



From the Desk of Dr. John Stehlin

Dear Friends:

Before The Stehlin Foundation for Cancer Research was founded in 1969, I spent a good deal of time thinking about what I wanted to accomplish if I undertook the challenge to establish a private practice or research foundation. I traveled around the country, as well as other parts of the world, visiting with well known cancer specialists and talking to them about how they conducted their practices, how often they consulted with research scientists, what they learned from their patients and how often they heard back from their patients months or years after having treated them.

What I learned, frankly, disappointed me. I heard a lot about the conferences that these specialists attended and the papers they published, the awards and honors that they received, the prestigious clubs to which they belonged. I heard very little, however, about people. Thirty years ago it was almost unheard of for even the most famous and accomplished cancer specialists to consult with a research scientist, however accomplished a specialist in their field he or she might be. Likewise, cancer researchers were equally disdainful of sharing their expertise with clinicians. Most research scientists seemed to have little interest in the immediate clinical application of their research. And I thought, this is such a gross injustice, because there is no coordination, and it will be years before the work that these people are doing will be of any use to the patient.

And the patient? Was anyone talking to or listening to the patient? The great men to whom I spoke could not imagine what the patient would have to contribute. "Well, just possibly some of the answers, if anyone would listen," I thought, finally determined on the course I was about to undertake.

It was from these observations that I understood the essential foundation on which any private practice that I established on my own must be based. It must be formed upon an equal partnership between the clinician, the research scientist and the patient. It was this concept of a Tripartnership that resulted in the founding of The Stehlin Foundation for Cancer Research in 1969. The concept of the Tripartnership is one that teams the patient, physician and research scientist in their shared fight against cancer. None is ever isolated from the other, and within this unique commitment, the intrinsic dignity of the patient remains supreme. In the early years of The Foundation, at a time when it was almost unheard of for a physician to consult with a research scientist, much less with a patient, this was indeed a revolutionary idea. But it was an idea whose time had come. And it is an idea that is very much here to stay.

When I founded The Stehlin Foundation more than thirty years ago, I began with a vision of a medical foundation where clinicians talked to scientists and scientists talked to

clinicians, and most important, where clinicians and scientists both talked to patients and encouraged the patients to talk to them and become involved in their own treatment and recovery. To know that they were an integral part of their own health care team. To know that they had come to a place where there was always hope. Where there was always faith and joy and laughter. The idea of "hope for the incurable patient" was once a revolutionary idea, too, but we seemed to have latched on to an idea more than thirty years ago that the rest of the world is just now waking up to – the idea that faith, hope, love and laughter are powerful medicines, indeed!

More than thirty years later, I hear all the time from patients who were members of those early Tripartnership "teams". I run into them on the street, at the grocery store, in restaurants, at the theatre, and they remain my good friends. They send me their children's graduation and wedding pictures, or announcements of their retirement. I am sure many of them will be reading of my retirement this summer from my clinical practice, and I hope they will be glad to know that I am just moving on to a new phase in my career. And a very exciting one. Another milestone. Another plateau.

This summer as I retire from clinical practice and begin to focus my time and energy on the important and all-consuming work on The Foundation "side" of our operation, I feel in many ways that my career has come full circle. Having the opportunity to focus attention on the research being conducted at our lab, as well as the important task of fundraising and community education necessary to continue that research and its clinical applications, is enormously exciting for me. As I renew my focus on my Foundation duties, I want everyone who has supported us through the years to know that neither I nor any of us at the Foundation are losing steam. Far from it: we're simply gaining momentum!

In the next newsletter, we'll talk about all that we accomplished once our Tripartnership team began to get to work, all those years ago. What a grand adventure we have had together! And what a grand adventure we have to look forward to in the coming years. Our vision of hope and healing is still very much alive today, and with your continuing support, I know it will be alive well into the future.

With my thanks
and warm regards,

John S. Stehlin, Jr., M.D.

