



2022
DIGESTIVE
HEALTH
FOUNDATION

Gala

TRANSFORMING DIGESTIVE DISEASE INTO DIGESTIVE HEALTH

June 4, 2022

Thank you Dr. Stephen Hanauer
for your leadership and friendship.

With gratitude,
The 111 Foundation
Wendy and Jim Abrams



PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Dear Friends,

On behalf of the Digestive Health Foundation (DHF) Board of Directors, it is my pleasure to welcome you to the 2022 DHF Gala. After postponing our flagship event for the past two years due to Covid-19, it is so wonderful to be together again in person.

Tonight we are thrilled to honor Eddie Olczyk, an Olympian, NHL player, coach and broadcaster – and colon cancer survivor. Eddie's journey has inspired many others fighting digestive disease and he credits much of his recovery to the care he received at Northwestern Medicine's Digestive Health Center (DHC). Thanks to the loyalty and support of our donors and Gala supporters, the DHF has been able to continue its mission to fund the research of physicians and scientists at the DHC. Their important discoveries help prevent, treat and cure not only colon cancer, but a spectrum of other digestive disorders including pancreatic and esophageal cancers, Crohn's disease, ulcerative colitis, celiac disease, swallowing disorders, and hepatitis and other liver diseases. This vital medical research is changing the future of digestive health as well as the lives of countless patients like Eddie and their families.

Unfortunately, Eddie is far from alone in his digestive health battle. Gastrointestinal diseases adversely affect an estimated 60-70 million Americans each year. This is why the DHF remains committed to supporting the medical research necessary to find new and effective treatments to fight these illnesses. We recently funded seven innovative research initiatives (highlighted on pages 85-91), bringing our total to 75 grants since our inception six years ago. Our work also supported two leading edge DHC projects - the development of the first ever artificial intelligence diagnostic used for assessing esophageal function and disease, and the use of nano-string technology to enable the study of inflammatory and immune cells in various GI diseases. The DHC is one of only 10 centers in the world to have this technology!

As the amount of research support grows, so does our organization. We recently welcomed a new Executive Director, Joel Massel, who brings more than 20 years of non-profit management experience to the DHF. And, of course, we honor Lee Gould, who was our Founding President, and this year became our first Immediate Past President of the Board. Joel and all of DHF's leaders aspire to replicate Lee's record of success.

We realize none of this would be possible without your support and we thank you for enabling us to provide those living with digestive disease with hope for a bright future. I hope you have a most enjoyable evening.



Dave Rosenbloom, President

Tonight's Program

WELCOME

David Kaplan, Chicago TV/Radio Personality

REMARKS

David Rosenbloom, DHF Board President

Dr. Stephen B. Hanauer, DHF Science Advisory Council

Clifford Joseph Barborka Professor of Medicine
Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine
Medical Director, Digestive Health Center
Northwestern Medicine

Dr. John Pandolfino, DHF Science Advisory Council

Hans Popper Professor of Medicine
Chief, Division of Gastroenterology & Hepatology
Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine
Northwestern Medicine

Dr. Michael Ruchim, DHF Director

Vice President, Medical Affairs
Northwestern Memorial Foundation
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HONOREE/KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Eddie Olczyk, Olympian, NHL Player/Coach/Broadcaster

LIVE AUCTION

MUSIC & DANCING

ENTERTAINMENT THROUGHOUT THE EVENING
PROVIDED BY TVK ORCHESTRA

OUR HONOREE EDDIE OLCZYK

An Olympian and Stanley Cup champion, Eddie Olczyk's standout career in hockey has taken him across the National Hockey League, all over the world and into the television broadcast booth.

At just 16 years of age, Olczyk was selected to train with the U.S. Men's National Team and after posting 68 points in 62 games, earned a spot on the 1984 U.S. Olympic Men's Ice Hockey Team. Skating on the famed "Diaper Line," Olczyk scored two goals and added five assists in six games at the Olympic Winter Games in Sarajevo, Yugoslavia.

Olczyk, fresh off of his Olympic success, was selected by his hometown Chicago Blackhawks as the third overall pick in the 1984 NHL Entry Draft – making him the first ever American born native son in NHL history to be drafted in the first round by his hometown team. He went on to enjoy a 16-year NHL career spent with six teams and highlighted by capturing the 1994 Stanley Cup with the New York Rangers. Olczyk was a consistently dynamic NHL scorer, notching 50+ points in eight of his 16 seasons, including a record making 90-point performance for the Toronto Maple Leafs in 1988-89. All total, he notched 342 goals and 452 assists for 794 points in 1,031 games. Olczyk held the longest consecutive game scoring streak by an American born player in NHL history for 25 years until 2015.

Throughout his NHL career, Olczyk represented Team USA on the international level a total of nine times, punctuated by earning a silver medal at the 1991 Canada Cup. Five of those appearances came as a member of the U.S. Men's National Team at the International Ice Hockey Federation World Championship. He was also the head coach for team USA at the 2006 Ivan Hlinka U18 tournament where the team won a silver medal.

After retirement following the 1999-2000 season, "Edzo" began his career in television broadcasting. He provided commentary for the Pittsburgh Penguins from 2000-03 before leaving the booth to become head coach of the Penguins from 2003-05. In 2006, Olczyk returned to broadcasting where he is widely considered the game's top television analyst. He was the lead hockey analyst for the NHL on NBC Sports for 15 years and was also heard during the men's ice hockey games in the 2010, 2014 and 2022 Winter Olympics. He currently calls games for the Chicago Blackhawks and nationally for the NHL on TNT. Since 2015, he has also served as the horse racing handicapper and analyst for NBC's horse racing coverage.

In 2019 Olczyk published an inspiring memoir entitled, "Eddie Olczyk: Beating the Odds in Hockey and in Life". The book chronicles his life on and off the ice, including his triumphant battle against stage 3 colon cancer. Since his diagnosis in 2017, Olczyk has been devoted to bringing as much awareness and support to those fighting cancer as he possibly can.

Olczyk and his wife of 33 years, Diana, have four children, Eddie, Tommy, Alexandra and Nick, and two grandchildren, Audrey and Eddie.



OUR EMCEE DAVID KAPLAN

Chicago native David Kaplan is an award winning columnist, and radio and television personality who currently co-hosts *Kap and J. Hood* on ESPN radio. He is also the host of two NBC Sports Chicago programs, *Unfiltered with David Kaplan* and the *Football Aftershow* which airs after every Chicago Bears game.

Kaplan began his broadcasting career at WGN Chicago in 1995. During his 21-year tenure with the network, he hosted Chicago radio's #1 rated sports talk show, *Sports Central*, as well as *WGN Sports Night*. David also hosted the Emmy award winning program *Chicago Tribune Live*, later to be named *Sports Talk Live*, on Comcast SportsNet from 2008 to 2020. From 2013 to 2015, he co-hosted *Kap and Haugh* on Comcast SportsNet with longtime Chicago Tribune lead sports columnist, David Haugh. Kaplan also hosted pregame and postgame shows for the Chicago Cubs on WGN Radio and TV for 25 seasons from 1995 to 2019. He joined ESPN in 2015 as the host of *Kap and Co.* on ESPN Radio. His co-hosts included US Hockey Hall of Famer Eddie Olczyk and NBC Sports Chicago broadcaster Pat Boyle.



Kaplan has appeared as a guest on the "The Oprah Winfrey Show" and was in the highly acclaimed documentary, *Hoop Dreams* during his basketball scouting days. In 2011, he played a prominent role in the ESPN documentary *Catching Hell*, which chronicled the story of the 2003 Chicago Cubs and their failure to win the National League Championship. Kaplan was also a basketball game analyst for NBC Sports and has worked extensively as a basketball analyst for ESPN.

Kaplan grew up in Skokie, Illinois and is a graduate of Hamline University in St. Paul, Minnesota. He was formerly a men's basketball coach at Northern Illinois University, and a scout for two NBA teams, the Indiana Pacers and the Seattle SuperSonics.

