

HOPE

THE CHRISTUS STEHLIN FOUNDATION FOR CANCER RESEARCH

MARCH 2007



BEYOND TEMPTATION

This past October 27, when the lights went down in the Westin Galleria ballroom, the excitement went up – and spirits remained high throughout the evening.

Both young and old were delighted to find that The Temptations that we remembered still had the “right stuff.” Hit songs, great showmanship, and a steady beat kept the audience of 685 people on their feet – leaving no doubt how this group earned a spot in the Rock ‘n Roll Hall of Fame.

“Motown Uptown,” the 26th Annual Friends of the CHRISTUS Stehlin Foundation gala, was overall a rousing success, netting \$467,000 to help fund the Foundation’s educational, research and treatment programs. This brings the total net proceeds donated by the Friends to over \$8.25 million.

This year the Friends welcomed back the support of the Young Texans Against Cancer (YTAC), particularly the able

leadership of gala chairs Emily Adams and Amy Donovan. YTAC, a grassroots organization focused on fundraising for cancer research, also co-chaired the Friends event in 2004.

“This young group adds so much energy and creativity – we really enjoy working with them,” said Bobby Anderson, Executive Director of the CHRISTUS Stehlin Foundation.

The Uptown Motown program, emceed by long-time Houston Rockets announcer Jim Foley, included a moving testimonial by honorary chair The Most Reverend Vincent M. Rizzotto, D.D., J.C.L., Auxiliary Bishop and Vicar General – Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston. The evening concluded with dance band Super-T, whose sounds kept the Young (and young-at-heart!) Texans up until the wee hours.

Another great party and another big success. Thank you, Friends and Young Texans Against Cancer!

MOTOWN UPTOWN

March 15, 2007

Dear Friends,

Wow! What a party!! Amazing entertainment, wonderful food, beautiful decorations, and, of course, endless support for two organizations! We could not have imagined a more perfect evening!! On behalf of the Young Texans Against Cancer, we want to thank the Friends of Stehlin Foundation for including us in such a truly special evening – the 26th Annual Friends Gala.

YTAC cannot begin to thank the Friends of Stehlin enough for welcoming us and being a great example to our young, growing organization. With Houston being the home to many of the best cancer facilities in the world, you have truly shown your enthusiasm to be active in this fight that takes place every day in our own city. We have so much to learn from you. Thank you for your inspiration.

We feel honored to have been a part of this wonderful fundraising event to advance the Foundation's pioneering research efforts to bring better treatments and hope to people with cancer. Together we WILL find a cure!

We are truly inspired and touched by your generosity and dedication – and have all of you to thank for another successful event and year.

With sincere gratitude,

Emily Adams
Amy Donovan



SAVE THE DATE! Saturday, October 20, 2007 has been confirmed for the 27th Annual Friends of the CHRISTUS Stehlin Foundation gala at the Westin Galleria. Details to follow – mark your calendar now for another wonderful evening.





In Appreciation - Star Performers

This year's gala to benefit the CHRISTUS Stehlin Foundation for Cancer Research received the generous

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Huge Strides in Drug Development

Since the last issue of Hope, the CHRISTUS Stehlin Foundation has received significant confirmation of the effectiveness of one of our most promising drug families, the Camptothecins.

The Foundation laboratory has been conducting research on the development of cancer-fighting compounds derived from the Camptothecin tree since 1987. After testing more than 200 derivatives, researchers have identified several that are highly effective cancer killers, with extremely low toxicity.

One of the most promising Camptothecin compounds was recently tested on 20 human cancers transplanted in our nude althymic mice. Eighteen of the 20 tumors demonstrated complete responses – a total growth inhibition of the cancer!¹

“We are very excited about the results we have seen in the laboratory studies,” commented Dana Vardeman, Laboratory Supervisor. “We believe that we are one step closer to realizing the great potential of the Camptothecin family of drugs.”

Perhaps more promising, the animals treated with the Camptothecin compound have shown no sign of toxicity to date even at the highest dosage. This is truly significant, since most anti-cancer drugs are effective only when they are administered at levels lethal to both normal and malignant cells.

