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EDITORS

Leisa Duff
Executive Director
Friends of the Saint Louis
University Liver Center
lduff@friendsofthelulc.org

Lou Ann Biermann, RN, MSN
Administrative Manager,
The Saint Louis University
Liver Center
liverctr@health.slu.edu

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Friends & SLULC news

Welcome New Liver Center Members!

We are excited to welcome and introduce the newest members of the Saint Louis University Liver Center. We look forward to their expert contributions to the medical care of patients with liver disease.

Dr. Hany Elbeshbeshy graduated from Cairo University Medical School in 1995. He finished his residency at Atlantics Regional Medical Center in New Jersey, followed by fellowship in transplant hepatology, at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey in Newark, New Jersey. Dr. Elbeshbeshy has extensive experience in transplant hepatology and chronic liver disease. He served in different capacities at different Institutes and is UNOS certified as a primary transplant hepatologist. His focus is on management of chronic liver disease, viral hepatitis, and hepatic neoplasia with multiple publications and research related to his interests.

Dr. Elbeshbeshy and his wife Amira have five children and enjoy spending time with the family playing soccer and watching movies.



Hany Elbeshbeshy, MD

Dr. Kamran Qureshi comes to Saint Louis University from Temple University in Philadelphia where he served as an Assistant Professor of Medicine and a hepatologist in the Division of Gastroenterology. Prior to this, he completed his hepatology training at Florida Hospital in Orlando and also worked there as a faculty hepatologist. He completed his residency training in Internal Medicine at University of Illinois.

Dr. Qureshi's clinical interests are the management of advanced liver disease and complications of liver cirrhosis, care of patients with liver diseases before and after liver transplantation, viral hepatitis and liver malignancies. Dr. Qureshi has authored and co-authored multiple research manuscripts in leading peer reviewed journals, and was involved in various funded clinical trials at previous institutions.

"I'm honored to join the world renowned hepatology team at Saint Louis University and its growing transplant department. I look forward to providing leading-edge care to our advanced liver disease patient population, while exploring new advances in this innovative field." Dr. Qureshi and his wife Hooma Shah have two children. The Qureshi family has spent much time traveling, and when home, they enjoy swimming and watching movies.



Kamran Qureshi, MD

Save The Date!

16th annual DIAMONDS GALA *Puttin' on the Ritz*

Saturday, November 3, 2018
At the Ritz Carlton St. Louis

We invite you to join us for the Diamonds Gala on Saturday, November 3rd at the Ritz Carlton. We are excited to announce this year's emcee will be Rene Knott, KSDK Today in St. Louis, and our guest speaker is Don Eggleston, founder of Mission Works, and author of "With All We Are". The Diamonds evening begins with a general reception followed by dinner, presentation of awards, and a live auction. To register or for event info, P. 314-576-3078 or www.friendsofslulc.org/events/diamonds-gala



Rene Knott,
KSDK Today in St. Louis

CONGRATULATIONS TO LOU ANN BIERMANN 2017 NAOMI JUDD AWARD RECIPIENT



Lou Ann Biermann, RN, MSN

Lou Ann Biermann grew up Washington, Missouri. She received her Bachelor of Science degree in Nursing in 1979 at Southeast Missouri State University and Master of Science degrees in Nursing Education and Health Care Administration at the University of Phoenix in 1999. Lou Ann began her nursing career in 1979 at Saint Louis University Hospital working in the Surgical/Trauma Intensive Care Unit and later in organ donor procurement and liver transplantation. In 1990, she became the Program Director for Organ Transplantation at Scripps Health in LaJolla, CA. In 2002, Lou Ann assumed the position as Administrator of the Saint Louis University Liver Center and Manager of the Division of Gastroenterology & Hepatology in the Department of Internal Medicine.

