

# momentum

FALL 2008 | A NEWSLETTER FROM THE DAMON RUNYON CANCER RESEARCH FOUNDATION

## Where will the next breakthroughs come from?

We don't know. But we do know that our brilliant and creative young scientists are working in all of today's most promising areas of research.

The Damon Runyon Cancer Research Foundation has always believed in diversification. We fund a broad spectrum of research fields because in science, solutions can come from many different approaches. We do not focus exclusively on a single type of cancer, and this strategy has been validated over time because we now know that cancers are defined by genetic makeup, not strictly by the organ they are affecting. Today, our scientists are researching questions common to all cancers, as well as those related to specific types of the disease.

### THE GENETIC UNDERPINNINGS OF CANCER

Each of the estimated 25,000 genes in a single human cell is turned on when a specific job is needed and turned off when it is not. Cancer is caused by genetic mutations that are inherited or, more often, occur over time. Identifying these defects and how they cause cells to become cancerous is central to devising ways to reverse these processes.

### UNDERSTANDING HOW CANCERS DEVELOP

Normal cells divide to produce more copies of themselves when needed. The most important step in this process is the duplication of the cell's genetic information contained in its DNA. If that process goes awry and the DNA is damaged, cells can repair that damage or commit suicide to avoid creating new cells with genetic defects (mutations). Cancer cells often disable or circumvent these processes, enabling defective cells to grow out of control and develop into tumors. Research focuses on understanding and preventing or correcting these aberrant processes.

### METASTASIS

Tumor metastasis, the spreading of cancer cells to other parts of the body, is frequently what causes cancers to become lethal. Research focuses on how cells move during normal and cancerous conditions, with the ultimate goal of developing drugs that can prevent cancers from metastasizing.



**Thomas M. Huckaba, PhD** (Damon Runyon-HHMI Fellow) of the University of California, San Francisco, is researching the transition from a single tumor to metastatic disease. He hopes that his work will ultimately lead to therapies to block the spread of particularly invasive cancer types such as breast and colon cancer.

*"My research focuses on how a cell can sense direction, how it mobilizes itself to move to a different part of the body. The more we know about this process, the better we can design specific drugs to get cancer cells and not everything else in the body."*

Thomas describes why he loves his work at [www.damonrunyon.org](http://www.damonrunyon.org)

### EARLY DETECTION

The earlier cancer is detected, the better the chance of a cure. In each type of cancer cell, the levels of certain genes and proteins are different from those in normal cells. These alterations are referred to as biomarkers.

Scientists are developing tests that can be used before cancer's most obvious signs, such as tumors, become apparent, using biomarkers as "red flags." These tests can be carried out in the doctor's office using blood, saliva or urine. Advanced imaging techniques are also being developed for early diagnosis.

### TARGETED THERAPY

A central goal of research is to produce new treatments that specifically target and destroy cancer cells without affecting healthy cells, which is what causes the terrible side effects of current treatments. Recently developed targeted therapies, such as Herceptin and Gleevec, block the growth and spread of cancer by interfering with specific cancer-promoting molecules. This is just the beginning. Research continues to focus on identifying new targets and developing drugs to attack them.



**Patrick A. Brown, MD** (Damon Runyon-Lilly Clinical Investigator) of The Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, Baltimore, is leading clinical trials focused on new treatments for children with a particularly lethal form of leukemia. Dr. Brown is targeting

a protein called FLT3 to more effectively kill leukemia cells in combination with standard chemotherapy.

*"Our ultimate goal is to improve the cure rates for childhood leukemias in a way that leaves the children able to fully function and enjoy the rest of their lives."*

Hear what drives Patrick to help children with cancer at [www.damonrunyon.org](http://www.damonrunyon.org)

### DRUG DEVELOPMENT

The next generation of cancer drugs will work in entirely novel ways. This requires a new generation of specially trained scientists, working side by side to develop the new compounds and delivery systems needed to efficiently direct these drugs to the cancer cells. Multi-disciplinary teams of chemists, engineers, biologists and others are working together to make this happen.