“This is just the kind of breakthrough we’ve been waiting for,” said Bobby Anderson, Executive Director.

Global reinforcement

A personal experience, recently documented for the Foundation, heightens the staff’s encouragement about Camptothecin’s cancer treating possibilities.

In 2003, Dr. Wang Yang, an analytical chemist from China, spent a year’s fellowship at the Houston lab. During this time, Dr. Yang was engaged in the development, synthesis and purification of Camptothecin compounds.

In 2005, after Dr. Yang returned to China, her uncle was diagnosed with kidney cancer, which had metastasized to two vertebrae. This insidious cancer produced a compression of the spinal cord, resulting in paralysis and excruciating pain.

Her uncle received the conventional radiation and chemotherapy, but the prognosis for this type of disease is very grave. As she watched her uncle’s condition worsen, Dr. Yang elected to synthesize her own Camptothecin derivative in China and administer the drug to her uncle, daily, over the course of a year.

Recent CAT scans performed in China demonstrate a complete regression of the cancer in one vertebrae and a significant response in the other. Dr. Yang reports that her uncle is now pain-free and ambulatory, and continues to take large oral dosages of the drug with no signs of toxicity.

“Dr. Yang has essentially previewed for us a human clinical trial,” said Bobby Anderson. “While we realize that these results will have to be confirmed within our federal drug development guidelines, this case is obviously grounds for optimism.”

With the tendency of breast, prostate and other cancers to spread to the bones – and no effective treatment outside of palliative radiation – this patient’s recovery expands the CHRISTUS Stehlin Foundation’s hopes for the Camptothecin family as a powerful anticancer agent.

1 The two unaffected tumors were both pancreatic cancers; they were treated effectively, however, with other Camptothecin derivatives.

TARGETING

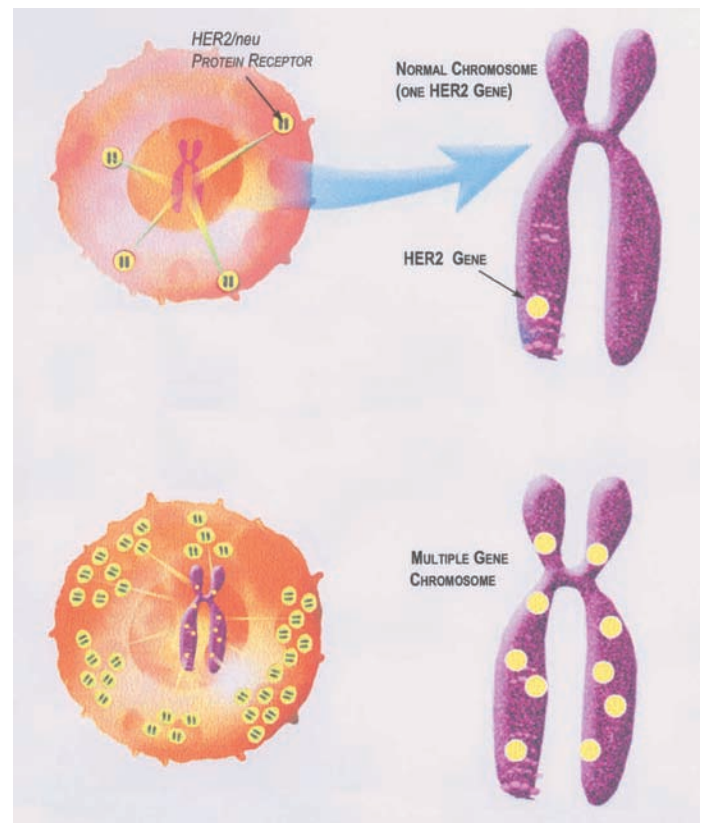
THE CHRISTUS STEHLIN FOUNDATION

is preparing for the next step in drug development for targeted anticancer therapy – the model for best practice in medical treatment today. Targeted therapies rely on specific drugs to treat specific types of cancer, keeping toxicity low and increasing effectiveness.

The new study will follow up on pioneering work conducted by the Stehlin laboratory showing the effectiveness of the drug Herceptin against some of the most deadly of breast cancers.

