



#### EDITOR

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#### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Naomi Judd Award Recipient<br>& Congrats John Tavis Ph.D.            | 2 |
| End of Year letter   | 3 |
| Fun with Friends in 2022   | 4 |
| Sponsor/Donor Thanks   | 5 |
| SLU Liver Center Seed/<br>Fellowship Awardees and<br>CME Opportunity | 6 |
| SSM Health<br>Saint Louis University Hospital                        | 7 |
| CALENDAR OF EVENTS   | 8 |

## Friends & SLULC news

### Saint Louis University and partners discover treatment for rare, genetic liver disease

Researchers at Saint Louis University's School of Medicine, Arrowhead Pharmaceuticals, and Takeda Pharmaceuticals reported the first effective drug to treat a rare, genetic liver disease.

Alpha1-Antitrypsin (AAT) Deficiency affects 1 in 3,500 births and can cause severe lung disease in adults or liver disease in adults and children. AAT is a protein that is made in the liver and released into the blood in large quantities which helps protect the body when there is an infection. Symptoms of the deficiency may include shortness of breath and wheezing, repeated infections in the lungs, yellow skin, fatigue, and even death. The only treatment for this disease, before this research, was a liver transplant.

SLU School of Medicine and Industry Partners reported the first effective drug to treat the disease. Their study "Fazirsiran for Liver Disease Associated with Alpha1-Antitrypsin Deficiency," was published in the New England Journal of Medicine.

Phase two of the study investigated the safety and efficacy of fazirsiran, an RNA interference drug, with patients between 18 and 75 years old with liver disease associated with alpha1-antitrypsin deficiency. "This is the culmination of over a decade of work to cure this disease, and a significant part of the work was done here," said Teckman, who also is Director of Pediatric Gastroenterology and Hepatology at SLU. "We have patients come around the country to see SLU's expert faculty members at SSM Health Cardinal Glennon Children's Hospital with this disease for care and to participate in our studies." Jeffery Teckman, M.D., is a professor of pediatrics and biochemistry and molecular biology who also authored this paper.

Teckman said that many of those who are impacted are often undiagnosed or misdiagnosed with other diagnoses. These would include fatty liver disease, asthma, or smoking-related lung disease. "When I was in medical school, I learned that reduction in liver fibrosis, or scar tissue in the liver, with AAT deficiency was impossible, but now we see that we can reverse this process in humans with minimal side effects," Teckman said. Now, the team will expand the international study to include additional adult patients and children.

*Credit: Saint Louis University, Author: Alli Hebel*



**Jeff Teckman, MD**  
SSM Health Cardinal Glennon  
Children's Hospital

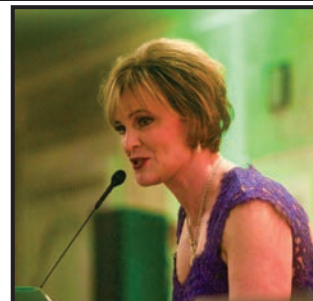
### Celebrating 20 Years of Research at the Diamonds Gala

Guests joined the Friends in "Celebrating 20 Years of Research" at the 20th Annual Diamonds Gala on Saturday, October 8, 2022 at the St. Louis Hilton Frontenac!

Monica Adams, KSDK Today in St. Louis Anchor, served as the Emcee/ Auctioneer and opening remarks were given by Jeff Gambaro, Co-Chair of the Friends Board. The 2022 Naomi Judd award was presented to Dr. Chintalapati Varma, for continued support of research at the SLU Liver Center. Our guest speakers were, Dr. Jeff Teckman, Pediatric Gastroenterologist at SSM Health Cardinal Glennon Children's Hospital, whom shared his recent treatment discovery for Alpha1-Antitrypsin (AAT), a rare genetic liver disease and, Lindsay Morris, which shared her experience as a patient with Alpha 1 and research participant. Both emphasized the need for support to continue the fight in finding a cure for Alpha1 and their excitement in all that has been accomplished thus far.

Special Thanks to all Sponsors and Donors and the St. Louis business community for donating auction items to help raise funds through a live auction and two raffles! Over \$227,000 was raised to support the Saint Louis University Liver Center!