**Danielle S.W. Benoit, PhD** (Damon Runyon-Merck Fellow) of the University of Washington, Seattle, is a chemical engineer who is developing a new technique to deliver siRNAs (small interfering RNAs) to cancer cells. These siRNAs will knock out the over-expressed genes that are

causing the cells to become cancerous.

*"One of the great things about Damon Runyon is that it funds people from diverse disciplines: biologists, organic chemists, people who are more technical at developing treatments. It's willing to fund a multi-pronged attack on a disease that is so terrible."*

Danielle describes why collaborative research could lead to cures at [www.damonrunyon.org](http://www.damonrunyon.org)

### IMMUNOLOGY

The immune system is designed to protect the body from infection and disease. Research focuses on understanding how the body fights disease, why it is not able to respond effectively to cancer and how it can be directed to attack tumor cells more robustly.

### CANCER STEM CELLS

Recent studies have shown that all cancer cells may not be alike. It appears that there are "cancer stem cells" that cause tumors to grow and are resistant to conventional treatment. Research focuses on identifying these stem cells and developing ways to specifically target them, thus preventing recurrence after treatment.

Hear more from Damon Runyon scientists at [www.damonrunyon.org](http://www.damonrunyon.org)

## Stagnant Federal Research Funding Puts Young Scientists in Jeopardy

The federal government is the largest funder of biomedical research in the nation (and the world). The number and speed of breakthrough discoveries for all human diseases is largely dependent on this funding. However, since 2003, **federal research funding has been flat.**

At Damon Runyon, we are particularly concerned with the lack of investment in the National Cancer Institute. Adjusted for inflation, the NCI has about **\$500 million less** for cancer research than it did just five years ago. Tight funding has had a direct impact on young cancer researchers, who are far less likely to compete successfully for grants against senior scientists with long track records. We know of many outstanding young scientists who have given up hope and abandoned promising careers in research. The impact: fewer bold new ideas when we need them the most.

What can you do to help? Reach out to your elected officials and let them know that finding cures for cancer and other diseases is a top priority. And please continue to help us support young cancer researchers — **the more we can invest in them, the faster we will have better treatments and cures for all forms of cancer.**

# Annual Breakfast Raises \$2 Million

This year's Annual Breakfast, *Investing in Brilliance*, ended with a standing ovation for honoree **John M. Angelo**, Chief Executive Officer of Angelo, Gordon & Co., who spoke from a personal perspective about the driving need to support cancer research. One of New York's leading alternative investors, he strongly endorsed the Foundation's commitment to investing in young scientists.

John was introduced by his friend **James Burrows**, award-winning sitcom producer and director (*Cheers*, *Frasier*, *Will & Grace*), who spoke about his personal connection to the Foundation: his father wrote the book for the Broadway musical *Guys and Dolls*, which was based on Damon Runyon's short stories. In addition, the first three winners of our new Innovation Award described their high-risk, high-return research.

Thank you to all who attended. We are grateful for the enthusiastic and energized show of support for the Foundation and our scientists. For additional photos of the event, see the "Events" section of our website at: [www.damonrunyon.org](http://www.damonrunyon.org).

For information about next year's Annual Breakfast, please contact Kim Kubert at 212.455.0501 or [kim.kubert@damonrunyon.org](mailto:kim.kubert@damonrunyon.org)



John M. Angelo addresses the Rainbow Room audience



Donald Trump



John M. Angelo & Lorraine W. Egan

## GO VERTICAL CHICAGO 2008

### Climbing for a Cure



Shortly after you receive this newsletter, more than 2000 people will climb the stairs to the top of Chicago's famous Sears Tower in support of the Damon Runyon Cancer Research Foundation.

Some climb for fun, others for a family member or friend affected by cancer, and many are themselves cancer survivors. Here are a couple of their stories:

*"This is the third time for me. My wife is a ten-year breast cancer survivor. I also use this climb as a motivational tool for myself. This is a challenge for me being 63. It gives me satisfaction to complete the climb."*

**Ron Baldini**

*"I climb to bring awareness to a disease that has reached all of us in one way or another. As a three-year survivor, my family has become very extended – you see, we as survivors have become a family! We are able to look into each other's eyes and understand without even talking. We understand the fear, tears, smiles, and never judge. This is a wonderful family that I have joined, not by choice, but one I am honored to be part of!"*

**Jackie Baird, Survivor**

Member, Team Rita II

You can still donate to support a climber, or help us directly by donating to Go Vertical at [www.goverticalchicago.org](http://www.goverticalchicago.org).