Kaplan was inducted into the WGN Radio Walk of Fame in 2018 and was named to the prestigious Chicagoland Sports Hall of Fame in 2021. He has won three Emmy Awards for his television work including two at Comcast SportsNet and one for hosting the highly successful *A Piece of the Game*, a national sports memorabilia show. In addition, he co-authored the award-winning "Around Town" column in the Chicago Tribune from 2009 to 2011. He was also inducted into the Illinois Basketball Coaches (IBCA) Hall of Fame and the Chicago Public League Basketball Coaches Hall of Fame in 2017. Kaplan is the only person in Chicago media history to host a daily TV show, a daily radio show and write a regular column in a major newspaper at the same time.

Kaplan's wife, Mindy Kaplan, is the marketing director with the Lou Malnati's chain of Chicago style pizzerias. Kaplan has a son, Brett, and three stepsons, Nicholas, Alexander and Garret.



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Tonight's Menu

HORS D'OEUVRES

- Korean Beef Sticky Ribs with Kimchi
- Wild Mushroom and Margarita Flatbreads
- Ginger Grilled Shrimp
- Smoked Salmon with American Caviar on a Potato Pancake with Dill Cream
- Seared Tuna with Papaya Avocado Salsa in Endive Leaf

BREAD BASKET

- Flatbread Crisps, Multigrain Roll, Pretzel Roll

SALAD

- Heirloom Tomato Burrata Salad
- Assorted Baby Lettuce, Arugula, Basil, Balsamic Pearls

COMBINATION ENTRÉE

- Grilled Filet of Beef with Cabernet Reduction and Colossal Shrimp with Lemon Butter
- Grilled Asparagus, Truffle Risotto

VEGETARIAN ENTRÉE AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST

DESSERT BUFFET

- Warm Sea Salt Caramel Cookies
- Warm Chocolate Chip Cookies
- Mini Fruit and Berry Tarts - Strawberry, Blackberry, Papaya
- Chocolate and Vanilla Iced Strawberries
- Sliced Fresh Fruit and Berries
- Flourless Chocolate Cake Bites
- Colorful Mini Macarons
- Assorted Milk Shakes - Chocolate, Vanilla, Strawberry

WINES

- Louis Latour Mâcon-Lugny 'Les Genièvres' Chardonnay, Mâconnais, France
- Storypoint Cabernet Sauvignon, California

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Jayne and Steve
for helping to make
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Andi & Jim Gordon



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Eddie,

You are an inspiration to so many people. Thank you for all you do to promote awareness of colon cancer prevention, to support Northwestern Medicine, and for being such a wonderful friend.

Michael & Janet Ruchim

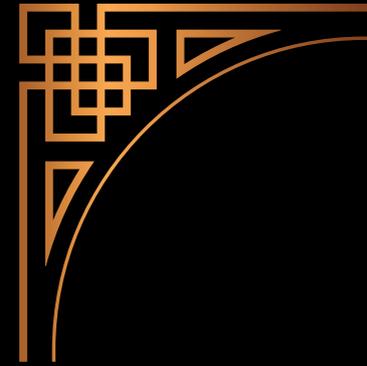
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LEE GOULD,

OUR FIRST
DHF PRESIDENT.

OUR CONTINUING JOURNEY
IS POSSIBLE BECAUSE
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THE FIRST STEPS.

DAVE ROSENBLOOM



*Thank you,
Eddie
for your efforts
in promoting
colon cancer
awareness.*

*With our deepest gratitude,
Jayne and Steve Hanauer*



WE PROUDLY SUPPORT
the Digestive Health Foundation
and the DHF Ambassador Board,
as it continues to strengthen
its mission to transform digestive disease
into digestive health.
Special thank you to Dr. John Pandolfino,
Dr. Stephen Hanauer, Dr. Scott Strong,
Dr. Michael Ruchim, the physicians
of the Digestive Health Center,
and the DHF Board members
and the DHF Ambassador Board
members for their tireless efforts to ensure
success of this year's exciting events.

Stephanie and Michael Baum



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**Congratulations to Chicago Blackhawks
own Eddie Olczyk, for being recognized by
the Digestive Health Foundation for your
commitment to helping others!**

**NHL On TNT
Congratulates Eddie Olczyk**



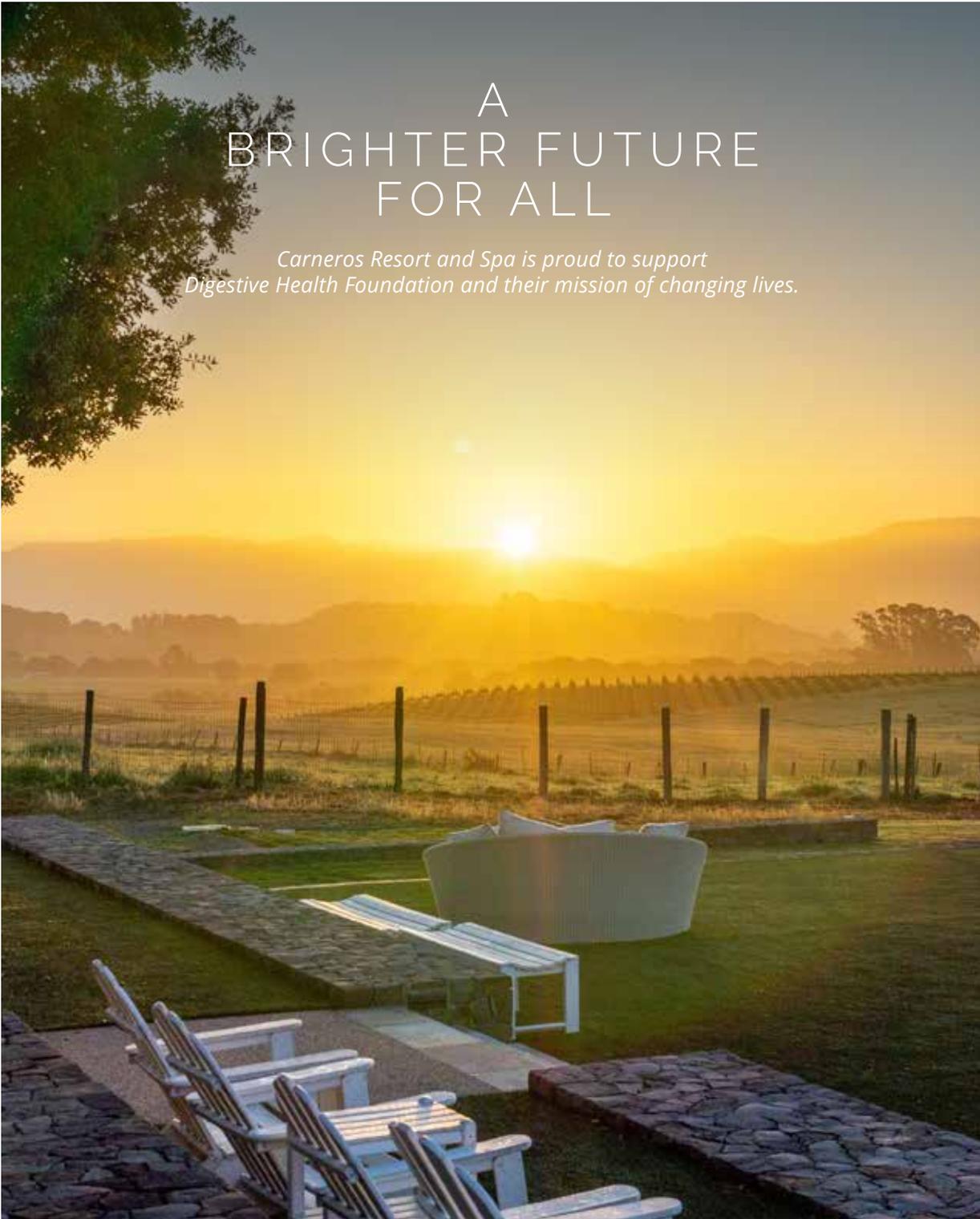
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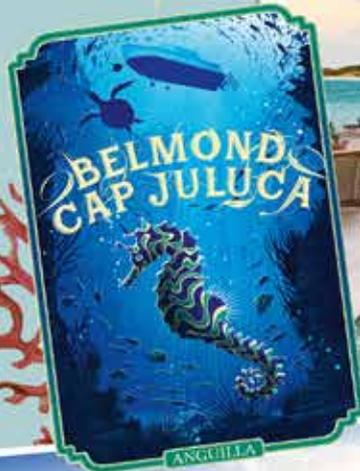