*The "Diamonds Gala" is Friends of SLU Liver Center's annual and major fundraiser, which supports the research efforts of the world-renowned Saint Louis University Liver Center for the treatment and cure of liver diseases, and promotes understanding and awareness of liver disease. All money raised stays in the St. Louis area to perform life-saving research which helps patients with liver disease nationwide.*



**Monica Adams**  
KSDK Today in St. Louis  
Diamonds Gala Emcee



**Jeff Teckman, MD**  
Presenting Speaker



## CONGRATULATIONS TO CHINTALAPATI VARMA, MD 2022 NAOMI JUDD AWARD RECIPIENT



**Chintalapati Varma, MD**

Dr. Varma completed his Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery at The Armed Forces Medical College in Pune, Maharashtra, India in 1983. He completed residency training in general surgery in both India and the United Kingdom. His multi-organ transplant/hepatobiliary surgery fellowship was completed at The Mount Sinai Medical Center in New York in 1997.

After completing his training, Dr. Varma initially joined the faculty in the Dept. of Surgery at Saint Louis University in 1997 as an Assistant Professor. He served as the Director of the Live Donor Liver Program and held an additional position with SSM Health Cardinal Glennon. From 2004 to 2015 he worked primarily in Pennsylvania, culminating in his role as the Director of the Department of Transplant & Liver Surgery in the Geisinger Health System. Unable to stay away any longer, he rejoined SLU in 2015 as a Professor.

In Dr. Varma's clinical work at SLU, he is the Surgical Director for the Pediatric Liver & Kidney Transplant Program at SSM Health Cardinal Glennon Children's Hospital. He collaborates with clinicians and researchers alike on campus and beyond and is an active member of the American Liver Foundation Mid America Medical Advisory Committee & OPTN/UNOS National Liver Review Board. Dr. Varma is also committed to education of the next generation of doctors, serving as clerkship advisor for fourth year medical students in transplant.

***Congratulations Dr. Varma!***

## CONGRATULATIONS JOHN TAVIS, PH.D.

John Tavis, Ph.D., a long-term member of the Saint Louis University Liver Center and strong supporter of the Friends of the Saint Louis University Liver Center was recently elected Chairperson of the ICE-HBV governing board and will assume that role on January 1, 2023. John will be responsible for overseeing ICE-HBV's international efforts and helping it set its annual goals.

The International Coalition to Eliminate HBV (ICE-HBV) is an association of the world's leading basic and early-stage translational HBV researchers. Its mission is to promote a science-driven cure for chronic HBV infections. It helps to standardize research protocols so that data can be directly compared between labs, holds symposia exploring timely questions in HBV cure research, hosts webinars in conjunction with close partners like the World Hepatitis Alliance and the Hepatitis B Foundation to provide up-to-date, accurate scientific information about HBV and cure researcher to lay



**John Tavis, Ph.D.**

audiences world-wide, and works with governmental partners to promote funding of HBV cure efforts. It played a key role in the US National Institutes of Health's recent launching of an HBV research reagent repository that provides high-quality research tools such as cell lines, HBV molecular clones, antibodies, etc. to the world-wide research community for only shipping costs.

ICE-HBV is developing a series of FAQ videos about the biology, pathology, therapy, and cure efforts for HBV. John recently recorded a video as part of this series which you can find at the following link: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kFI4lYt\\_5d4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kFI4lYt_5d4)

***Congratulations John!***



December, 2022

Dear Friends,

As this year comes to a close, we want to give thanks and reflect on the things made possible through your generosity. We deeply appreciate the support from our Board, Sponsors, Individual Donors and our Volunteers. We are grateful to those who came out to support our three fundraising events, Shoot for a Cure, Swing for a Cure, and the 20<sup>th</sup> annual Diamonds Gala. These events promoted understanding and awareness of liver disease while raising much needed funds for liver research. We appreciate everyone helping to keep the Liver Center Seed Grant program funded which supports research to find ways to prevent and cure liver disease.