**Can you help? We are looking to extend the Go Vertical challenge to other cities. If you know of a building that might be suitable, please contact us at 212.455.0501 or [GoVerticalChicago@damonrunyon.org](mailto:GoVerticalChicago@damonrunyon.org)**



Cubs' mascot Southpaw warms up

## MEET OUR SCIENTISTS AT WWW.DAMONRUNYON.ORG

We have redesigned our website to provide even more news and information about the cancer research being supported by Damon Runyon.

Watch interviews with today's most promising young researchers, learn more about their discoveries, check out our current Damon Runyon Broadway Tickets offerings and much more. **Visit us at [www.damonrunyon.org](http://www.damonrunyon.org) and let us know what you think!**

## BUY HOLIDAY GIFTS ONLINE AND FIGHT CANCER

**iGive.com** is an online shopping mall where purchases can benefit your favorite cause at no additional cost to you. Shop at more than 700 stores, including **Amazon.com**, **Barnes & Noble** and **iTunes**. You can even book travel through **Priceline.com**, **Expedia**, **Orbitz** and selected airlines. Just choose the Damon Runyon Cancer Research Foundation as your cause and each retailer will donate a percentage of the purchase price to the Foundation.

**Call us at 1.877.7CANCER if you have any questions.**



## BOARD OF DIRECTORS UPDATE

The Board of Directors welcomes new member, **John A. Fry**, President of Franklin & Marshall College, Lancaster, Pennsylvania. The Board also thanks two departing members for their years of service: **David Baltimore, PhD**, President Emeritus and Robert Andrews Millikan Professor of California Institute of Technology, and **Craig B. Thompson, MD**, Director of the Abramson Cancer Center, University of Pennsylvania.



John A. Fry

## THE DAMON RUNYON CANCER RESEARCH FOUNDATION

# Clinical Investigator Symposium

APRIL 27, 2009, NEW YORK CITY

This one-day symposium, sponsored by the Damon Runyon Cancer Research Foundation and The New York Academy of Sciences, will commemorate the 10th year of the **Damon Runyon Clinical Investigator Award**. It will feature distinguished awardees and alumni of the program, who will speak about their groundbreaking discoveries in the area of translational cancer research: from the first cure of late-stage melanoma to the latest early detection methods for lung cancer and head and neck cancer.

In addition, the schedule will include keynote speaker **Robert A. Weinberg, PhD**, of the Whitehead Institute and MIT. Dr. Weinberg is a pioneer in cancer research, most widely known for his discovery of the first human oncogene (Ras). The day will culminate with a panel discussion entitled *From Discovery Through Development – The Evolving Relationship Between Academia and Industry*. Panel participants will include senior scientists from leading academic cancer centers and representatives from Eli Lilly and Company, Genentech, and Siemens Medical Solutions.

**Join us for this excellent opportunity to learn about the latest advances in cancer research. For registration and a detailed schedule, please visit: [www.nyas.org/damonrunyon](http://www.nyas.org/damonrunyon). For more information, please contact Yung S. Lie, PhD, at 212.455.0521 or [yung.lie@damonrunyon.org](mailto:yung.lie@damonrunyon.org).**



## Five New Clinical Investigators Selected



**Ronald J. Buckanovich, MD, PhD**, with mentors Daniel F. Hayes, MD, and Max S. Wichita, MD, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan

Dr. Buckanovich has developed a new way to analyze how **ovarian cancer** tumors develop blood vessels

to keep them alive and growing. He seeks unique molecules on these blood vessels to target with **antibodies combined with toxic nanoparticles—a search and destroy technique**. He is also investigating whether there are special cancer stem cells that play a critical role in ovarian tumor development.