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We are amazed by your
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by your vision for the future

Dr. Stephen B. Hanauer

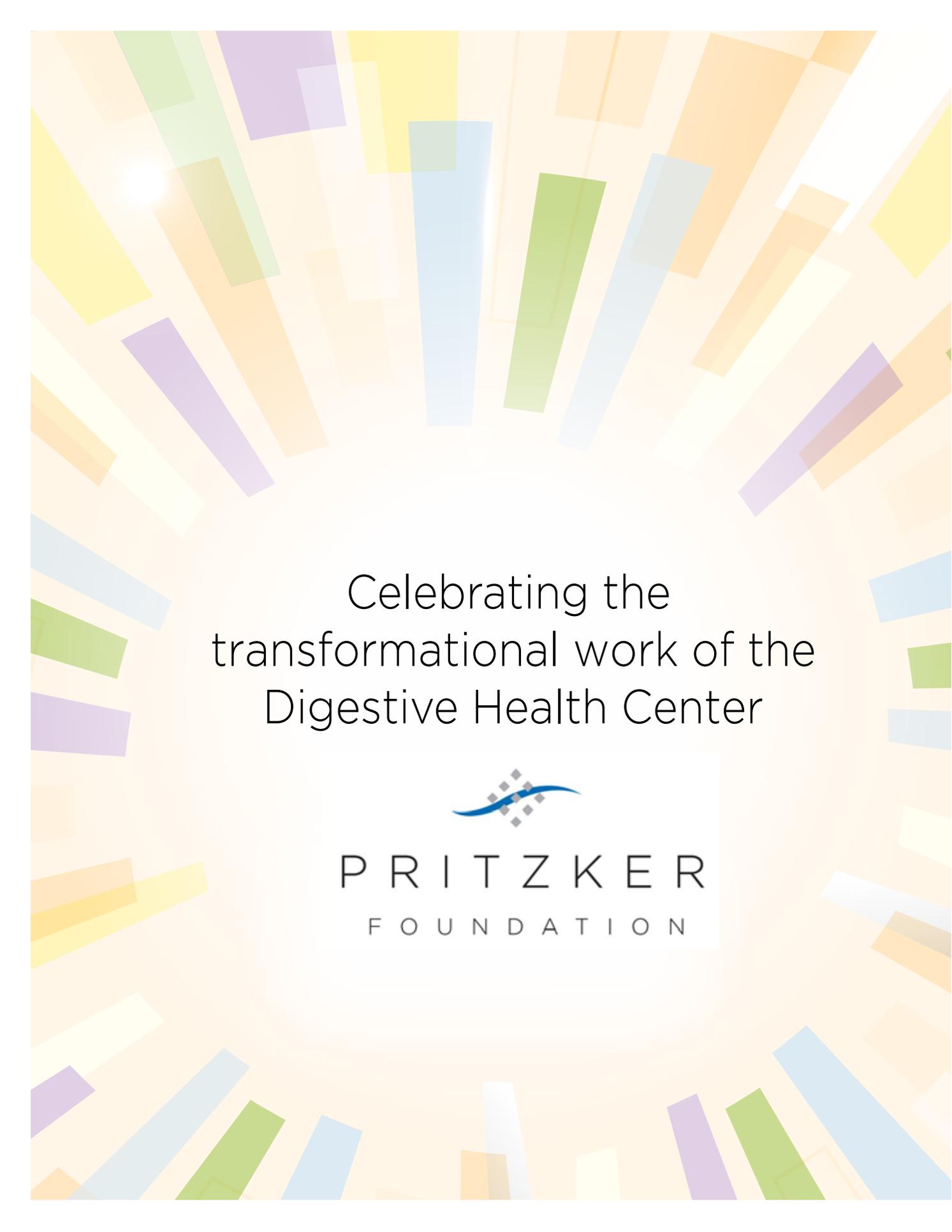
Dr. John E. Pandolfino

Dr. Michael Ruchim

Dr. Scott Strong

We salute and thank the physicians
of the Digestive Health Center,
the DHF Board members and
DHF staff for their dedication
to the pursuit of transforming
digestive disease into digestive health.

The Elrad Family



Celebrating the
transformational work of the
Digestive Health Center



Thank you to the
Digestive Health Center
clinicians and researchers.

While so many of us worked remotely,
you worked at bedsides and lab benches
in pursuit of better digestive health.



Dave and Cindy Rosenbloom

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THANK YOU

Eddie Olezyk

OUR ESTEEMED HONOREE

Thank you to our Gala planning Committee for this fabulous evening! Special thanks to the Digestive Health Center doctors and medical staff for your dedicated leadership to transforming digestive disease into digestive health.

Thank you for your expertise, devotion to research, and excellence, which inspire compassionate care of patients and life-changing outcomes.

SHARON & LEE OBERLANDER

A SPECIAL THANK YOU

Tonight's Honoree, Eddie Olezyk

and

Emcee, David Kaplan

We're honored to have you join us this evening
and are immensely grateful for your support
of the DHF and our commitment to
digestive health research.

**The Digestive Health Foundation
Board of Directors and Staff**

THANK YOU

I am grateful for
all the support and fellowship
throughout my years
as DHF president.

We accomplished much
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I look forward and fully support
Dave Rosenbloom's leadership
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I hope you will too.

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And a special shout-out
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Sharon & Joel Chefitz
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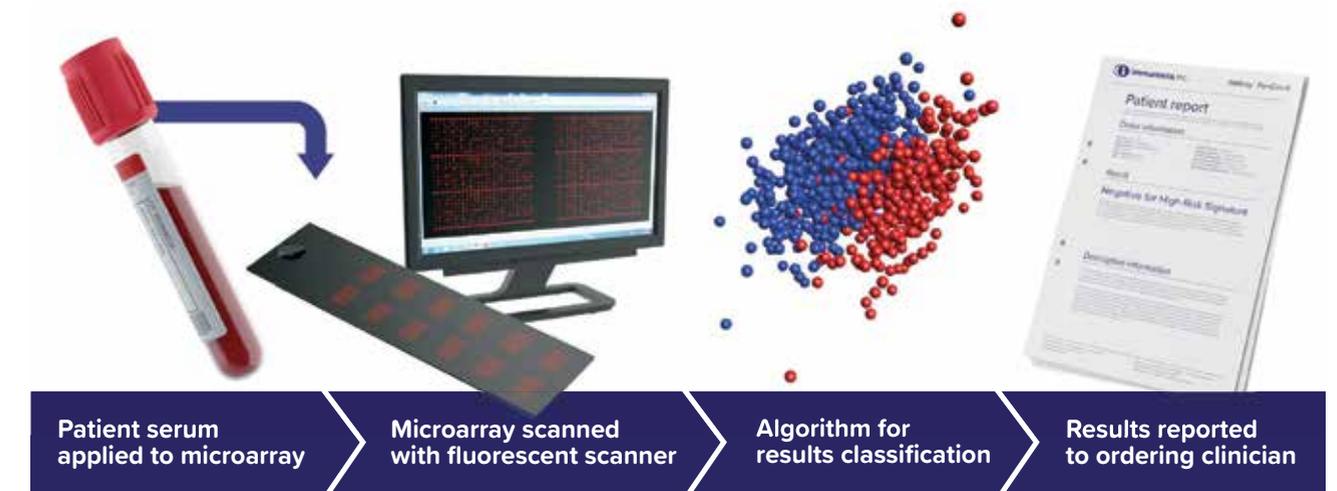


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1. Brand RE, Persson J, Bratlie SO, et al. Detection of early-stage pancreatic ductal adenocarcinoma from blood samples: Results of a multiplex biomarker signature validation study. *Clin Transl Gastroenterol.* 2022. doi: 10.14309/ctg.0000000000000468.