Lou Ann is very active in the community and has served as an ex-officio member of the Board of Directors of the Friends of the Saint Louis University Liver Center since its inception. She is also a member of the Medical Advisory Board for Mid-America Transplant in St. Louis, Missouri as well as a member of the Scientific and Medical Advisory Board of the Friends of the SLU Liver Center. Lou Ann lists one of the highlights of her life as having had the honor to meet Mother Teresa while working in California. She was moved by Saint Teresa of Calcutta's words, telling her that working in healthcare is more than a profession; *"It's a vocation in which we are called to serve and we are blessed to have received that calling."*

The Naomi Judd Award recognizes the dedication of clinical professionals and researchers who have been influential in improving liver disease health awareness and education.

REMEMBERING VICKIE CROOKE 2017 VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR



Vickie Crooke

Vickie Crooke was a special friend to so many people who knew her. She was a long-time volunteer for the Friends of Saint Louis University Liver Center and was one of the original volunteers, lending a hand since 2003. Always generous and kind, Vickie committed her time and energy to help in numerous ways. She also generously donated to auctions and raffles.

Vickie received a liver transplant in 1999 and often commented, "The Liver Center doctors saved my life." In gratitude, she became a dedicated and grateful volunteer. Vickie will always be remembered as one of our cherished "Friends" and most valued volunteers.

The Volunteer award was presented at the Diamonds Gala and was accepted by her daughter, Kim Crooke.

The Friends of the Saint Louis University Liver Center extend our sincere gratitude and appreciation to Vickie, and her family, for the support she provided and the *Friend* she was!

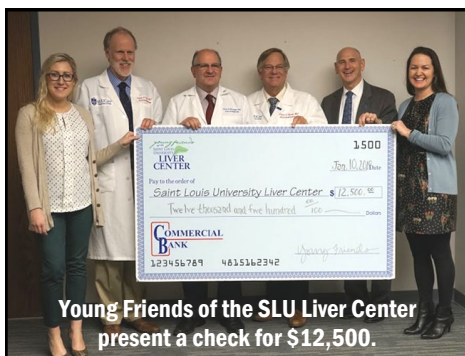


\$462,500 Check Presentations Marks 15 Years of Progress



**Friends of the SLU Liver Center
present a check for \$145,000.**

Photos by Simon Nguyen



**Young Friends of the SLU Liver Center
present a check for \$12,500.**

Friends of the Saint Louis University Liver Center presented a check for \$450,000 to members of the SLU Liver Center last week. From left to right, Brent Tetri, M.D., director of gastroenterology and hepatology, Adrian Di Bisceglie, M.D., co-director of the SLU Liver Center, Bruce Bacon, M.D., co-director of the SLU Liver Center, Kevin Behrns, M.D., dean of the medical school, and Rochelle Henderson, Ph.D., chair-elect of the Friends organization.

With a gift of \$450,000 raised at their annual “Diamonds” gala and events throughout the past year, the Friends celebrated its anniversary with continued support of liver research, patient care and education at SLU’s Liver Center. An additional gift of \$12,500 was raised by the Young Friends of the Liver Center.

SLUCare liver specialists in the division of gastroenterology and hepatology at Saint Louis University School of Medicine and SSM Health Saint Louis University Hospital care for more than 1,500 patients per month, with one of the largest hepatitis C practices in the world.

Bruce Bacon, M.D., co-director of the SLU Liver Center and professor of internal medicine, says that the generosity of Friends donors and volunteers has played a vital role in supporting SLU faculty members as they have advanced liver care on many fronts.

Contributions over the last 15 years to the Friends have made a significant impact, raising over \$4.2 million in support of clinical and basic science research, medical equipment and technology, patient care and educational opportunities sponsored by the Liver Center. Moreover, the impact of initial seed research grants funded by the

Friends has been instrumental in securing over \$18 million in NIH funding for the continuation of advanced research initiatives to improve patient care.

The SLU Liver Center has made great contributions in three areas of liver disease -- hepatitis C, hepatitis B, and fatty liver disease, said Adrian Di Bisceglie, M.D., co-director of the SLU Liver Center and professor of internal medicine at SLU.

Di Bisceglie and Bacon played major roles in conquering hepatitis C, most recently in helping develop the latest generation of drugs that now can cure patients of the virus.