Specifically, researchers at the CHRISTUS Stehlin Foundation for Cancer Research will be studying the effectiveness of Herceptin, a proven successful treatment for breast carcinomas, combined with a derivative of the Camptothecin family developed at the Stehlin laboratory.

Of particular interest is the possibility of using this Camptothecin agent and Herceptin as a combined preventative treatment against recurrence for certain high-risk patients who have had a cancerous tumor removed. “We’re focusing on one of the most virulent strains of breast cancer,” said Dana Vardeman, Laboratory Supervisor. “An effective solution would absolutely save lives.”



Normal cells have only one copy each of the HER/2 neu gene. In about 20% of breast cancers, where tumor cells have multiple copies of the gene, protein receptors on the cell's surface create explosive growth potential -- creating higher rates of recurrence and mortality in breast cancer patients.



THE WORST OF BREAST CANCERS

Neutralizing a Deadly Gene

A bit of background: The HER2/neu gene produces a protein receptor on the cell surface that regulates some of the most important functions in a tissue cell, including growth. When a cancer cell contains many copies of the gene HER2/neu, the cells divide and invade healthy tissue at an accelerated pace. These aggressive types of cancers are associated with a high recurrence of tumors and poor prognosis.

Three years after diagnosis, for example, studies show an 85% mortality rate for breast cancer patients with high HER2/neu receptors, versus about 20% of the patients with only one copy of the HER2/neu receptor.

Herceptin is an antibody that effectively neutralizes the aggressive growth effect of HER2/neu. In the 1990's the Stehlin Foundation was involved in studies with Dr. Dennis Slamon at UCLA and Genentech, a biotechnology firm, on the earliest versions of the Herceptin formula.

Stehlin researchers performed the crucial experiments in these studies, showing that a particular antibody inhibited the growth of more than 80% of the breast cancers with a high presence of the HER2/neu gene. This antibody, later humanized by Genentech, became known as Herceptin.

Further studies have shown that Herceptin works best in combination with other anticancer drugs, particularly on breast carcinomas with high HER2/neu factors.

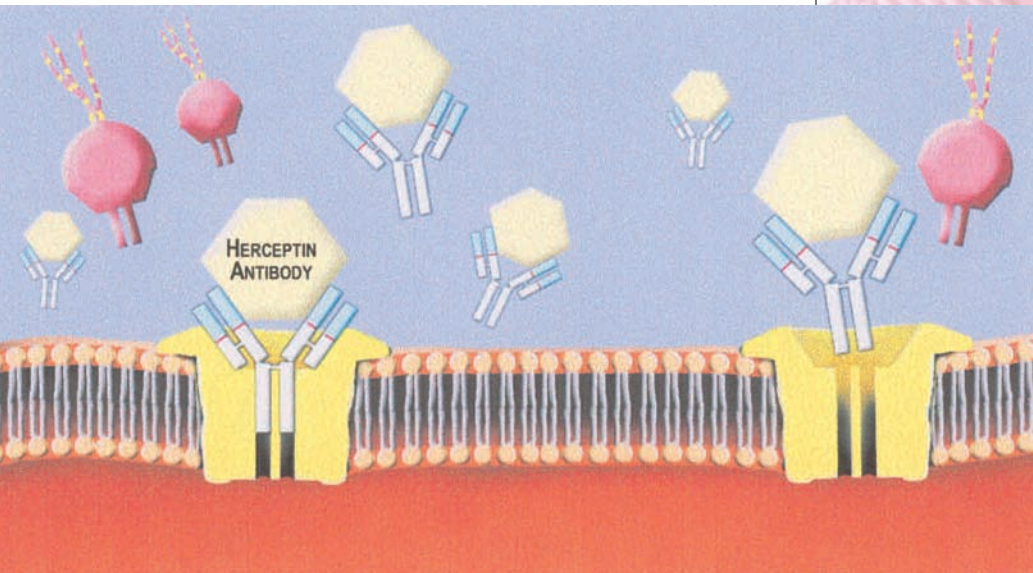
Camptothecin + Herceptin – a 1-2 Punch?

