
That 80s Band
Brought to you by Incentive Concepts

APRIL 26, 2014 @ PLUSH ST. LOUIS
3224 Locust Street, St. Louis MO 63103

BUY TICKETS ONLINE AT
that80sprom .bpt.me

Come leggings, come booties, come shoulder pads and rad baby-blue suits. Whatever your threads of choice, come rock the night away to the boss tunes of That 80s Band at That 80s Prom benefiting the Young Friends of the SLU Liver Center.

Wear your best 80s gear to earn your place on the Prom Court! Capture the Memories at our Photo Booth, sponsored by Paric.

FRIENDSOFTHESLULC.ORG/YOUNG-FRIENDS

BENEFITING
young friends of the SAINT LOUIS UNIVERSITY LIVER CENTER
FUELED BY launch ST. LOUIS

The 6th Annual

SHOOT FOR A CURE is a clay target shooting event held at the private Strathalbyn Farms Club located on 140 pristine acres in the Weldon Spring area of St. Charles County on Saturday, May 3rd.

SHOOT FOR A CURE features an afternoon of clay target shooting (a 100-shot, 14 station course), appetizers, dinner/drinks, and a live auction. There are also activities 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.

The event has raised over $240,000 and attracted hundreds of participants in the past five years with the help of local and national sponsors, supporters and volunteers. For more information or to register your team, visit: www.friendsoftheslulc.org/events/spring-event

SHOOT FOR A CURE
FRIENDS OF SLULC

Presented by
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Saturday, May 3, 2014

12TH ANNUAL DIAMONDS GALA *Saturday, November 15th Coronado Ballroom*

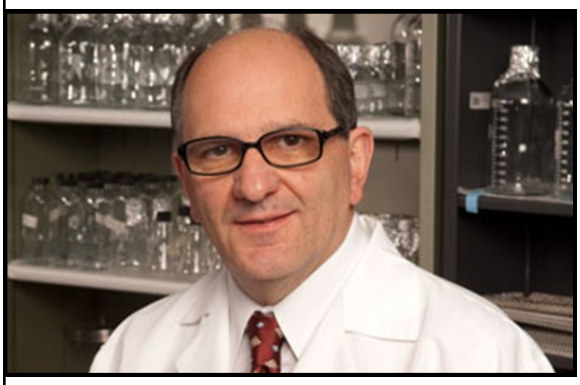
The "Diamonds" Gala is the Friends annual signature fundraiser, which supports the research efforts of the world-renowned Saint Louis University Liver Center. All money raised by the organization stays in the St. Louis area to perform life-saving research and treat patients in St. Louis.

friends of the SAINT LOUIS UNIVERSITY LIVER CENTER
CURE LIVER DISEASE NOW!

The evening's festivities includes a cocktail reception, sumptuous dinner, fabulous auction, along with the presentation of the annual "Naomi Judd Award" and "Volunteer of the Year Award".

The 12th Annual Diamonds Gala will be held in the historic Coronado Ballroom. For more information or to register, visit friendsoftheslulc.org/events

Introducing the AASLD President, Dr. Adrian Di Bisceglie



Adrian Di Bisceglie, M.D.
Chairman of the department of internal medicine at Saint Louis University

On January 1, 2014, Adrian M. Di Bisceglie became the 65th president of the American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases (AASLD) and takes on leadership of a 3,700-member academic society with a yearly operating budget in excess of $12 million and a long tradition of excellence in promoting liver disease research, training, and education. Few individuals are as qualified, committed, or enthusiastic about taking on this daunting task as Adrian Di Bisceglie.

Currently, Adrian is professor and chairman of internal medicine as well as chief of hepatology at the Saint Louis University School of Medicine. He is the author of more than 300 original articles and scholarly reviews in liver disease and is coeditor with Drs. Bruce Bacon, John Lake, and John O'Grady of the well-received textbook *Clinical Hepatology*, now in its second edition. He has been a member of the AASLD for more than 25 years and has served on seven of its committees (chairman of two), many abstract review groups, and, since 2010, its governing board. He has also served on multiple National Institutes of Health (NIH) and U.S. Food and Drug Administration scientific review groups and is the principal or co-principal investigator on three NIH grants. Most recently, Adrian (with Paul Martin) organized and oversaw the 2013 AASLD Postgraduate Course ("New Treatments in Liver Disease"), which drew 3,291 registrants, making it the one of the largest and most successful courses in the AASLD's long tradition of excellent yearly scientific educational presentations.