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to Dr. Stephen Hanauer,
Dr. John Pandolfino, Dr. Scott Strong
and all of the great physicians
at Northwestern Medicine
Digestive Health Center
for their dedication and hard work.

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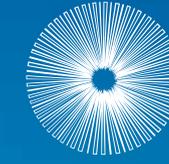
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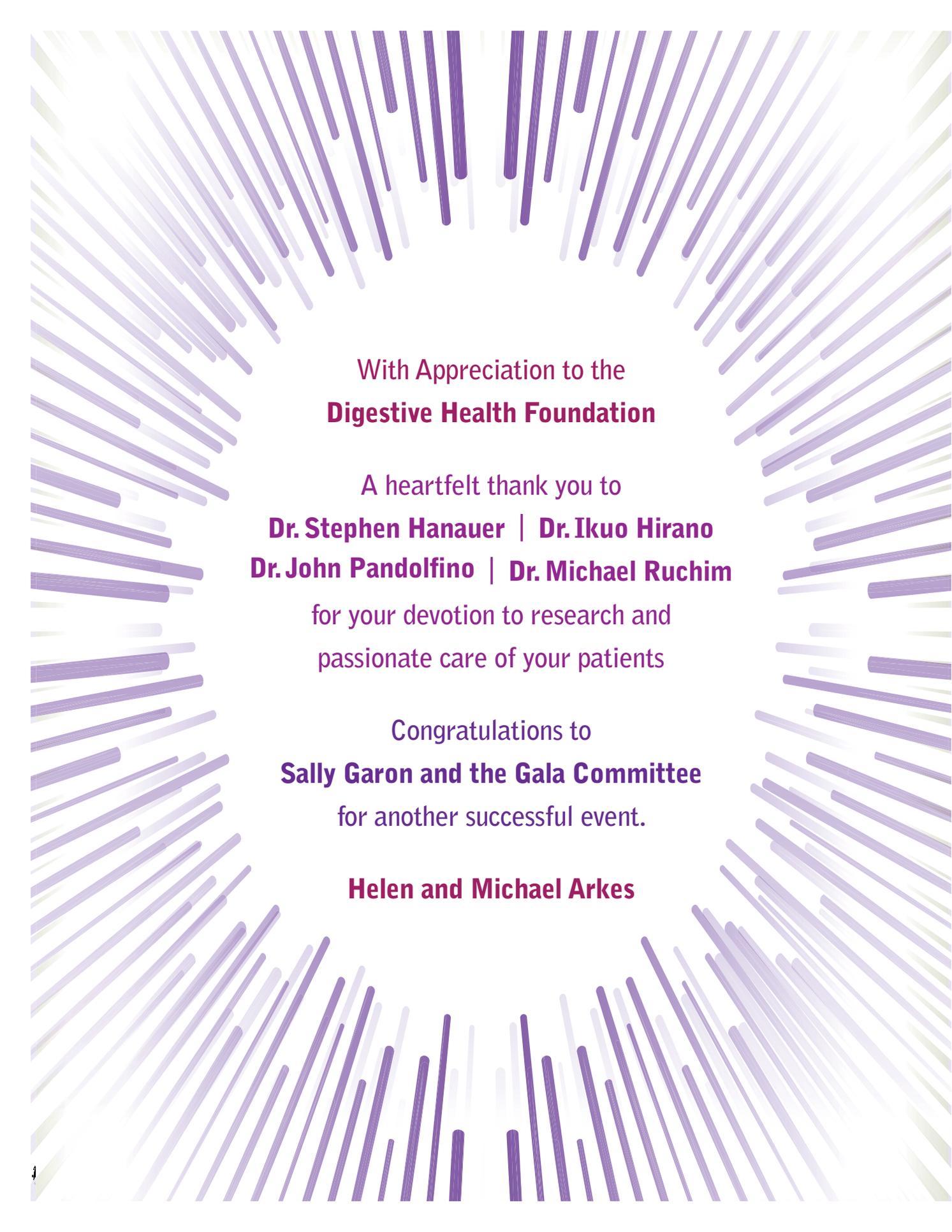
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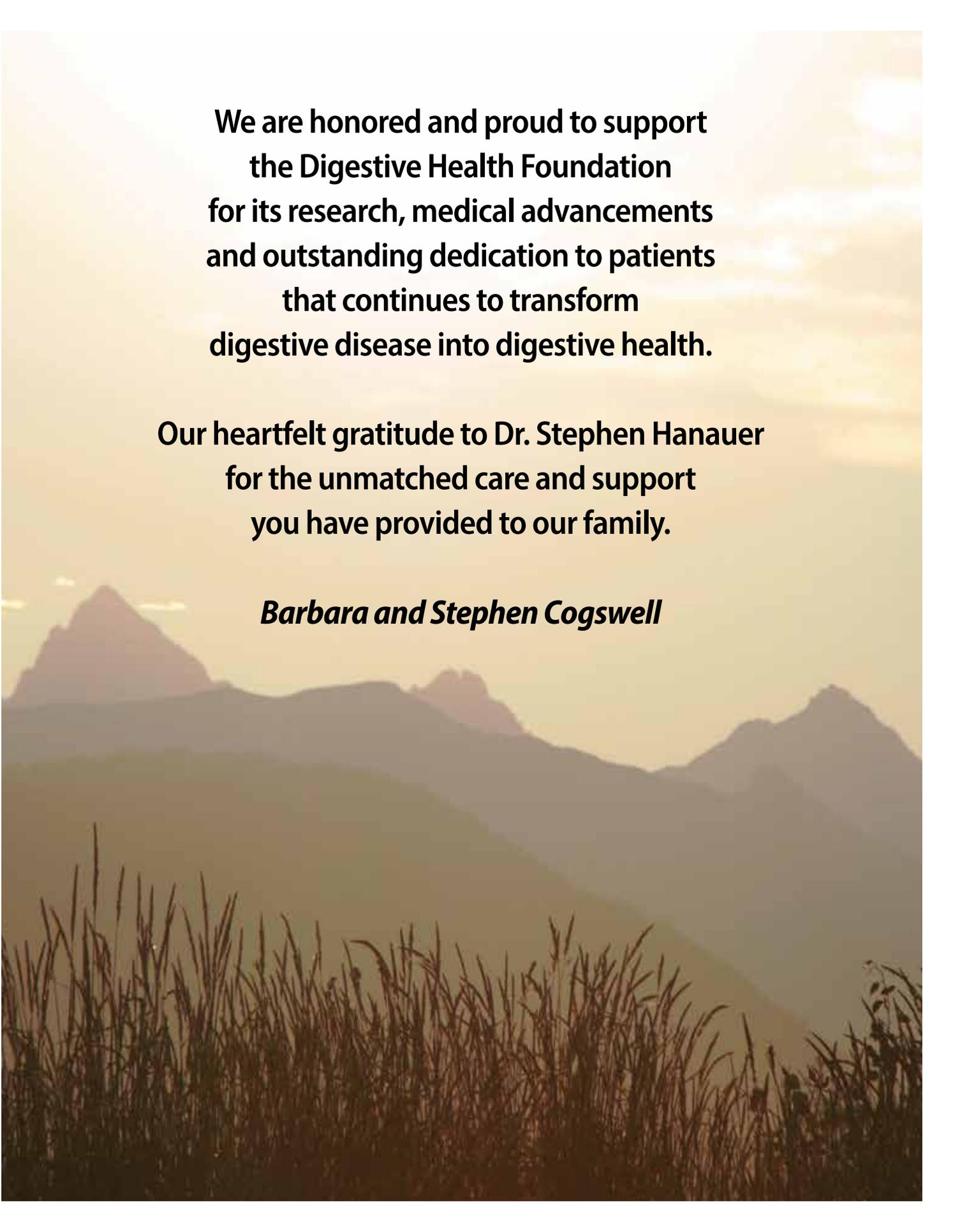


With Appreciation to the
Digestive Health Foundation

A heartfelt thank you to
Dr. Stephen Hanauer | Dr. Ikuo Hirano
Dr. John Pandolfino | Dr. Michael Ruchim
for your devotion to research and
passionate care of your patients

Congratulations to
Sally Garon and the Gala Committee
for another successful event.

