

Friends & SLU Liver Center News



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DENIM & DIAMONDS⁹

It was a "dazzling" evening as the Friends of the Saint Louis University Liver Center and their guests celebrated their 9th annual "Denim & Diamonds" event on Saturday, November 12, 2011 in the magnificent Khorassan Room at The Chase Park Plaza.

This year's event – *The Black & White Gala* – raised more than \$424,000 in corporate and donor support for the SLU Liver Center and the life-saving research and treatment they provide to patients from all over the world. Dr. Bruce R. Bacon, received the "Naomi Judd Award" for his outstanding accomplishments in clinical research for viral hepatitis. Paul Azzara received the Volunteer of the Year award (see story below).



After the awards were bestowed, dinner was followed by a special "Grateful Patients" presentation, featuring stories and comments by SLU Liver Center physicians/researchers alongside their patients and families.

Saint Louis University President Fr. Lawrence Biondi, S.J., served as the Honorary Chairperson, and KTVI FOX2's Morning Show Anchor John Pertzborn was the event Emcee.



VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

There isn't a week that goes by that Leisa in the Friends office doesn't receive a call from Paul Azzara asking "what do you need me to do – how can I help – just call if you need me to do anything!"

Paul Azzara has been volunteering for the Friends since early 2010 and in that time, has served many volunteer roles. He has raised money through letter writing campaigns, volunteered at events as well as recruited others to help. Paul is always recruiting auction items, inviting guests to events, and serving in the Friends office. He has been an active member of this year's Denim & Diamonds Planning Committee. Paul has a joyful spirit and we are most grateful for all he has done.

The Friends of the Saint Louis University Liver Center extend our sincere gratitude and appreciation to Paul for the endless volunteer hours he serves and for the Friend he has become!

Thank You Paul!



Paul Azzara

The Saint Louis University Liver Center proudly welcomes two new physicians to the team!



Mark Dy-Liacco, M.D.

Mark Dy-Liacco, M.D. joined the faculty of the Department of Surgery, Division of Abdominal Transplant at Saint Louis University as associate professor in May 2011. He came to SLU from his position as liver transplant surgeon from Rush University Medical Center in Chicago, IL. Dr. Dy-Liacco's clinical interests are in liver transplantation, hepatobiliary surgery and laparoscopic liver resection. He is a board certified critical care practicing intensivist with interest in transplant critical care.

Housed in the oldest university west of the Mississippi, the abdominal transplant programs at Saint Louis University began with the first kidney transplant in St. Louis in the 1970s. Since that time the programs have evolved into providing access to transplantation for patients in need of kidney, kidney/pancreas, pancreas after kidney and liver transplantation. Over 780 liver transplants have been performed at SLU since 1988 with a current one year patient and graft survival rate of greater than 91%.



Layla Hajjafar, MD, MSc

Layla Hajjafar, MD, MSc, joined the faculty of gastroenterology and hepatology at Saint Louis University as an assistant professor in October 2011. Dr. Hajjafar comes to the SLU Liver Center from her position as transplant hepatologist at Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit, Michigan. She is seeing general hepatology (liver disease) and liver transplant patients in the SLU Doctor's Office Building as well as doing endoscopic procedures at Saint Louis University Hospital.

Dr. Hajjafar's husband, Jason R. Taylor, MD, joined the Division of Gastroenterology and Hepatology at SLU in June 2011. Dr. Taylor is trained in advanced endoscopic techniques including endoscopic ultrasound and ERCP. Dr. Hajjafar started her position at SLU in the fall of 2011 following the birth of the couple's second child.

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: _____

What is Liver Cancer?

Primary cancer of the liver is called hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC). It is the fifth most common cancer worldwide. A large amount of HCC is caused by chronic liver disease with cirrhosis. Statistically, most HCC occurs in Asia due to high rates of hepatitis B. In Europe and North America, the annual rates of new cases of HCC are less than 10/100,000 in men and 5/100,000 in women. In persons with cirrhosis, the risk is 2-4/100 per year. Each year, about 20,000 new cases of HCC are diagnosed in the US. Though the overall incidence is low, it is one of the fastest growing causes of cancer related death in the United States. Hepatocellular carcinoma is a cancer that needs to be closely screened for patients that are at higher risk.



Alex Befeler , M.D.