**Andrew T. Chan, MD, MPH**, with mentors Charles S. Fuchs, MD, MPH, and Ralph Weissleder, MD, PhD, Massachusetts General Hospital, Boston, Massachusetts

Current colonoscopies miss approximately 22% of precancerous polyps. An oncologist

partnering with imaging researchers, Dr. Chan is **developing molecular “smart” probes and novel imaging techniques for earlier and improved detection of colon cancer**, which he will be testing in clinical trials. This technology also has the potential to assess the effectiveness of colon cancer treatments on individual patients in real time.



**Rachael A. Clark, MD, PhD**, with mentor Thomas S. Kupper, MD, Brigham and Women’s Hospital, Boston, Massachusetts

Dr. Clark investigates the role of the immune system in controlling squamous cell **skin cancers**. She has identified

new mechanisms by which these skin tumors evade T immune cells and is focused on **developing new therapies** using this information.



**Vassiliki Karantza-Wadsworth, MD, PhD**, with mentor Robert S. DiPaola, MD, UM-DNJ/Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, New Brunswick, New Jersey

Autophagy is a process of “cellular self-digestion” used by both normal and tumor cells as a

survival mechanism in times of metabolic stress, including during chemotherapy. Dr. Karantza-Wadsworth is examining the role of autophagy in tumor cell survival. She is performing preclinical and clinical studies **modulating autophagy in breast cancer, which could lead to improved patient response to treatment**.



**Elahe A. Mostaghel, MD, PhD** [Damon Runyon-Genentech Clinical Investigator], with mentor Peter S. Nelson, MD, Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, Seattle, Washington

Suppression of the hormone testosterone is currently the

most effective treatment for advanced prostate cancer; however, tumors frequently develop resistance to this therapy. Dr. Mostaghel is defining key mechanisms underlying this resistance. Her goal is to **develop novel treatments for prostate cancer that can be rapidly moved into the clinic**.

## Escalating Our Commitment to Clinical Research

The Damon Runyon Cancer Research Foundation was one of the first cancer charities to identify the alarming shortage of clinical investigators: physicians who also conduct research and are capable of translating promising science into new treatments. We were also one of the first to do something about it.

In 2000, we launched our **Clinical Investigator Award**, which is designed to increase the number of top physician-scientists in the United States. We help them early in their careers, providing three years of research support and payment of up to \$100,000 of outstanding medical school debt, which was causing many young MDs to choose private practice over less lucrative careers in research.

### CONTINUATION GRANTS

This year, thanks to generous commitments from the **William J. Bowes, Jr., Foundation** and **Connie and Bob Lurie**, Damon Runyon will be able to award special “Continuation Grants” to recipients of our Clinical Investigator Award whose research has been highly productive and who need an additional two years of funding to pursue a promising idea or clinical trial. This will enable us to accelerate progress on the most innovative research.



## 14 New Damon Runyon Fellows Selected

The Damon Runyon Fellowship Award supports the training of the brightest young postdoctoral scientists conducting basic and translational cancer research in leading laboratories across the country. The three-year award is designed to enlist the skills and creativity of the next generation in the fight against cancer.

**Laura A. Banaszynski, PhD**, [Angelo Family Fellow] with her sponsor C. David Allis, PhD, at The Rockefeller University, New York, New York, is studying how modifications of proteins called histones regulate gene expression and maintain genome stability. **Understanding what happens when this process goes awry will lead to important insights into how tumors develop.**

**Sarah K. Bowman, PhD**, with her sponsor Robert E. Kingston, PhD, at Massachusetts General Hospital, Boston, Massachusetts, is investigating how nucleosomes, proteins that package DNA in the nucleus, contribute to gene silencing (turning genes off). This will provide insight into **how genes that suppress tumors are inactivated during cancer**.

**Lee Stirling Churchman, PhD**, [Merck Fellow] with her sponsor Jonathan S. Weissman, PhD, at the University of California, San Francisco, California, is exploring endocytosis, the process by which cells absorb molecules from outside their membranes. This plays an integral role in **cell-to-cell communication**.

**Michael J. Emanuele, PhD**, [Philip O’Byryan Montgomery, Jr., MD, Fellow] with his sponsor Stephen J. Elledge, PhD, at Brigham and Women’s Hospital, Boston, Massachusetts, seeks to understand the process by which **healthy cells repair damage to their DNA, thereby avoiding cancer**.