Helen and Michael Arkes



We are honored and proud to support
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for its research, medical advancements
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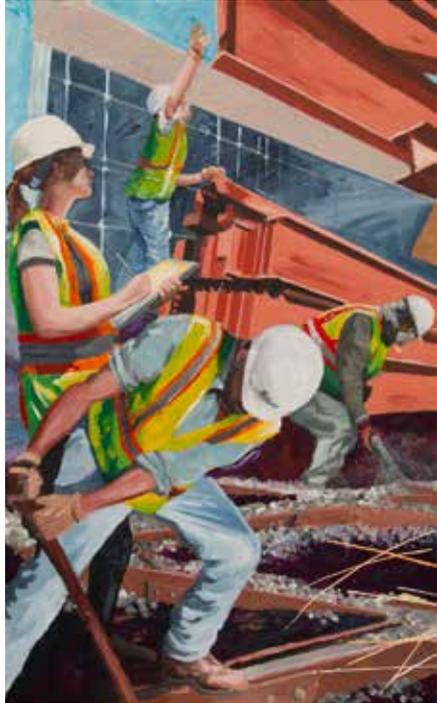


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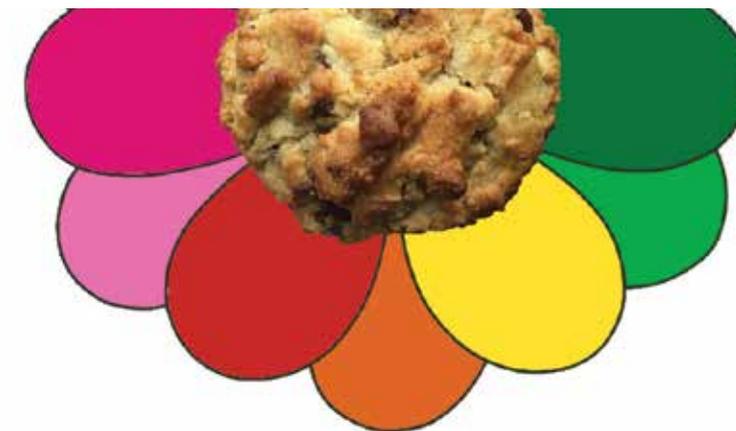
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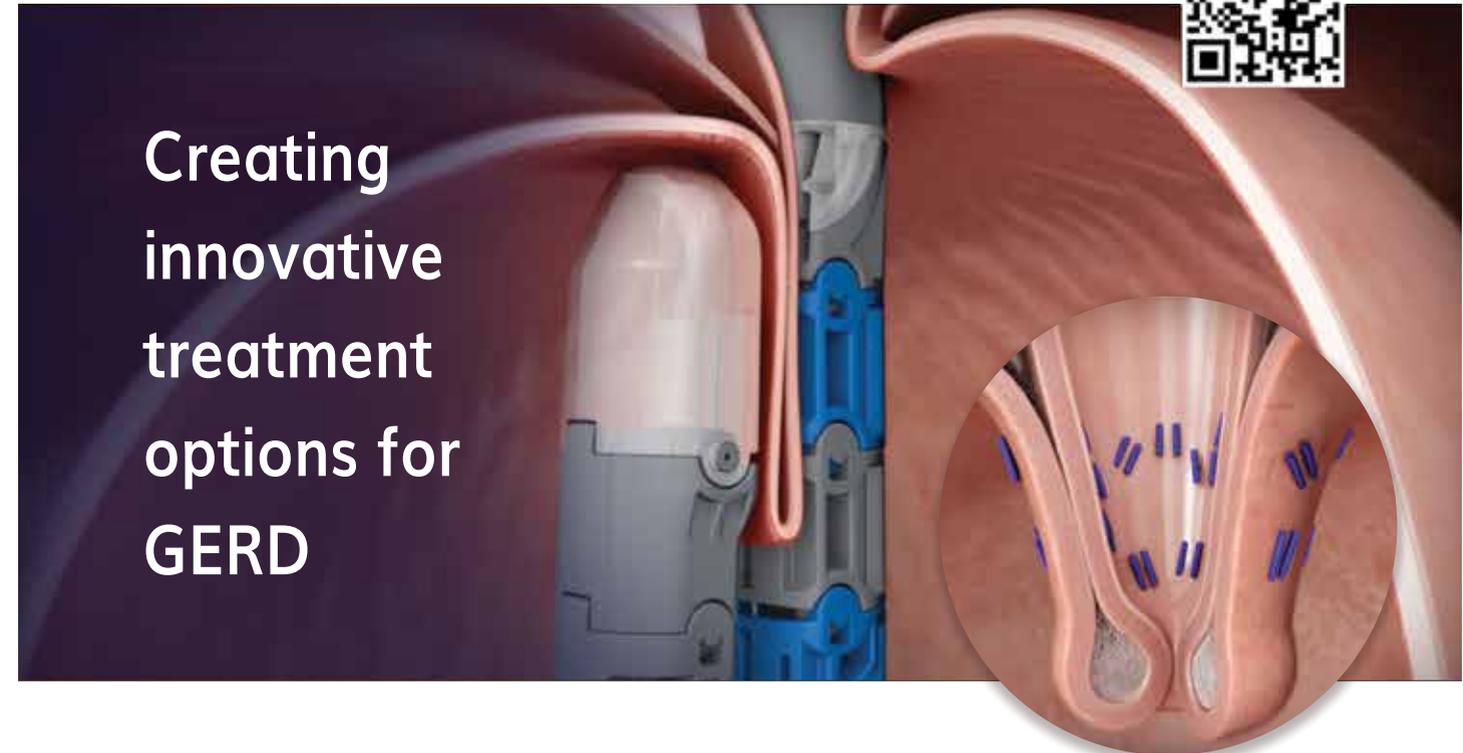
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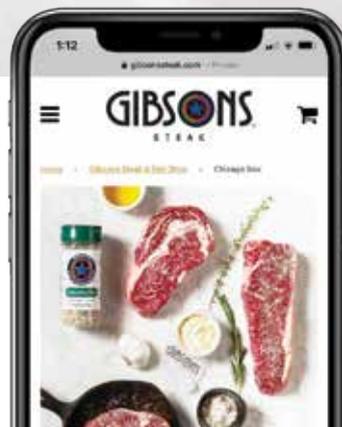
1. In 11 TIF 2.0 on label studies collectively representing 568 patients where the follow-up was between 7 and 59 months, the weighted incidence percentage of patients completely off PPIs was 73.50% and 7.91% of the patients reported occasional use of PPIs, for a total of 81.41% of the patients reporting no daily use of PPIs. 2. Weighted incidence analysis of 13 TIF2.0 patients cohorts' GERD-HRQL, GERDD, and RSI median scores at follow-up intervals of >6mo, >3Y and 5Y 3. In the 2 studies in 56 patients where esophagitis was assessed at >=36 months, the median follow-up was 44 months, the weighted percentage of patients where the esophagus had completely healed was 83.94%

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DIGESTIVE HEALTH FOUNDATION

Changing the Future of Medicine

The Digestive Health Foundation (DHF) focuses on improving the quality of life for anyone facing a digestive disorder by supporting cutting-edge medical research, physician training and education at the Northwestern Medicine Digestive Health Center (DHC). As DHF enters its seventh year, we have raised more than \$15 million and have funded 75 independent research studies by world-class physician scientists at the DHC. Additionally, DHF has provided signature awards to underwrite two initiatives – the Artificial Intelligence in Mathematics project and the DHF BioRepository – both of which are advancing the way that medical research is being conducted.

DHF is also dedicated to establishing the next generation of leading physician scientists in gastroenterology and we are proud to fund the following initiatives:

- **The Stephen B. Hanauer Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD) Advanced Physician Fellowship**
- **The Deborah and Martin Elrad Fund for Hereditary Digestive Diseases**
- **The Steven J. Stryker, MD, Gastrointestinal (GI) Surgery, Education, and Research Endowment**
- **The Elizabeth Blackwell Fund**, for independent female GI researchers in honor of the first US woman to earn a medical degree
- **I Am Abel MCAT Prep Program**

Together, we are changing the future for the millions of individuals around the world battling digestive disease.