Q. What are the risk factors for hepatocellular carcinoma?

A. Hepatocellular carcinoma presents typically in patients with cirrhosis, the presence of advanced scarring in the liver. Approximately eighty percent of patients diagnosed with HCC have the underlying diagnosis of cirrhosis. The common causes of cirrhosis include hepatitis B, hepatitis C, alcohol, and nonalcoholic fatty liver disease (NASH). The infrequent causes of HCC include hereditary hemochromatosis, alpha 1 antitrypsin deficiency, autoimmune hepatitis, primary biliary cirrhosis, and Wilson's disease. Patients with chronic hepatitis B, and to a lesser extent chronic hepatitis C, can develop HCC without having underlying cirrhosis. In addition to having cirrhosis, HCC is seen more frequently seen in men and persons older than 50 years.

Q. What tests can be used to detect liver cancer?

A. The initial detection of liver cancer is usually on screening abdominal ultrasounds. If the ultrasound suggests possible HCC, a 4 phase CT scans or dynamic contrast-enhanced MRI scans can often make the diagnosis based upon classic vascular patterns seen on the exams. Rarely a liver biopsy is needed.

Q. If someone has colon cancer or another type of cancer that has spread to the liver, is that the same as having liver cancer?

A. No. Though the cancer is now in the liver, it does not mean that the origin of the cancer is from the liver. If another cancer has spread to the liver, this is referred to as a metastasis. Metastases to the liver are 18-40 times more common than having a primary liver cancer (such as HCC). The most common cancers that spread to the liver include colon, pancreatic, breast, lung, stomach, esophageal, and ovarian cancers.

Q. What can I do to prevent primary liver cancer (HCC)?

A. Because the most common risk factor for developing HCC is having underlying liver disease, the best prevention is to avoid getting liver disease. A Hepatitis B vaccination can effectively prevent you from getting hepatitis B. If you have not been vaccinated against hepatitis B, this is something that can be done by your primary care provider or even at the local health department. If you already have hepatitis B, there are many effective medications which can lower your risk of getting HCC. If you have hepatitis C, successful medication treatment can prevent you from getting cirrhosis. If you have liver cirrhosis, you should be screened with an abdominal ultrasound for hepatocellular carcinoma every 6-12 months so it can be detected early and treated more effectively.



Roshani Desai , M.D.

Special Thanks to authors Dr. Alex Befeler and Dr. Roshani Desai

SLU Doctor Investigates Silent, Cancer-Causing Liver Disease \$50,000 Grant from Lottie Caroline Hardy Charitable Trust Funds Research

A Saint Louis University liver disease specialist has received a \$50,000 grant from the Lottie Caroline Hardy Charitable Trust to continue studying a silent disease caused by excess fat and inflammation in the liver that is linked to cancer.

Brent Tetri, M.D., director of the division of gastroenterology and hepatology at Saint Louis University School of Medicine, is using a mouse model to examine the connection between a fast food diet and an illness called nonalcoholic steatohepatitis (NASH), an exploding epidemic associated with obesity and a sedentary life style.

"NASH is common, probably seen in 5 to 10 percent of people, including children," Tetri says. "The condition puts people at risk for developing cirrhosis and liver cancer, which is the cancer with the fastest rising mortality rate. With the grant, we will continue studying NASH in mice, with the goal of understanding more about its cause and connection to liver cirrhosis and liver cancer."

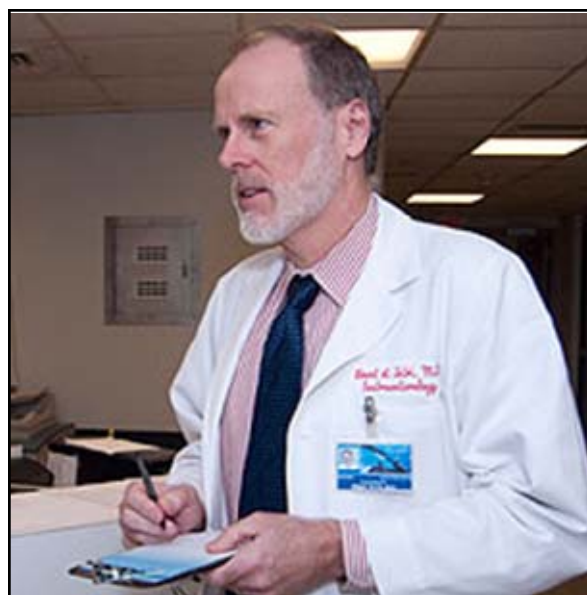
Fueled by a diet that is high in fats and sugars, the number of NASH cirrhosis cases in the U.S. has dramatically increased in recent years and NASH cirrhosis occurs even in children. Likewise, despite medical advances, deaths from liver cancer also have shot up.