**Sunny D. Gilbert, PhD**, with her sponsor James C. Carrington, PhD, at Oregon State University, Corvallis, Oregon, is studying the basic mechanisms governing the process of RNA silencing, which turns genes off. As this process is highly regulated in several types of cancer, **this work will lead to insights in the understanding of cancer biology**.

**Christopher A. Johnston, PharmD, PhD**, [Dennis and Marsha Dammerman Fellow] with his sponsors Kenneth E. Prehoda, PhD, and Chris Q. Doe, PhD, at the University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon, is **investigating how cells divide**. Failure in this process can lead to abnormal cell division and subsequent tumor development.

**Adam G. Matthews, PhD**, [Fraternal Order of Eagles Fellow] with his sponsor Stephen P. Bell, PhD, at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, Massachusetts, is investigating **how human DNA replication is regulated** to ensure faithful duplication of genetic material, maintain genome stability, and prevent the development of cancer.

**Akiyemi I. Ojesina, MBBS, PhD**, [Rebecca Ridley Kry Fellow] with his sponsor Matthew Meyerson, MD, PhD, at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, Boston, Massachu-

setts, seeks to **discover infectious pathogens, such as viruses, that can give rise to lymphomas and other cancers**. These findings have the potential to facilitate the diagnosis, treatment and prevention – by vaccine – of many cancers.

**Carolyn M. Phillips, PhD**, [Marion Abbe Fellow] with her sponsor Gary B. Ruvkun, PhD, at the Massachusetts General Hospital, Boston, Massachusetts, is examining the relationship between **small RNAs and nuclear organization of the genome**. Defects in the nucleus of a cell can result in inappropriate regulation of genes, incorrect physical separation of chromosomes, and instability of an organism’s genetic material: all of which are thought to be early steps in cancer progression.

**Avi Priel, PhD**, with his sponsor David J. Julius, PhD, at the University of California, San Francisco, California, is identifying molecules that contribute to **pain sensation under normal or disease states**, such as cancer, with special focus on molecules that confer temperature sensation.

**Melanie A. Samuel, PhD**, with her sponsor Joshua R. Sanes, PhD, at Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, is investigating **age-related changes that occur in the nervous system**. Because aging, neural function and cancer susceptibility are molecularly linked, these studies may identify factors that **promote healthy aging and also enhance resistance to cancer**.

**Timothy O. Street, PhD**, [Connie and Bob Lurie Fellow] with his sponsor David A. Agard, PhD, at the University of California, San Francisco, California, is investigating the mechanism by which proteins called chaperones ensure that other **proteins take on the correct shape to function (protein folding)**. The specific chaperone he is studying is responsible for activating a wide variety of proteins that are overexpressed in cancerous cells.

**Elaine M. Youngman, PhD**, [Kenneth G. and Elaine A. Langone Fellow] with her sponsor Craig C. Mello, PhD, at the University of Massachusetts Medical School, Worcester, Massachusetts, is **examining how small noncoding RNAs control gene expression**. Understanding this newly-defined regulatory mechanism may provide paths to novel therapies for the treatment of many types of cancer.

**Xiaomeng Milton Yu, PhD**, with his sponsor Liqun Luo, PhD, at Stanford University, Stanford, California, is studying **how a cell senses its environment and uses this information to control its own survival and regeneration**. These are processes important for both healthy and cancerous cells.

> Where Will The Next Breakthroughs Come From?

> Annual Breakfast Raises \$2 Million

> Five New Clinical Investigators  
Tackle Ovarian, Breast, Colon,  
Prostate & Skin Cancers

> Top House Seats Available

## House Seats for the Holiday Season

The holidays are coming and a gift of premium house seats would make anyone smile! Our **Damon Runyon Broadway Tickets** service offers you the best seat locations – normally reserved for VIPs or industry insiders – for a wide variety of Broadway shows. Our tickets typically cost less than a broker would charge and your purchase supports cancer research.

**Please spread the word!** We often have unsold tickets, which are then returned to the theaters. The donation portion of each ticket purchase is of vital importance, allowing us to give 100% of direct donations to cancer research. Please tell others about our service, pass on the website address or call to request brochures. If you refer three new users, you will be eligible for a free pair of tickets. We also welcome corporate clients.