DHF BioRepository in Gastroenterology and Hepatology

Only five years old, the DHF BioRepository is fulfilling a vision for the future of digestive health research with unprecedented hope and solutions for patients. Launched with a signature grant award from the Digestive Health Foundation, the DHF BioRepository is unmatched in its impact on the field of Gastroenterology and Hepatology. The DHF BioRepository is a hybrid database and specimen [tissue, blood, serum, urine, stool] collection system that links the specimen with physiologic and psychometric data, making that data available in real time to Northwestern investigators and their collaborators.

Historically, researchers were required to recruit patients to obtain the specimens for their studies over the course of months or years. All that has changed with the DHF BioRepository's unique resource, offering thousands of patient samples and related data to scientists on demand. This "Big Data" approach means that we are living at the forefront of a new era with renewed promise every day for better treatments and cures.

The BioRepository provides the data for machine learning approaches to uncover the relationship between molecular changes at the tissue level and gastrointestinal function. Understanding this connection provides new opportunities for better diagnosis, treatments, and cures. Over the last five years, the DHF BioRepository has enabled many multimillion-dollar NIH grants, supported the development of crucial pilot studies within the DHF Grant Awards Program, and fostered discovery for leading research teams at Northwestern and around the world. Further funding will grow the BioRepository's major impact on current research, while also expanding access to new investigators and new studies across Northwestern and around the globe.

Artificial Intelligence and Mathematics in Gastroenterology (AIM-GI)

Can you imagine a virtual, fully functioning stomach that lives inside a mega computer and can be tested completely virtually with new medications and surgical procedures for real life application? Or how about combining the experience of world-class physicians with the precision of machine-learned data analysis to offer patients diagnoses approaching 90% accuracy? These dreams are becoming a reality at the Northwestern Medicine Digestive Health Center (DHC). Made possible by support from the Digestive Health Foundation, gastroenterologists are developing the latest in artificial technology to take patient care into a new era with unprecedented accuracy and diversity of solutions.

Artificial intelligence (AI) is the science of developing computer algorithms that can perform tasks as well as, and some cases better than, humans. Gastroenterologists and computer scientists in the DHC's Artificial Intelligence and Mathematics in Gastroenterology (AIM-GI) program are revolutionizing the way clinicians are managing digestive diseases. The program focuses on three main initiatives:

- The development of virtual organs, which can be used to study the effects of surgery and medications.
- The development of new hybrid diagnostic tools that use AI and machine learning to enhance diagnoses.
- Using machine learning and neural networks to predict disease outcomes.

The Northwestern team not only develops novel AI algorithms, they also lead research into how those algorithms can be utilized in practice to transform clinical care. For example, researchers are identifying ways AI can improve the quality of screening colonoscopies in rural healthcare settings, how it can assess the severity of inflammatory bowel disease, and how AI and mathematics can reduce delayed diagnoses of motility disorders in the esophagus. The overarching goal of this work is to help clinicians deliver high-quality, effective and safe clinical care. The AI grant represents DHF's ongoing commitment to identifying the most advance treatment options and providing the best care in the world for digestive health patients. Further funding will allow expansion of the application of AI, bringing hope and years of life to patients around the world.



I AM ABEL FOUNDATION

Digestive Health Foundation would like to congratulate the following I Am Abel students on acceptance to medical school:



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UIC College of Medicine



Diamond Coleman
Carle Clinic School of Medicine
University of Illinois Chicago,
School of Medicine
University of Wisconsin – Madison



Dhruvall Bhatt
Wayne State Medical School
University of Missouri Kansas
University of Oklahoma
University of Cincinnati



Ayanna Fourte
Morehouse School of Medicine



Ephraim Enderito
Indiana University



Ted Amadi
Southern Illinois University School of Medicine
Meharry Medical College
Marian Osteopathic
University of Toledo

I AM ABEL

Communities across America need doctors to provide quality medical care and there are many aspiring, hardworking students who, given the opportunity, are eager to meet those needs. However, one of the determining factors for medical school admissions is the Medical College Admission Test (MCAT) and many at-risk communities lack the resources necessary to enable their students to score competitively on the exam. To help address this issue, the Digestive Health Foundation supports the I Am Abel MCAT Prep Program, which provides much needed funds, mentorship and infrastructure to underrepresented students as they prepare for the MCAT.

The I Am Abel Foundation seeks to bridge socioeconomic gaps and promote achievements amongst minority inner city youth. The Foundation realized that while many of their students were performing well in the classroom, they were still scoring below the 50th percentile on the MCAT exam. In 2021, with support from DHF, they launched an intensive MCAT preparation program that provides qualifying students with personalized and group tutoring and coaching, as well as access to third party test prep materials and resources at no cost. These initiatives have enabled I Am Abel students to improve their MCAT scores, and the program is already proving successful in facilitating their acceptance into medical school, launching these talented and diligent students on the path toward becoming future physicians.

Since its inception, 18 students have participated in the I Am Abel MCAT Prep Program and almost all have successfully raised their MCAT scores into a competitive range. Further funding from DHF would help even more promising students pursue their dreams of attending medical school and serving the communities that they call home.

Congratulations to the 2022 Digestive Health Foundation Grant Awardees

We are extremely proud of the novelty and diversity of the 2022 grant applications. This year's DHF Grant Awards will fund research studies that quite literally span the length of the digestive tract, from achalasia in the esophagus, to cancers of the bile ducts and the colon, fatty liver disease, and inflammatory bowel disease.

Once again, the recently awarded grants reflect the scope and breadth of the Northwestern Medicine Digestive Health Center and its physician-researcher faculty members.

In 2022, DHF increased the research grant award amounts from \$25,000 to \$50,000 per study. The purpose of the increase is to bolster the potential for these research projects to lead to larger future studies with even greater impact on patient quality of life. DHF has approved a total of approximately \$350,000 in grants this year, which powerfully encompass the three main types of medical research happening in the world today: primary laboratory, clinical practice, and "translational" research — the bridge between those two realms that "translates" discoveries in the laboratory into patient solutions in the clinic.

We are all excited to monitor the progress of these projects, as well as updating the progress of prior awardees' research efforts and successes for patients and the future of digestive health.

Thank you for your support. With your help we are making a positive impact on patients with digestive disease.



Stephen B. Hanauer, MD, DHF Chief Medical Advisor
 Clifford Joseph Barborka Professor of Medicine
 Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine
 Medical Director, Digestive Health Center
 Northwestern Medicine

Post-Traumatic Stress in Crohn's and Colitis Patients – A Veterans' Solution

Principal Investigator: Tiffany Taft, PsyD, Research Associate Professor of Medicine (Gastroenterology and Hepatology), Medical Social Sciences and Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, Northwestern Feinberg School of Medicine



Tiffany Taft, PsyD, MIS

Inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) is a chronic autoimmune disease that affects approximately 3 million Americans, and many more worldwide. Encompassing Crohn's disease, ulcerative colitis, and indeterminate colitis, IBD is often diagnosed by age 35, with decades of life left to live. IBD patients can experience debilitating and dangerous inflammation, infection, and tissue damage along the entirety of the digestive tract with embarrassing and life altering symptoms.

Increasingly recognized for her groundbreaking work on the relationship between living with chronic digestive disease, primarily Inflammatory Bowel Disease, and the risk of developing Post Traumatic Stress (PTS), Dr. Tiffany Taft, PsyD used **previous DHF grant funding** to show that, alarmingly, up to 25 to 30 percent of patients with IBD will develop PTS (IBD-PTS) from the anxieties of living with and receiving necessary treatment for their disease. Symptoms of medical trauma can include life altering flashbacks, nightmares, avoiding medical care, and/or feeling suicidal. In fact, Dr. Taft's research has shown that PTS exacerbates and worsens the physical symptoms of IBD.