The impact of charitable contributions continues to grow and is *measurable*! We'd like to share a few things which have been supported by generous contributions to Friends of the Saint Louis University Liver Center:

- *Since 2005, nearly \$5.6 million has been raised for research at the Saint Louis University Liver Center which has supported **52 Liver Center Seed grants** awarded to Liver Center members through a Request for Applications process. These directed research grants were established to provide bridge or seed grant funding to investigators while they work toward developing their projects, gathering preliminary data allowing them to submit external grant applications and publish their results. These seed grants have generated over \$29 million in external funding, such as the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and other agencies, enabling the continuation of vital research by Saint Louis University Liver Center investigators. The seed grant funding program has produced a current Return on Investment of **17.5**. Many of these research studies are now part of national and international research programs to find cures and treatments to liver diseases.*
- *Over **\$169,992** was used for the purchase of supplies and equipment in support of clinical trials research and for basic science laboratories of the Liver Center investigators.*
- ***Ten Summer Research Fellowships** have been awarded, totaling **\$35,000**.*

These things are not possible without community support, and donations at every level! Your support is critical in continuing cutting edge research especially given the past few challenging years in our world which has impacted our fundraising events. Every level contribution will help us move research forward!

We are thankful to our physicians, clinical staff, and investigators at Saint Louis University Liver Center and to you, our donors/sponsors/volunteers, for your financial support and volunteer involvement as we look ahead to opportunities for new discoveries and treatments for patients.

We ask you to please consider making an end of the year tax deductible contribution to Friends of the Saint Louis University Liver Center. You may contribute online at [www.friendsoftheslulc.org/make-a-donation](http://www.friendsoftheslulc.org/make-a-donation).

We look forward to your reply and we wish you a Healthy and Happy Holiday Season!

Sincerely,

Brent Tetri, M.D.  
Co-Director, Saint Louis University Liver Center  
Associate Chairman for Clinical Studies  
Professor of Internal Medicine  
Saint Louis University School of Medicine

Co-Chair, Friends of the Saint Louis University  
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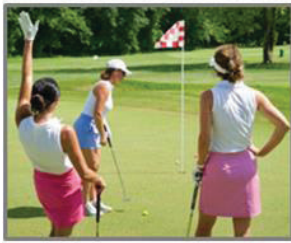
#### Development Assistant

Laurie Mallon

\*In memoriam



# Fun with Friends in 2022



Midland Optical Team



Top Team, Flight #1  
Commercial Bank Team



Top Team, Flight #2  
Genentech



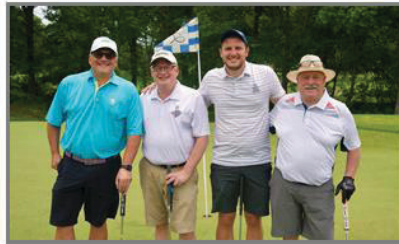
SLU Internal Medicine Team



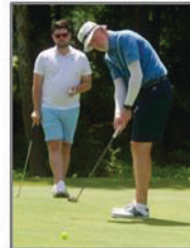
Dr. Place  
Good or Bad shot??



Ude Team



Gambaro Team



1st Place - GM Law-Helms Team



2nd Place - Foam Supplies



3rd Place - SLUH 1989



SLU Metabolic Team



Team Research



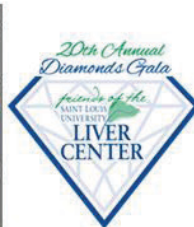
Moore Computing Team



Jeff Gambaro



The Morris Family



Michael & Michelle Goolsby



Cadeau Team



Monica & Jim Quentin



Dr. Danielle Carpenter &  
Dr. Chintalapati Varma



SLU Dept. of Biochemistry & Molecular Bio Guests



Laurie Mallon



Dr's Ranjit & Ratna Ray



Dr. Jeff Teckman



Chris Kennedy  
Golden Ticket Winner!



Mr. & Mrs. Jeff Gambaro & Guests



Dr. & Mrs. Wing-Kin Syn



Mary Ann & Don Eggleston



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

*A complete Thank You List is on the Friends website, event page.*



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



**We look forward to seeing YOU at an upcoming Friends event - Dates soon to be announced!**

**[www.friendsoftheshlulc.org](http://www.friendsoftheshlulc.org)**

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20 Years of  
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Dr. & Mrs. Wing-Kin Syn

Dr. & Mrs. Brent Tetri



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## Saint Louis University Liver Center Seed Grant & Fellowship

Saint Louis University Liver Center Research Seed Grants support novel research aims of their investigators. Seed grants are expected to yield data that the applicant will use as the basis for an extramural grant application. These directed research grants were established to provide funding to Liver Center investigators while they work toward developing their projects, gathering preliminary data allowing them to submit NIH grant applications and publish their results. Since 2005, 52 grants have been awarded totaling \$1,459,000 and additionally \$169,992 of research equipment and laboratory supplies were purchased and ten Summer Research Fellowships have been awarded totaling \$35,000.