“Members of the SLU Liver Center were intimately involved in the development of the antiviral agents that now make it possible to cure almost all patients with hepatitis C,” Di Bisceglie said. “We did this by enrolling large numbers of patients into clinical trials aimed at testing and perfecting the new drugs as they were being developed.”

Di Bisceglie notes that SLU has emerged as a major center in research on hepatitis B through work done by John Tavis, Ph.D., professor of molecular microbiology and immunology, in developing a new class of drugs aimed at treating hepatitis B, and that SLU remains an active participant in the NIH-funded Hepatitis B research Network (HBRN), a North American network of sites dedicated to studying hepatitis B as it occurs in North America.

“We have positioned ourselves as leaders in research in fatty liver disease, a condition that is becoming increasingly important,” Di Bisceglie said. “Dr. Brent Tetri is an international authority on this liver disease and advises many companies as they try to develop treatments for it. In addition, Dr. Tetri leads our participation in the NIH-funded NASH Clinical Research Network.”

In each of these cases, Di Bisceglie credits the Friends organization for its important role in SLU’s success. “They helped promote our clinical trials and thus provided access to these new treatments for hundreds of patients,” Di Bisceglie said. “Some of the funds they raised were used as seed grants to support new research projects to support our staff who conducted pivotal clinical trials.”

With Cancer, Early Awareness is Key



SLUCare transplant specialist Dr. Alex Befeler with a patient

Finding cancer at an early stage can mean the difference between succumbing to the disease and surviving it. That's a stark but life-saving message SLUCare doctors want to convey to the public, along with the importance of healthy habits and preventive care. They are passionate about using modern technology and patient education to detect cancer early and intervene so people can enjoy longer, healthier lives.

Early awareness is important in treating cancer because it enhances the patient's choices and chances of success, says Dr. Alex Befeler, SLUCare transplant hepatologist at SSM Health Saint Louis University Hospital. "If you wait until you have symptoms, it's likely your therapy options will be more limited," he explains. "But if it is detected early, before symptoms even appear, there are likely to

be more curative treatment choices with a high rate of success."

Befeler says many people may not be aware of the usual progression of liver cancer, but it's an important process to understand. It can happen when the patient contracts hepatitis C, a viral infection of the liver. This leads to cirrhosis, or scarring, of the organ; later, cancer develops and can spread to other areas of the body. "It may take a number of years for the cancer to appear," Befeler explains. "If we can diagnose and treat liver disease early and prevent cirrhosis from occurring, we likely can prevent the cancer."

According to Befeler, baby boomers should get a blood test for hepatitis C as a preventive measure. "If you have hepatitis C, the treatment for it is very effective," he notes. "It takes two to three months, and we are seeing near 100 percent cures." The condition rarely causes symptoms, so patients may not even know they have it until they get a cancer diagnosis.

Fatty liver disease (FLD) also can be a contributor to cirrhosis and cancer, but there are about 20 medications now available to treat it, Befeler says. Regular exercise and losing at least 10 percent of body weight also are common recommendations for overweight patients with FLD, he notes. "We know weight loss is difficult, and many people struggle with it," he says. "We are hopeful about new FLD medications, and for those who are obese, bariatric surgeries and procedures may be an option for losing weight."

SLUCare urologic oncologist Dr. Zachary Hamilton says sensitive screening methods like the prostate-specific antigen (PSA) blood test are helping doctors get an early handle on prostate cancer, the most common type of solid organ tumor in males. The antigen is a protein that may be elevated in the blood of a patient who has the disease.

Before the early detection methods we have now, patients had a 70 or 80 percent chance of surviving five years after diagnosis. Today, with better screening, it's more like 95 to 99 percent because we can catch the cancer earlier." *SLUCare Urologic Oncologist Dr. Zachary Hamilton*

"Lifetime risk for this type of cancer is one in every seven or eight men," says Hamilton, who also practices at SSM Health Saint Louis University Hospital. "Before the early detection methods we have now, patients had a 70 or 80 percent chance of surviving five years after diagnosis. Today, with better screening, it's more like 95 to 99 percent because we can catch the cancer earlier." If not treated, prostate cancer can spread to areas like bones and pelvic lymph nodes.