Please call 212.455.0550 between 9AM and 5PM for more information or see our website for details:  
[www.damonrunyon.org](http://www.damonrunyon.org).

## Premier Circle

The **Broadway Premier**

**Circle** is a premium membership service

that gives patrons early

access to our tickets, along with other exclusive benefits. It's a great way to increase your commitment to cancer research and get first dibs on the hot new shows!

For information about our Premier Circle please call 212.455.0550 or visit our website at [www.damonrunyon.org](http://www.damonrunyon.org).



### 2008 Fall and Holiday Season Openings

#### OCTOBER

**The Seagull:** Chekhov's classic drama about the tensions between family members. Starring Kristin Scott Thomas and Peter Sarsgaard.

**Speed-the-Plow:** The revival of David Mamet's satire of greed and ambition. Starring Jeremy Piven, Raul Esparza and Elisabeth Moss.

#### NOVEMBER

**American Buffalo:** A group of third-rate crooks plans to steal a valuable coin collection. Starring John Leguizamo, Cedric the Entertainer and Haley Joel Osment.

**TO ORDER TICKETS CALL 212.455.0550 or 1.877.7CANCER**

(For more information about our Broadway Tickets Service, visit our website at [www.damonrunyon.org](http://www.damonrunyon.org))

**Billy Elliot:** The hit show is based on the British film about a young boy who wants to be a ballet dancer. With music by Sir Elton John.

**Dividing the Estates:** The Gordon family of Harrison, Texas, has enjoyed years of wealth and status, but matters are about to change. Written by Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Horton Foote.

**Irving Berlin's White Christmas:** An adaptation of the classic musical film comes to Broadway.

#### DECEMBER

**Shrek The Musical:** A new sort of fairytale based on the blockbuster movie.

\*See our website for a full list of all available shows, seating and ticket prices.

### POPULAR AND ACCLAIMED

**August: Osage County:** The 2008 Tony Award winner about the dysfunctional Weston family's return to Oklahoma after the disappearance of its patriarch.

**In the Heights:** The 2008 Tony Award winner for Best Musical that portrays the lives of young dreamers in Washington Heights.

**Jersey Boys:** The story of the legendary Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons. The musical features the hit songs "Big Girls Don't Cry," "Oh, What a Night" and "Can't Take My Eyes Off You."

**South Pacific:** The iconic Rodgers and Hammerstein musical and the winner of seven 2008 Tony Awards, including Best Musical Revival, continues its radiant run.

## GIVING OPPORTUNITIES

- > **Tribute gifts** Honor someone in your life, give special meaning to condolences or celebrate important events with a special gift that supports cancer research. The Foundation will send a beautiful card on your behalf to the person(s) of your choosing.
- > **Remember the Foundation in your will or trust** Support the Damon Runyon Cancer Research Foundation after providing for your family and loved ones. Bequests and trusts using property, securities or cash provide long-term financial stability to the Foundation.
- > **Gifts of securities** If you have stock that has grown in value, you can make a charitable gift of these securities and enjoy significant tax savings.
- > **Matching gifts** Double your impact through a corporate matching gift. Check with your employer's human resources department to find out if this is an option for you.
- > **Sponsor a Scientist** Sponsor a brilliant scientist for a three-year period or in perpetuity, and we will name the award for you or your family or in honor of a loved one.
- > **Host an event** Help the Foundation reach out to new friends by hosting an event to raise funds and awareness about our important work.
- > **Shop Online at iGive.com** Shop online through [www.iGive.com](http://www.iGive.com) at retailers including Amazon.com, Expedia, Barnes & Noble, iTunes, Overstock.com and Priceline.com and donate a percentage to Damon Runyon – at no extra cost to you!
- > **Non-Monetary Giving** We value non-monetary gifts and welcome pro-bono services. We would particularly welcome gifts of professional services, catering services, advertising and media-related placements or products that we can use for raffles, prizes or gift bags.

100%  
for cancer  
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\* ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS ARE PAID THROUGH OUR DAMON RUNYON BROADWAY TICKETS SERVICE AND ENDOWMENT.

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One Exchange Plaza, 55 Broadway,  
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