These seed grant funds generated NIH, VA and foundation awards totaling over \$29 million. *We are proud to share the Return on Investment (ROI) for all Saint Louis University Liver Center Seed grants awarded since 2005 is 17.5.*

**The following investigators received 2022 Saint Louis University Liver Center Seed Grants:**

- **John Tavis, PhD** – Molecular Microbiology & Immunology - SLULC Seed Grant - In silico identification and validation of novel non-active site inhibitors of the HBV polymerase.
- **Brent Tetri, MD** - Development of liver “defatting” methods in cell culture that can be used in ex-vivo pre-transplant liver perfusion of fatty donor livers.

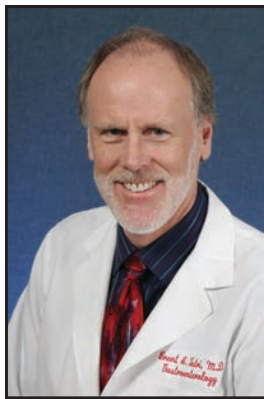
**Summer Fellowships** – The Liver Center hopes that student research fellowships will help foster the development of the next generation of medical researchers. The Summer Research Fellowship was initiated by the SLU Liver Center in 2018 for Saint Louis University undergraduate and graduate level students who have a keen interest in liver disease research. To date, funded fellowships have been awarded to 10 students.

**2022 Summer Fellowship Recipient:**

- **Jeff Bettag**, Project title: PROTECT (Perfusion Regulated Organ Therapeutics with Enhanced Controlled Testing)  
Faculty Mention: **Mustafa Nazzal, MD**



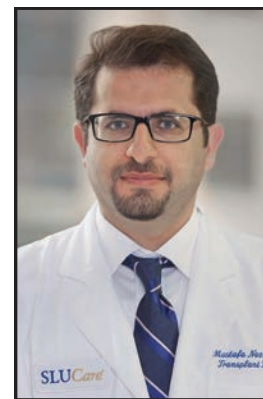
**John Tavis, Ph.D.**



**Brent Tetri, MD**



To the dedicated staff, physicians & researchers at the Saint Louis University Liver Center!



**Mustafa Nazzal, MD**



**Jeff Bettag**

## CME Opportunity

We are pleased to announce the inaugural Midwest Metabolic Disease Clinical Symposium. The symposium will take place on Friday, April 14 through Sunday, April 16, 2023, at The Westin St. Louis. The symposium is a two-and-a-half-day event where the medical community can gain specialty-specific insight on the multidisciplinary approach to Metabolic Disease. Experts from across the globe will present on topics related to diabetes, obesity management, hepatology, endocrinology, cardiology, and pulmonary medicine.

**Credit Designation:** Saint Louis University School of Medicine designates this live activity for a maximum of **14.5 AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™**. Physicians should only claim credit commensurate with the extent of their participation in the activity.

Saint Louis University School of Medicine will provide other learner certificates (APPs, nurses, and other types of learners). The certificate will state that the activity was designated for **14.5 AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™**. Follow your board's requirements for reciprocal CE credits.

Laura Robinson is the Program Director and Myron Minner are the contacts for the symposium. For more information, you may reach them at: [laura.robinson@health.slu.edu](mailto:laura.robinson@health.slu.edu) or [myron.minner@health.slu.edu](mailto:myron.minner@health.slu.edu)



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## What's Coming Up?

- \*SLU Division of GI and Hepatology GI Lecture Series - Kicks off in February, 2023, for info contact LaDonna Willis at [ladonna.willis@slucare.ssmhealth.com](mailto:ladonna.willis@slucare.ssmhealth.com)
- \*Shoot for a Cure - Strathalbyn Farms Club - April, 2023
- \*Swing for a Cure - The Legends Country Club - Aug, 2023
- \*Diamonds Gala - TBD - Check Friends website for info
- \*AASLD-The Liver Meeting - November 10-14, 2023
- \*Best of AASLD-SLU - December 6, 2023

For information on Friends events:

p: 314-576-3078

[www.friendsoftheslulc.org](http://www.friendsoftheslulc.org)



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