"Cancer researchers from around the world are focusing on liver cancer," Tetri said. "However, our group is the only one to look at the role of a fast food diet, and especially trans-fats, in the development of liver cancer. Our study of how diet affects the development of disease is an example of the multi-faceted research at Saint Louis University, which also includes studies at the SLU Cancer Center."

Tetri and his team have developed a mouse model of NASH. In earlier studies, mice were fed a fast food-type diet that included a high level of trans-fats, which are in French fries, chicken nuggets and many snack foods, and high fructose corn syrup, an ingredient in soda. Scientists already knew that this type of diet is linked to heart disease, and Tetri saw the diet also caused liver disease.

The mice developed severe NASH after four months, early signs of cirrhosis after 12 months and liver cancer by 18 months.

Additionally, the mice that were fed high fructose corn syrup ate more than other mice, indicating that fructose



Brent Tetri, M.D.

likely suppresses the feeling of being satisfied and full.

"The take home message for people is when you have a Coke next to that Whopper, chances are, you'll finish that Whopper," Tetri said.

With funding from the Lottie Caroline Hardy Charitable Trust, Tetri will spend the next 18 months performing detailed analysis of liver damage in mice that are fed a diet that is high in trans-fats.

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, infectious disease, liver disease, aging and brain disease and heart/lung disease.





The Hepatitis B Research Network (HBRN)

Observational Studies of Adults and Children with Hepatitis B Virus Infection in North America



Who can enroll?

Individuals who are hepatitis B surface antigen positive not currently on anti-viral medication. Approximately 2500 adults (≥ 18 years of age) and 500 children (ages 6 months to 17 years) will be enrolled in this study. We hope to enroll as many as 300 adults and 50 children into these two studies at Saint Louis University.

What is an observational study?

An observational study is the collection of information related to a specific disease. Once a large amount of information is collected, it may help identify the best way to diagnose or treat a disease.

Who is conducting the research study?

These two studies are being conducted by researchers at approximately 22 adult liver centers and 7 pediatric liver centers in the United States and Canada. Saint Louis University is participating in both the adult and pediatric study. The National Institute of Health (NIH) is providing the funding for the studies.

What will be collected at the start of the study?

If you choose to participate, a physical examination and a detailed medical history will be taken. As the diagnosis of Hepatitis B involves routine laboratory tests, at the same time that testing is being done we would collect additional blood samples. The samples would be labeled and stored by a coded number. The collection of additional blood for research is optional.

What will happen at follow-up visits?

If you choose to participate, we will make every attempt to coordinate the research visits at the same time as your clinical visits. Therefore these visits will include a physical exam, interval history and laboratory tests. Most research visits will also include questionnaires.

How long does the study last?

This study lasts for up to 6 years but your length of participation depends on age at the time of enrollment.

What if I don't want to be in the study or if I want to drop out of the study?

Your participation is entirely voluntary and you will receive the same level of care whether you decide to participate or not. You are also free to drop out of the study at any time.

Several of my family members are hepatitis B positive. Can more than one enroll?

Yes. Any family member meeting the enrollment criteria is eligible to enroll. If members of the same family (parents, children, or siblings) are enrolled in both the adult study and pediatric study, we will do our best to coordinate the visits so they are completed at the same time and in the same place.

Who can I contact if I have questions?

Adult Study: Debra King, RN at 314-977-9320 or KINGDL@slu.edu

Pediatric Study: Rosemary Nagy, RD at 314-268-2700 ext. 6144, RNAGY@slu.edu

Don't miss the 10th annual
Diamonds Gala Circle of Friends Celebration
September 22, 2012 at The Chase Park Plaza

Sponsorships are still available at the following levels:

BRONZE SPONSOR \$5,000

- 1/8 page acknowledgement / advertisement in the Diamonds Gala Program
- Invitations for 10 guests to the Diamonds Gala
- Company recognition for being Bronze Sponsor in program and event signage
- Company recognition on the Friends of the SLULC website on the "Meet our Sponsors" page

TABLE SPONSOR \$2,000

- Invitations for 10 guests to the Diamonds Gala
- Thank You acknowledgement / advertisement in the Diamonds Gala Program

INDIVIDUAL TICKETS \$200 per person

Please call the Friends office for Gala information
 314-576-3078 or visit us at <http://friendsoftheslulc.org/events/denim-diamonds>

**A few more pics of friends having fun at
 Denim & Diamonds in November!**



THE BLACK & WHITE GALA
 2011

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The Friends of the Saint Louis University Liver Center raise money
 to support the efforts of the SLU Liver Center for the treatment
 and cure of liver diseases, and to promote understanding
 and awareness of liver disease.

