

February 21, 2014

To: Scott and Aileen Glickman
Cyclists, Volunteers, Donors of Century for the Cure

From: Roger K. Strair, MD, PhD

Last year, two major research grants were awarded to scientists at the Rutgers Cancer Institute of New Jersey with funds donated by Century for the Cure.

Dr. Lori Covey received support for research that focuses on how specific molecules on the surface of lymphoma (and chronic lymphocytic leukemia) cells interact with other molecules. The relationships between some of these specific “receptors” on lymphoma cells (e.g. a molecule called CD40) and the specific “ligands” that they bind to (e.g. a molecule called CD154) are very important because the binding of a receptor to a ligand on a lymphoma cell often induces a chain reaction that stimulates the lymphoma cell to both divide and resist death. Dr. Covey’s work will lead to a better understanding of these mechanisms and may facilitate the development of inhibitors that interfere with this process.

In another series of experiments supported by a research grant from Century for the Cure, Dr. Shridar Ganesan and members of his laboratory are determining how certain very specific genetic changes that sometimes occur in leukemia (including the specific leukemia that occurs in infants) result in the development of the disease. Dr. Ganesan and those working in his laboratory are especially interested in how a specific alteration involving a gene called “MLL” affects the ability of a cell to repair the DNA damage that occurs “normally” during cellular processes. Their hypothesis is that specific changes in “MLL” reduce the capacity to repair normal DNA damage and that with reduced capacity to repair DNA, errors build up and leukemia may result.

Both of these Century for the Cure research grants support studies that apply basic research to better understand lymphoma and leukemia biology. These “translational” studies will help elucidate the mechanisms by which leukemia and lymphoma develop. It is our hope that this knowledge will lead to the development of new therapeutic approaches that help patients with these diseases. These studies would NOT be possible without support from Century for the Cure!

We are grateful for the opportunities afforded by everyone who participates in the Century for the Cure and thank everyone on behalf of myself; my colleagues at the Rutgers Cancer Institute of New Jersey, and of course, the patients who benefit from your generosity. We are all looking forward to the “10th” Annual Century for the Cure!

Sincerely,

Roger K. Strair, MD, PhD