Men age 55 and older who get screened for prostate cancer every year or so have a good chance of detecting the disease at an early stage, Hamilton says. "In some patients, we catch it so early that they don't even need treatment at that time," he notes. "We can put them on an active surveillance program that involves periodic tests and imaging, and if the cancer looks like it may become aggressive, we can intervene."

Continued...

Hamilton says there also are genetic tests for cancer that show promise in early detection. "These tests can analyze a man's individual DNA and his hereditary risk for the cancer," he notes. "The technology is in its early stages in clinical use, but so far, it's producing exciting results and opportunities." It's also possible to analyze the tumor tissue of a patient who has had prostate cancer and determine his risk of recurrence. "This can help guide post-operative treatment and therapy," he says.

Doctors are making strides in diagnosing and treating patients with testicular, bladder and kidney cancers, too, according to Hamilton. "Identifying blood- and urine-based biomarkers is a promising area of research that can tell us when a gene has been disrupted and there's an increased risk of cancer," he says. Biomarkers are measurable indicators like DNA, vital signs or blood chemistry results that may signal disease.

"It's important to stay informed about different types of cancers and learn whether you need early screening," Hamilton advises. "Listen to your body, take good care of it, and talk with your doctor to find out which tests are important as you age." SLUCare Physician Group is dedicated to providing complete diagnostic care and treatment for cancer patients. For more information, call 314-977-4440.

This article originally appeared in Town & Style.

Saint Louis University Labs and Facilities

Friends of the Saint Louis University Liver Center Board of Directors, Executive Director and Young Friends members enjoyed a tour of Dr. John Tavis' laboratory at the SLU Doisy Research Center on Monday, January 8, 2018. John E. Tavis, PhD, is a Professor in the Department of Molecular Microbiology and Immunology. The Tavis lab studies 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 millions of deaths each year world-wide.



Left to right: Nathan Ponzar, Juan Villa Torrecilla, Tiffany Edwards, John Tavis, Jill Daw, Elena Lomonosova, Qilan Li, and Mikhail Ryzhikov

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



Donations at every level are greatly appreciated!

A donation is one of the most impactful ways to help CURE liver disease.

Donate online: www.friendsoftheshlulc.org

Or by mail: Friends of the SLU Liver Center, 14323 South Outer 40, Suite 200M, Chesterfield, MO 63017

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.

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SLU Schools of Law and Medicine Team Up to Eradicate Hepatitis C in Missouri

"Missouri is a giant leap closer to curing all of its citizens of hepatitis C," announced third-year law student Lizzie Kurowski at a press conference Tuesday, Nov. 21, at the School of Law. *"Years of pain and fatigue will end in just eight short weeks of treatment with the drugs available that completely cure hepatitis C, a serious and communicable disease."*

Kurowski was part of a legal team that filed a federal lawsuit on behalf of three individuals on Medicaid against the Missouri Dept. of Social Services in October 2016. The team was led by Saint Louis University Legal Clinics; John Ammann, J.D., McDonnell Professor of Justice in American Society; Legal Services of Eastern Missouri; and the National Health Law Program.



Left to right: Joel Ferber, J.D., Jamie Rodriguez, J.D., Bruce Bacon, M.D., Lizzie Kurowski, John Ammann, J.D., Photo by Adam Westrich

The lawsuit challenged the state's Medicaid policy, which restricted the coverage of these life-saving drugs to only patients with the most advanced stages of the disease, despite other patients' risk of impending liver disease or cancer.

The team also included Bruce Bacon, M.D., co-director of the Saint Louis University Liver Center in the Division of Hepatology at Saint Louis University School of Medicine, who along with his staff advocated for low-income Missourians with hepatitis C. "The state's rationale was they had a limited resource and would only treat the patients who really needed it, not all the patients," Bacon said. "The problem was that it became readily apparent that it was cost-effective to treat patients before they got really sick and eradicate the virus, not wait until they got really sick and then treat them."