The focus of the proposed Stehlin study is testing Herceptin plus a Camptothecin agent in a preventative mode. Said Bobby Anderson, Executive Director at Stehlin, “We believe that these two drugs would be promising against breast cancer patients with a high risk of recurrence following removal of the primary tumor.”

Using the Foundation’s signature nude mice, the study will attempt to determine the safe dosages of Herceptin and the Camptothecin drug; examine and compare different permutations of administration and combinations of the two drugs, looking for the optimum. As part of the control group, researchers will study the drugs’ effects on breast cancers that are not high in the HER2/neu factor.

Both the Camptothecin drug and Herceptin have low toxicity, which makes them ideal as a preventative treatment in high-risk, post-surgical patients.

“The data tells us these two drugs have high potential together,” said Bobby Anderson. “Now that the study is underway, we’re anxious to start seeing results. Our goal, as always, is to usher effective treatments from the laboratory to the patient as quickly as possible.”



Herceptin is an antibody that blocks the aggressive growth effect of the HER2/neu gene. Stehlin researchers believe combining a Camptothecin agent with Herceptin will help prevent recurrence in post-surgical breast cancers.

Aiming High

The CHRISTUS Stehlin Foundation study on the combined effects of Herceptin and a Camptothecin drug in combating the most severe breast cancers is expected to take three years and cost \$1.2 million.

Several grants are pending, but thanks to a generous lead grant from The Vivian L. Smith Foundation, the project was launched in December 2006.

Peter D. de Ipolyi, MD, surgical oncologist, addresses the potential of the project from a physician’s point of view. “The trauma of a major cancer is severe. The trauma is multiplied by recurrent or metastatic cancer. If we can reduce the patient’s risk and fear, we are accomplishing a huge amount.”

Both individual and organizational donations are still needed to fully fund this project. Donations can be sent to The CHRISTUS Stehlin Foundation for Cancer Research, 1315 St. Joseph Parkway, Suite 1818, Houston, Texas 77002, Please write “Target Breast Cancer” on the memo line.



CHRISTUS Stehlin's Stepping Stone

Since 1980 the Stehlin Foundation has provided practical experience as well as financial support to students keen on becoming physicians, basic scientists, veterinarians or other professionals in related fields of medical research.

The CHRISTUS Stehlin Foundation Educational Scholarship Program gives high school and college students the opportunity to work "hands on" in cancer research, advancing the real work of the Foundation. They are also allowed to view surgeries and accompany doctors on patient rounds.

The selection process is rigorous: Last summer, with a competitive field of more than 90 applicants, 11 students were selected to participate in the Educational Scholarship program. Two students illustrate the value of their work – and the program – in Summer '06.



Amanda Sollars, now a senior at Wake Forest University, knew early on that she was attracted to biology. She actually visited the Stehlin laboratory on a field trip with her Bear Creek area high school. So when she applied for internships last summer, Stehlin was on the top of her list.

After learning the basics, Amanda was put in charge of her own experiment in the chemo department, running experiments with various dosages and administration methods on the Stehlin group's emerging cancer-fighting drugs. As with all the Stehlin interns, she was expected to develop a presentation for the group. Her assigned topic? The nude mouse.

Amanda has no doubt that her work this summer provided valuable experience for her next assignment back at Wake Forest – working with a professor in the laboratory. But as a future physician, she appreciates the humanistic lessons of the Stehlin Tripartnership: "I saw patients' spirits lifted by the way they were treated. I'll never forget that."

Daniel Wang, now in his senior year at St. Thomas Episcopal High School, had spent the summer of 2005 doing cell culture research. However, for his work at the CHRISTUS Stehlin Foundation lab this past summer, he focused on live animal cultures, which took him, as he put it, "one step deeper into research experience."

Daniel conducted his own drug efficacy studies using Camptothecin derivatives on the Stehlin's signature nude mice. His topic for presentation was "The Correlation Between Poor Prognosis and Poor Survival Rate with the HER2/Neu Oncogene." This, he says, was a better alternative than the summer job he might have had working in a video store.

This year, while he selects his future college, Daniel is taking classes at Rice University; he took biochemistry and organic chemistry at Rice last year. His plans are to become a medical doctor, "but still do research." Why? "Because I know that it contributes to the field of oncology and I know that it benefits people."



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