Adrian was born in Germiston, South Africa, a small mining town and suburb of Johannesburg, its largest city. His father was born in Italy, but taken to South Africa after being captured by the British army in North Africa during World War II. After his internment, he stayed on in South Africa to work in the gold mines and, more important, to marry a young South African woman and start a family. Adrian was the first person on either side of his family to graduate from high school. Not stopping there, he went on to gain entrance to the prestigious University of Witerwatersrand (Johannesburg, South Africa). Six years later, he graduated with a bachelor of medicine and surgery (M.B.B.Ch.), the equivalent of an M.D. in the United States. The following year, he did a general medical internship at the Coronation Hospital in Johannesburg.

After compulsory military training, where he spent several months in Namibia providing care for troops and locals, Adrian became a registrar (similar to a resident in medicine and later gastroenterology fellow) at the famous Baragwanath Hospital just outside the sprawling community of Soweto. This 3,000-bed hospital has provided outstanding care to the citizens of Soweto and extensive clinical experience to generations of South Africa physicians. As a registrar on call, Adrian regularly supervised a team of interns that might admit more than 100 patients each day. It was there that Adrian became interested in liver disease, falling under the mentorship of Professor Michael Kew. There also, Adrian first dealt with the disease that would become the focus for his career, hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC), the single, major cause of cancer death at Baragwanath Hospital. On weekly rounds, patients with liver disease would be presented to Professor Kew. Those with HCC would get a special visit from the professor to obtain a clinical history, demographic information, and a serum sample—data that would ultimately help define the role and burden of hepatitis B as a cause of HCC in Africa. Unlike in Asia, HCC in South Africa was a disease of young, otherwise healthy men (average age: late 20s), was rapidly progressive, and occurred in persons with low levels of virus and inactive disease.

With Professor Kew and Geoffrey Dusheiko, Adrian began clinical and laboratory investigations of chronic hepatitis B, its epidemiology, modes of transmission, natural history, therapy, and relationship to HCC. An early project was to assess the prevalence of hepatitis B among school children in Soweto, the large city adjoining Johannesburg in apartheid South Africa. Among 2,000 children, the rate of hepatitis B was less than 1%, far below the rates reported in rural areas and among migrant workers from southern Africa in the gold mines—a mystery in the epidemiology of hepatitis B that remains unexplained today. In 4 years of training and attending service at Baragwanath Hospital, Adrian began to establish his reputation as a clinical investigator in liver disease.

In 1986, Adrian, came to the United States. He joined the Liver Diseases Section at the Clinical Center of the NIH under the directorship of E. Anthony Jones (chief) and Jay Hoofnagle (senior investigator). When asked what he would like to make the focus of his research, he replied "hepatocellular carcinoma." "Very admirable", he was told, "but we don't see a lot of it here." The statement was true at the time, but, sadly, has changed since.

SAINT LOUIS UNIVERSITY LIVER CENTER

Adrian came to the Clinical Center of the NIH at a propitious time, and he thrived in the face of its challenges and opportunities. Within 2 years of joining the Liver Diseases Section, he had authored or coauthored important initial descriptions on the use of interferon-alpha (IFN-α) in chronic hepatitis C (CHC) and D, the natural history of hepatitis C, the replicative status and concentration of hepatitis B virus in hepatic and nonhepatic tissues, and pilot studies of other antivirals in chronic viral hepatitis. Adrian was made a senior staff physician in the Liver Diseases Section in 1989 and, 3 years later, became its director. He demonstrated the effects of IFN therapy on the newly described hepatitis C virus (HCV) and showed that long-term remissions in CHC were attributable to long-term clearance of HCV. Adrian was a close collaborator with Dr. Stephen Feinstone, discoverer of the hepatitis A virus and a skilled molecular virologist. Together with Drs. Michiko Shindo and Shuichi Kaneko, both visiting scientists at the NIH, they developed and refined the first assays for hepatitis B viral DNA and hepatitis C viral RNA, utilizing them to assess the effects of these novel therapies. These tools allowed them to show that levels of HCV RNA declined and could become negative in patients on IFN therapy, that relapse was associated with return of the viral RNA, and that long-term clinical remission was associated with viral eradication—the first demonstration that a human, chronic viral infection could be cured by antiviral therapy.

From early on, Adrian was privileged to interact and collaborate with some of the giants in the field of viral hepatitis, including Harvey Alter, Robert Purcell, John Gerin, and Leonard Seeff. In 1994, Adrian left the NIH to become professor of internal medicine and associate chairman at Saint Louis University School of Medicine, joining Dr. Bruce Bacon, who was division chief of gastroenterology and hepatology. Together, they formed the Saint Louis University Liver Center, ultimately to become one of the most prominent units devoted to research and care of patients with liver disease in the Midwest. Their superb clinical and basic research team grew to include Brent Tetri, Elizabeth Brunt, Bruce Luxon, John Tavis, and Jeffrey Teckman, among others. With local start-up funds, Adrian created a hepatitis research laboratory and was successful in receiving NIH funding for support of basic and clinical investigation.