"Providing the early treatment will save money by reducing the need for more expensive long-term treatment, including transplants," Ammann added. "Medicaid was covering liver transplants at \$300,000 to \$400,000, but not paying for the medication that would cure the disease [before significant liver damage]."

Besides the long-term economic benefit to the state following the change in policy, Ammann noted the moral problem of not providing the existing cure – which has been covered by most major health insurers for years – to the state's most vulnerable residents, as well as the public health risk of not stopping the spread of a curable disease.

"During the past year of litigation and before, there were poor people in Missouri who suffered needlessly. Patients would come to Dr. Bacon, and he knew the drugs were available, but they wouldn't be covered by Medicaid," Ammann said. "It's also important to note that there's a racial disparity in health law in America, and that's true with hepatitis C. African Americans are twice as likely to be living with hep C compared with the general population. Chronic liver disease, which comes from hep C, is one of the leading causes of death for African Americans between the ages of 45 and 64. So this is an important step in eliminating at least one of the disparities in health care in the U.S. because everyone is cured." Bacon estimated that the policy change will affect approximately 100,000 people in Missouri, and that while about half the states still limit access to the medication, Missouri's policy change will continue the national momentum to eventually eliminate the disease across the country.

"These cures are dramatic in terms of the improvement of quality of life that patients have," he said. "Patients feel so much better after they no longer have the virus. Additionally, the public health improvements from eradicating this virus are tremendous. We know that hepatitis C can be transmitted from mother to child in childbirth. We know that the incidence of hepatitis C is actually increasing in our society and is linked to the opioid epidemic going on in the U.S. So it's an important time for us for those of us who take care of patients with liver disease and specifically hepatitis C.

"We feel very confident that we can get to a point where we will be able to literally cure everybody and eliminate this virus from infecting and affecting any patients in the U.S. at all."

Continued...

Over the past year, several law students in the Legal Clinics have been involved in the lawsuit, working with the clients, interviewing patients, developing affidavits, going to clients' homes to prepare them for having their depositions taken. Kurowski got involved this semester with researching and contacting other advocates to help with the case, as well.

"I wanted more knowledge of the medical aspects of the case," she said. "Having diabetes myself, I was interested in learning more to incorporate into my law practice. My research included ensuring the state was ending the case when they said they were going to and making sure that the drugs being covered will stay covered."

Fun with Friends



15th Diamonds Gala
Living Life Fully

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Friends of the Saint Louis University Liver Center

Leisa Duff, Executive Director
 14323 So. Outer 40, Suite 200M
 Phone 314-576-3078 Fax 314-576-3654
 Website: www.friendsoftheslulc.org

Saint Louis University Liver Center

3635 Vista at Grand
 St. Louis, MO 63110-0250
 Phone: 314-577-8764 Fax: 314-577-8125
 Website: www.slucare.edu/gastroenterology-hepatology/liver-center

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Dr. Bacon Honored by St. Louis Metropolitan



Pictured L to R: Dean Kevin Behrns, MD, Mrs. Behrns, Dr. Bacon, Mrs. Sarah Bacon

Bruce R. Bacon, MD, professor of internal medicine and the James F. King Endowed Chair in Gastroenterology at Saint Louis University received the 2017 Award of Merit for distinguished and exceptional service to scientific medicine.

The St. Louis Metropolitan Medical Society, representing physicians in St. Louis city and county, works to

advance strong patient-physician relationships and quality health care through advocacy, communication and education. Founded in 1836, the Medical Society is affiliated with the Missouri State Medical Association and the American Medical Association. The society website is

www.slmms.org.

Special Thanks to our newsletter Sponsor



SSMHealth

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What's on the Calendar?

November 3, 2018 Diamonds Gala, Ritz Carlton, St. Louis, MO

November 9—November 13, 2018 The Liver Meeting® 2018, American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases, San Francisco, CA

December 6, 2018 The Friends End of Year Gathering—location TBD

June 1, 2019 Shoot for a Cure, Strathalbyn Farms Club, Weldon Spring, MO

For information on Friends events:

p: 314-576-3078

www.friendsoftheslulc.org