This year, Dr. Taft is using a DHF grant to take her recent discoveries to the next level by testing the efficacy of writing as a therapeutic tool for treating IBD patients suffering from PTS. Known as Written Exposure Therapy (WET), this highly effective approach is endorsed, and still utilized, by the US Department of Veterans Affairs for treating PTSD in many members of the military. Guided by a psychologist, WET prompts patients to write about their traumatic experiences to better manage their physical and emotional reactions to negative memories. The Taft team is testing the use of WET to reduce trauma symptoms in recently hospitalized IBD patients. They also plan to deliberately survey African American and Latinx patients to determine rates of IBD-PTS in these groups, who often go understudied, to better identify more effective treatment options. Dr. Taft's research offers a promising, potential intervention for enhancing the mental and physical health of IBD patients by combatting and reducing disease flares linked to the brain-gut connection and the untreated emotional distress of living with chronic disease.

Hope for Liver Disease (NAFLD/NASH) Patients Using Covid-19 Nanotechnology

Principal Investigator: Richard Green, MD, Professor of Medicine (Gastroenterology and Hepatology), Northwestern Medicine, Northwestern Feinberg School of Medicine



Richard M. Green, MD

Nonalcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD) is the most common liver disease in the United States and growing at an increasing rate. NAFLD affects more than 25% of the US population, occurring in up to 90% of obese adults. Patients with NAFLD often drink little to no alcohol, yet they develop liver damage comparable to what would usually result from many years of alcohol abuse. NAFLD often progresses to the more serious non-alcoholic steatohepatitis (NASH), affecting 15 million Americans and the leading cause of liver scarring (cirrhosis), liver failure, and liver cancer. For patients who progress to NASH, liver transplantation is the only current option for survival.

This year, a DHF grant supports Dr. Richard Green's team in investigating the efficacy of revolutionary CHOP-targeted nanoparticles carrying genetic material (mRNA) in silencing CHOP expression in the liver with the intent of lessening or completely preventing NASH in animal models. Interestingly, this approach mimics the way that recent COVID-19 mRNA vaccines target the virus' spike protein to help strengthen the body's immune system against the disease process. Dr. Green and his team intend to transition their animal model to clinical human trials to develop an effective pharmaceutical treatment for NASH. Dr. Green's efforts could offer hope of a non-invasive treatment option to millions of NASH patients.

For almost four decades, Dr. Green has led ground-breaking research and offered exceptional patient care at Northwestern Medicine. Dr. Green runs a high-profile laboratory funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) where his team made the breakthrough discovery of

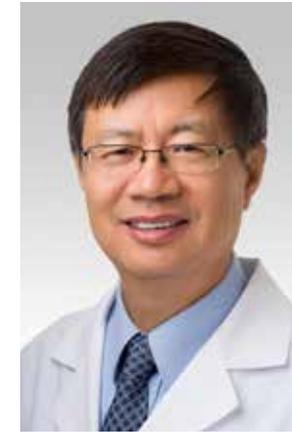
the UPR protein, "CHOP," and its role in causing fatty liver disease. The discovery of "CHOP" offers the opportunity for more targeted, effective treatments for the tens of millions of patients facing fatty liver disease. Partnering with Dr. Green is Dr. Andrew Benitende, MD, a General Surgery Resident at New York Presbyterian-Columbia University who has joined the Northwestern Gastroenterology Division for three years of research training, focusing on stem cell biology and nanotechnology-based therapies of fatty liver disease.



Andrew Benitende, MD

Targeting Dangerous and Destructive Inflammation in Achalasia Patients

Principal Investigator: Guang-Yu Yang, MD, PhD, Joseph C. Calandra Research Professor of Pathology and Toxicology Professor of Pathology (Experimental Pathology) and Pathology (Gastrointestinal Pathology), Northwestern Feinberg School of Medicine



Guang-Yu Yang, MD, PhD

Achalasia is a painful, debilitating, and potentially lethal "motor" (muscle) disease where the lower esophagus becomes paralyzed, causing food to become trapped. Achalasia patients struggle to eat or drink normally. While relatively uncommon, achalasia diagnoses are growing every year. The causes of this esophageal motility disorder remain unclear, so research continues at Northwestern Medicine Digestive Health Center where patients receive some of the best treatment in the world for achalasia and other esophageal disorders. Northwestern researchers are working hard to make inroads into the causes of and potential treatments for achalasia patients worldwide.

A renowned Professor of Gastrointestinal Surgical Pathology and Toxicology at Northwestern, Dr. Guang-Yu Yang, MD, PhD, is using this year's DHF grant award to study the role of chronic inflammation in the development of achalasia. Northwestern researchers previously discovered the potential role of inflammation—particularly caused by T-lymphocytes—in the development of achalasia. Dr. Yang's study is taking this discovery to the next phase, embarking on the first study of its kind to uncover the distinct causal patterns linking T-lymphocyte inflammation to injury of nerves and muscles in the esophagus of achalasia patients. The discovery of a specific molecular biomarker of achalasia disease could help predict the risk and prognosis for achalasia patients. Additionally, this research could lead to a new treatment opportunity involving cutting edge stem cell therapy. Dr. Yang's study offers the promise of improved care options for a better future for achalasia patients.



John E. Pandolfino, MD

Dr. Yang leads research teams at Northwestern who are revealing the molecular mechanism, and developing drug-based preventions, of cancers driven by chronic inflammation in ulcerative colitis. Dr. Yang is also doing important work on the disease progression and revelatory molecular biomarkers of pancreatic cancer to create new avenues of prevention and survival for chronic inflammation-driven cancers, specifically colorectal, pancreatic, and liver cancers. Dr. Yang's study on the role of inflammation in achalasia will also be guided by John E. Pandolfino, MD, the top-rated expert in the world on esophageal physiology, disorders of the lower esophageal sphincter, and achalasia. For almost a decade, Dr. Pandolfino has led the Division of Gastroenterology and Hepatology to become the #1 Esophageal Center in the world. Dr. Pandolfino splits his time 50/50 between groundbreaking research and unparalleled patient care, and introduced the internationally recognized "Chicago Classification" of esophageal motor disorders.

Bacteria Offer a Window of Opportunity to Catch Bile Duct Cancer Earlier

Principal Investigator: Aziz Aadam, MD, Associate Professor of Medicine (Gastroenterology and Hepatology), Northwestern Medicine, Northwestern Feinberg School of Medicine



A. Aziz Aadam, MD

Cancer of the bile ducts (cholangiocarcinoma) is a particularly aggressive and deadly cancer, with **less than 10 percent** of patients surviving five years after diagnosis. Today, there aren't any approved, reliable tests to effectively detect these devastating cancers at early enough stages to be effectively treated and cured. But there is hope and promise in continued research efforts at Northwestern Medicine.

The gut microbiome includes a variety of bacteria, many of which are just recently being identified and understood. News media outlets report regularly on the growing scientific awareness that the gut microbiome is a powerful indicator and influencer of digestive and overall health. Recent research studies illuminate how specific changes in the gut microbiome are linked to a variety of digestive diseases and cancers. With this year's DHF grant award, Dr. Aziz Aadam's team is studying the microbiomes of patients with bile duct cancers. By identifying genetic or metabolic "fingerprints," researchers hope to develop sophisticated, early cancer detection methods as part of the cutting-edge approach of personalized/"individual" medical care. Dr. Aadam's study could significantly improve survival rates and quality of life for patients with bile duct cancers, while also reducing the resource burden on the overall medical system.

Dr. Aadam is a highly specialized interventional gastroenterologist, focused on digestive cancers and complex pancreatic and biliary disorders. He is currently leading the initiative in endoscopic submucosal dissection (ESD), which allows for the removal of early

cancers in the gastrointestinal tract using a flexible endoscope as an alternative to more risky invasive surgery. Currently the earliest available intervention, ESD can often greatly improve the prognoses and life expectancy for patients facing digestive cancers. Partnering with Dr. Aadam is Dr. Jonathan Yu Xia, MD, PhD, a Northwestern Gastroenterology Fellow who identified unique mouse metabolic profiles associated with the progression of NAFLD (non-alcoholic fatty liver disease) to NASH (non-alcoholic steatohepatitis). Dr. Xia's growing body of research focuses on translational (lab "bench" to patient "bedside") studies on the causative role of the gut microbiome in bile duct disease.



