

# The Palchak Connection

## Hope for a Cure... Begins with Research

Spring 2021

THE JACQUALYN PALCHAK  
**CANCER FUND**  
Volume 10 Issue 1

**Thank you for your  
generous support**



**Cancer Moonshot Study**  
by David Palchak, MD

As we wrap up our fiscal year, the Board of Directors of the Jacquelyn Palchak Cancer Fund (JPCF) would like to take this opportunity to express our deep gratitude to our local community for their generosity.

Donations to the Palchak Cancer Fund during this holiday season increased 25% from prior years! This holiday season we received a very generous \$27,525 from our local community.

Even during the COVID-19 Pandemic we have continued to offer access to the latest treatment options and clinical trials to local patients. Because of your generosity our local patients can access these trials without having to travel to other areas for treatment, which has had a significant impact on their care. We are all so very grateful to live in such a beautiful and compassionate community.

Thank You!



**Serving our Local Community  
since 2003**

A federally recognized 501(c)3 n on-profit organization.

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Cancer is an acquired genetic disease caused by mistakes copying DNA during cell division. These mistakes make cancers sensitive to some treatments and resistant to others. We have a patchy

understanding of which mutations make tumors sensitive or resistant to any given cancer treatment. Sometimes we can pick effective treatments based on a cancer's genetic makeup, but many times we cannot.

PCR Oncology is the first (and presently only) office in California selected by the National Cancer Institute (NCI) to participate in their Cancer Moonshot Biorepository Study, which will enrich our understanding of which cancer treatments are effective for which cancer genetic profiles.

Consenting and eligible patients with some incurable cancers may choose to have tissue submitted to the NCI for sequencing. The NCI will inform the patient and PCR Oncology of the results of sequencing and will include treatment advice. Results of treatment will be sent to the NCI and used to fill in the database of sensitivity and resistance. Future generations of cancer patients will benefit greatly: The genetic profiles of their tumors will be matched with the NCI's

database and they will be offered treatments that were found effective for tumors with their genetic profile and spared treatments that were found to be ineffective.

Feedback from the NCI will ensure participants receive the best possible current treatments, while knowledge gained from their participation will help future generations.

**Artificial Intelligence Comes to  
PCR Research Program**

PCR Oncology has reached an agreement with Deep Lens to use their Artificial Intelligence (AI) program to help match patients with clinical trials.

Dr. Erick Hjortsvang and I face patients in need of better treatments weekly, if not daily. We turn to our portfolio of clinical trials and search for a treatment that offers more hope than a standard treatment. We have thousands of patients and >100 clinical trials.

Most patients with life-threatening cancers have had their tumors sequenced, and these reports yield 1-10 genetic abnormalities per cancer. We face the challenge of matching tens of thousands of genes to more than 100 clinical trials.

Deep Lens has an AI program (Viper) that, when fully implemented, will run 24-7 examining genetic profiles of our patient's cancers and available clinical trials. PCR will be able to offer these trials to patients in need of the treatments.

## Community Service Project

Last year challenged all of us to be creative and resourceful when it came to meeting our work, family and school obligations.

Annie and Valerie Pompa, students at Mission College Preparatory Catholic High School in San Luis Obispo needed a community service project that could be safely carried out during the pandemic.

The Crochet Mafia was formed to knit scarves and mittens for cancer patients, which were donated in December in canvas bags along with adult coloring books and pencils.

The project was inspired by and honors the memory of their late father, Silas, who lost his battle with cancer two years ago. Thanks, also, to mom, Laura Pompa and the following members: Lieschen Erikson, Isabella Garza, Siru Lu (Chloe), Lina Mauk, Olivia Rizzo, Shea Rostermundt and Connie Zhan. The bags were greatly appreciated!



Pictured L-R: Laura Pompa, Valerie Pompa, Annie Pompa, PCR Oncology Nurse Phea Bonds-Castro.

## Penny's Annual Fundraiser

Penny's All American Café in Pismo Beach rose to the challenge of holding a Breast Cancer fundraiser during the pandemic.

In October 2020, owners Penny and Dale Rodriguez donated a percentage of their restaurant's receipts from Tuesday sales throughout December.

Penny also sold hats and t-shirts to once again mark her annual effort to raise awareness of breast cancer.

As a result of their work and dedication, the JPCF received \$2,266. We are grateful for this undertaking. Penny, Dale and their staff's efforts are truly inspiring. (Penny is pictured below)



## JPCF Board of Directors

**President, Marie Palchak**

**Treasurer, Linda Alvarado**

**Secretary, Theresa Schultz**

**Members at Large**

Bill Cockshott and Donna Glass

## The Tribune featured PCR Oncology

On April 13<sup>th</sup>, our local newspaper The Tribune, featured PCR Oncology as the Arroyo Grande cancer treatment and research practice that has received a unique distinction placing it at the forefront of research in the United States.

In the article, Tribune reporter Nick Wilson underscored the significance of PCR Oncology joining the federal Cancer Moonshot program, whose mission is to broaden and accelerate the pace of cancer research. (See Dr. Palchak's article: Cancer Moonshot Study on front page)

PCR Oncology is one of 73 study locations across the nation to be selected. The article further highlights this importance, "In joining Cancer Moonshot, the San Luis Obispo County medical practice has begun offering patients with incurable forms of the disease the option to participate in federal research, which could help prolong their lives in part by finding treatments the disease can't easily resist."

"There are many people on Earth with incurable cancer who can live for many years after contracting their disease," Palchak is quoted as saying.

Patients in the study undergo biopsies, then can go over results and options with the doctor, "The results not only help the patient but also the national program, by improving the scientific knowledge base and understanding better how to treat cancer," Wilson writes.

"This is a rare chance for patients to be selfish and altruistic at the same time," Palchak said.

## Daffodils as a Gift of Hope

Daffodils are one of the first perennials to bloom after winter. For this reason they are seen to represent rebirth and new beginnings.

Every year, during a one-week period in March, JPCF President Marie Palchak puts together 40-50 vases of fresh cut daffodils.

Marie has continued this tradition each year as symbolic "Gifts of Hope" that are given to patients of PCR Oncology.

The striking flower represents hope for a cancer-free future to those with a cancer diagnosis.

*"Once you choose hope, anything's possible." - Christopher Reeve*



## A Possible Celebration

As was the unfortunate case for many events in 2020, circumstances surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic cancelled the JPCF's Annual Cancer Survivor Celebration. This event takes place every year in September or October and is our opportunity to recognize and celebrate the survivors of cancer in our local community.

With San Luis Obispo currently in the Red Tier and hopefully soon poised for the Orange Yellow Tier, we are holding onto the idea that if the conditions are right, we may be able to hold a scaled back outdoor event this fall.

More information will be available and communicated as that time draws near.