A defining moment in Adrian's career came in 1999, when he became a principal investigator in the NIH-funded Hepatitis C Antiviral Long-term Treatment against Cirrhosis (HALT-C) Trial and was chosen as the chairman of its steering committee. This U.S. multicenter trial enrolled more than 1,000 patients with CHC and advanced fibrosis or cirrhosis and assessed the long-term benefits and safety of IFN-α therapy in patients who were nonresponders or only partial responders to optimal pegylated IFN/RBV–based therapy. His chairmanship of the HALT-C Trial demonstrated his best qualities: persistence; attention to detail; scientific rigor; medical judgment; personal leadership; and major organization abilities. Ultimately, long-term, low-dose IFN therapy was found to be ineffective in improving important clinical outcomes of CHC and indeed was associated with an excess in all-cause mortality. But, at the same time, the HALT-C Trial fostered an enormous amount of clinically useful information and new hypotheses regarding the natural history and complications of CHC, generating more than 75 publications, establishing a standard of excellence in clinical investigation and training a cadre of clinical investigators in liver disease research.

As a member of the AASLD, Adrian has been particularly active in public policy, having been a long-term member and, eventually, chair of the AASLD Public Policy Committee. He served as the first medical director of the American Liver Foundation under then-president and CEO Alan Brownstein and made multiple visits to Washington, DC, to the NIH and Capitol Hill, testifying on behalf of liver disease research before Congress and speaking directly to legislators and patient advocates regarding policy and the importance of federal support of liver-disease–related research.

Adrian Di Bisceglie becomes the president of the AASLD at a critical time, as rapid changes are about to occur in the U.S. medical care system, policies on screening for liver disease, management and therapy of hepatitis C and B, the level of biomedical research funding, and as fundamental breakthroughs in the understanding of the liver and its diseases are beginning to be translated into effective interventions to prevent or reverse the major causes of liver injury. As a seasoned clinician with experience in both clinical and laboratory research, Adrian is well positioned to appreciate and promote the needs of AASLD members.

This article was adapted from an article published in Hepatology, Feb 2014.

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Website: http//livercenter.slu.edu

SAVE THE DATES!

That 80s Prom
April 26, 2014
@ Plush

SHOOT FOR A CURE
May 3, 2014
@ Strathalbyn Farms Club

Diamonds Gala
November 15, 2014
@ The Coronado Ballroom

PBC ALLIANCE MESSAGE OF AWARENESS

Primary Biliary Cirrohosis (PBC) is a disease that slowly destroys the bile ducts in the liver causing bile buildup and damage to liver tissue. Obstruction in the bile ducts damages liver cells and leads to scarring, called cirrhosis. Warning Signs and Symptoms of PBC are *fatigue, hyper pigmentation, osteoporosis, jaundice, ascites, dry eyes and mouth, portal hypertension.*

If you have questions about PBC, visit the PBC Alliance page on the Friends website at www.friendsoftheslulc.org and submit your question to "Ask a Physician". Your question will be reviewed by a panel of Saint Louis University physicians and an answer will be posted within 48 hours of submission.

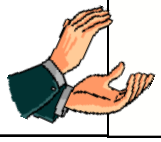
With continued appreciation of the support for PBC patients through the Saint Louis University Liver Center.

PBC Alliance

Becky, Patti, Deb, Joan
and the PBC Alliance Membership

*The Mission of the PBC Alliance is to **Care** for the needs of PBC patients by **Advocating** for new technology and treatment, funding **Research**, and to provide **Education** for PBC patients, medical professionals and the community.*

Special Thanks
to our newsletter sponsor!



What's on the Calendar?

April 26, 2014 That 80's Prom - at Plush in St. Louis, MO. Buy tickets online at www.that80sprom.bpt.me

May 3, 2014 Shoot for a Cure, Strathalbyn Farms Club, St. Charles, MO. For Team register or information, visit: friendsoftheslulc.org/events/spring-event

October Liver Awareness Month

November 7—11, 2014 AASLD (American Assoc. for the Study of Liver Diseases), Boston, MA

November 15, 2014 12th annual Diamonds Gala at Coronado Ballroom and Meeting Facility. To register or for info, visit: http://friendsoftheslulc.org/events

December 6, 2014 Best of AASLD (American Assoc. for the Study of Liver Diseases). Details coming soon…