**DENIM &
 DIAMONDS**
 9

Friends of the
**SAINT LOUIS
 UNIVERSITY
 LIVER
 CENTER**
 Cure Liver. Dismiss Fear.

\$250,000 check presented to the SLU Liver Center

On February 17, 2012 the Saint Louis University Liver Center received a check in the amount of \$250,000 from the Friends of the SLU Liver Center organization. Leisa Duff, Executive Director of the Friends organization presented the check to Dr. Adrian Di Bisceglie, co-director of the SLU Liver Center and Dr. Brent Tetri, a member of the SLU Liver Center.

The Friends is a 501c3 organization that was started in 2002 by a group of grateful liver disease patients who were treated by SLU physicians. The sole mission of the organization is to raise funds that support research, treatment and cure of liver diseases at the Saint Louis University Liver Center. Since its inception, the Friends organization has donated \$2,334,500 to the SLU Liver Center. The Liver Center is very fortunate to have an organization like the Friends to partner with!



Adrian Di Bisceglie, MD, Leisa Duff, Brent Tetri, MD (Pictured from left to right)

Introducing the PBC Alliance

The PBC Alliance held its first informational meeting in February to introduce patients to the mission of Caring for the needs of PBC patients and jump start their effort to recruit new members and volunteers for the Alliance. Dr. Bacon was a guest speaker and presented information on "What is known, unknown and on the horizon for the treatment of PBC". There were 30 guests in attendance seeking PBC information and the Alliance members have already started working toward their mission.

Dr. Bruce Bacon of the Saint Louis University Liver Center, Dr Mark Green of Northwestern University, Dr. Mark Pruzinski, of Intercept Pharmaceuticals, Deborah Sobel, a PBC Patient, presented information to the Rare Disease Caucus, on April 25th in Washington, D.C. PBC information included education about the disease, current treatment, the potential for future solutions as well as the Challenges of treating patients with PBC.

The Rare Disease Caucus was founded in 2009 and is a bi partisan and bi cameral (congressmen and senators). The focus of the caucus is to provide FDA oversight and design legislative solutions to the problems facing those suffering from rare diseases.

JOIN THE PBC SUPPORT GROUP MEETING

Saturday, July 21, 2012 11:00 a.m.—12:30 p.m.

at the Learning Resource Center (near SLU Hospital)

Don't miss Dr. Bacon's presentation

"Aspects of Being an Informed PBC Patient"

For information call 314-576-3078



PBC
Alliance
CARE

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

Young Friends of the SLU Liver Center

The Friends of the SLU Liver Center recently partnered with Launch St. Louis embarking on a mission to build a Young Friends Board of Directors. Launch St. Louis is a St. Louis-based non-profit that energizes and develops the next generation of leadership for cancer related nonprofits. Have you thought about putting your skills to work to benefit a non-profit organization? We welcome you to get in on the ground level and support the Friends of the SLU Liver Center. This is an opportunity to gain board experience in a comfortable learning environment and network with your peers!

We invite you to join this energetic group of young professionals. For an online application to join the group or to learn more about this opportunity, visit

<http://friendsoftheslulc.org/young-friends>

launch
ST. LOUIS

4th Annual
SHOOT FOR A CURE!

Saturday, June 30, 2012

*Open to both novice and advanced shooters,
SHOOT FOR A CURE is a fun day for all.
Shoot 50 or 100 rounds, or if you're not a shooter,
come enjoy the beauty of the Strathalbyn landscape!*

**For more info visit the Friends website at
friendsoftheshluc.org/events/spring-event
or phone 314-576-3078**

*Strathalbyn Farms Club is located on 140 pristine acres in
the Weldon Spring area of St. Charles County.*

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What's on the Calendar?

June 30, 2012 Shoot for a Cure, Strathalbyn Farms Club in St. Charles, MO. To register or for more info, visit: friendsoftheshluc.org/events/spring-event

July 21, 2012 PBC Alliance Support Group Meeting, Learning Resource Center, near SLU Hospital. To register or for more info, visit: <http://friendsoftheshluc.org/pbc-alliance>

September 22, 2012 Diamonds Gala¹⁰ Circle of Friends Celebration at The Chase Park, Khorassan Ballroom. To register or for more info, visit: <http://friendsoftheshluc.org/events/denim-diamonds>

November 9–13, 2011 AASLD (Assoc. for the Study of Liver Diseases), Hynes Convention Center, Boston, MA

Saint Louis
University Hospital 
when it's
CRITICAL

SHOOT FOR A CURE

June 30, 2012
Strathalbyn Farms Club

Diamonds¹⁰ Gala
September 22, 2012
The Chase Park Plaza

SAVE THE DATES!

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