Jonathan Yu Xia, MD, PhD

Genetic Screening for Inherited Lynch Syndrome in Colorectal Cancer Patients

Principal Investigator: Mohammad Abbass, MD, Assistant Professor of Surgery (Gastrointestinal), Northwestern Medicine, Northwestern Feinberg School of Medicine



Mohammad Abbass, MD

Colorectal cancer diagnoses are skyrocketing in the United States, especially among young men. Today, colorectal cancer is the second most common cause of cancer-related death in the United States. The exact cause of this increase is not quite clear, so much research continues on this concerning trend. One solution to this alarming reality is the increase in screening colonoscopies and lowered age recommendations to begin screening. Screening colonoscopies have turned colorectal cancer into a largely preventable disease.

This year, a DHF grant award is supporting Dr. Mohammad Abbass' study on Lynch syndrome. The most commonly inherited colorectal cancer syndrome, Lynch syndrome is often underdiagnosed due to an avoidable lack of family history assessment in the primary care

setting. Improving the collection of this valuable information could help clinicians to better identify and screen patients at high risk for Lynch syndrome. Dr. Abbass' team is evaluating the use of a family history collection software tool called "MeTree" to screen endoscopy patients at Northwestern Medicine for potentially deadly hereditary digestive cancers like Lynch syndrome. The project aims to identify patients with high-risk family histories for these cancers and refer them to genetic counselors for appropriate testing to potentially prevent or catch these cancers before it is too late. Dr. Abbass' study could change the future for patients with Lynch syndrome by increasing early diagnoses and treatment, potentially adding years to patients' lives.

Dr. Abbass is a physician-scientist researcher and colorectal surgeon specializing in the care of patients with inherited gastrointestinal syndromes and cancers of the digestive tract. He has been joined by Dr. Charles Mueller, a new recruit to the Gastroenterology Division with complementary interests in inherited colon (and other GI) cancer syndromes. Drs. Abbass' and Mueller's clinical practices focus on the improvement of care for patients with inherited colorectal cancer syndromes through system-wide quality and consistency of care for each and every patient. Dr. Abbass' research centers on the relationship between disease predisposition and actual disease occurrence, including what risk factors contribute to a diagnosis of colorectal cancer.

FitBits to Improve Physical Conditioning and Survival in Liver Transplant Patients

Principal Investigator: Andres Duarte-Rojo, MD, MS, PhD, ACADEMIC APPT DOESN'T START UNTIL AUGUST 2022, Northwestern Medicine, Northwestern Feinberg School of Medicine



Andres Duarte-Rojo, MD, MS, PhD

Last year, approximately 8,000 liver transplants were performed in the United States for patients facing life-threatening liver disease. Many more patients waited for livers after exhausting pharmaceutical and surgical options for their disease. The success of these crucial, lifesaving, risky surgeries is affected by many factors, including the physical condition of patients before and after surgery.

This year's grant from DHF will support Dr. Andres Duarte-Rojo's work at the intersection of liver transplantation and patient physical conditioning, a crucial component for recovery and transplant success long term. Walking does a body good, especially for the recovery and physical function of liver transplant patients. Despite the recommendation to start walking on the day after surgery, early postoperative exercise has been inconsistent by these patients and their care teams. Lack of ambulation after major surgery often slows recovery, and the risk of frailty increases with decreased mobility. Dr. Duarte-Rojo's research will objectively monitor physical activity of liver transplant recipients with the use of personal activity trackers (FitBits). The team aims to see if introducing personalized statistics and feedback on activity progress to patients and their care teams will motivate study participants to take more post-operative daily steps. This analytics-based strategy could help patients recover faster and stronger, potentially reducing time spent in the hospital and/or rehab facility after transplant.



Daniela Ladner, MD, MPH

Dr. Duarte-Rojo joins the world class Gastroenterology and Hepatology Division at Northwestern Medicine in Summer 2022 after his recruitment from the University of Pittsburgh where he led one of the world's largest "living donor transplant programs". As Medical Director of liver transplantation at Northwestern Memorial Hospital, Dr. Duarte-Rojo will continue his clinical focus on complications of liver scarring (cirrhosis) and portal hypertension, in addition to crucial comprehensive medical care of the many waitlisted liver transplant candidates with advanced liver disease. Dr. Duarte-Rojo uses NILDA (non-invasive liver disease assessment), an important alternative method to evaluate the severity of illness in pre- and post-transplant patients. In addition to his efforts to expand living donor transplants at Northwestern, Dr. Duarte-Rojo leads major clinical trials on physical frailty metrics in liver transplant candidates and the importance of exercise in advanced liver disease in preventing hepatic encephalopathy (dangerous buildup of toxins in the brain in patients living with chronic liver disease).

Partnering with Dr. Duarte-Rojo on this year's DHF grant is Dr. Daniela Ladner, MD, MPH, the Founding Director of the Northwestern University Transplant Outcomes Research Collaborative (NUTORC). Dr. Ladner helps build transdisciplinary collaborations across the Feinberg School of Medicine and Northwestern University and leads clinical and research teams with her expertise in liver cirrhosis (scarring and eventual failure) and liver transplantation. Dr. Ladner focuses her research on liver disease/cirrhosis prognosis and survival rates.

"Skip Lesions" as the New Frontier in Diagnosing and Treating Crohn's disease

Principal Investigator: Parambir Dulai, MD, Associate Professor of Medicine (Gastroenterology and Hepatology), Northwestern Medicine, Northwestern Feinberg School of Medicine



Parambir Dulai, MD

Up to 3 million Americans, and many more worldwide, suffer from the chronic autoimmune condition of Inflammatory Bowel Disease, which includes diagnoses of Crohn's Disease, ulcerative colitis, and indeterminate colitis. IBD is a lifelong disease characterized by painful, often debilitating symptoms, and damage to the digestive tract that can become irreversible and fatal if left untreated.

This year's DHF grant award funds a study by Dr. Parambir Dulai and his team to investigate the as yet inexplicable "skip lesions" in Crohn's disease patients. Visible on colonoscopy, "skip lesions" are an area of inflammation, or wound, that is clearly patchy with "skipped" areas remaining unaffected by the disease. While prior research has focused primarily on the immune system's role in Crohn's disease damage to the digestive tract, the appearance of skip lesions typically indicates the distinct presence of active infection. The Dulai team has identified a novel bacteria (*W. chondrophila*) that they believe may be the reason for this classical but still puzzling presentation of Crohn's disease during colonoscopies. Dr. Dulai is investigating whether this bacteria is present at the margins of the skip lesions and how it is interacting with the immune system of patients with Crohn's disease to create the chronic and recurring inflammation that is so damaging and debilitating to patients. Better understanding of these mechanisms could help advance discoveries that result in new, more effective treatments for managing Crohn's disease.

Dr. Dulai is the newest addition to the world class Gastroenterology and Hepatology teams at Northwestern Medicine. Recognized as a research leader throughout his career, Dr. Dulai's impact on the field of inflammatory bowel disease (i.e., Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis) includes major scientific discoveries in the lab and pharmaceutical industry collaborations, all of which are actively contributing to the development of new and better solutions for the millions of patients living with IBD. As Director of Gastrointestinal Clinical Trials and Director of Precision Medicine for the Digestive Health Center and Division of Gastroenterology and Hepatology, Dr. Dulai's leadership shows limitless potential to take IBD research and patient care to the next level. Currently, Dr. Dulai leads a team that is redefining digestive diseases based on their immune-microbe signatures, an approach that will change the landscape of patient care by offering unprecedented, targeted therapies for each individual.

Thank You!

The Board of Directors would like to thank you for your presence this evening and for your contributions to the Digestive Health Foundation. Without our tremendous network of support, including a growing number of patients, families, friends, colleagues, volunteers and donors, we would not be able to invest in groundbreaking research, physician-scientist training, and gastroenterology care at Northwestern Medicine. With your help, we are changing the future for patients and their loved ones.

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We are helping to transform digestive disease into digestive health for patients and families by generating resources to accelerate medical discoveries.

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