Lupus Awareness Month

Although this past May—Lupus Awareness Month—wasn’t quite like others, the LRA has initiated efforts for people with lupus to connect. To help our community cope with the effects of COVID-19 in May and beyond, the LRA has unveiled a series of enlighteningly educational videos hosted by Shayla Shorter, PhD.

The Learning from Lupus series is now available on the LRA’s website and YouTube channel.

Forum for Discovery

In the era of COVID-19, the LRA is working hard to keep every aspect of every vital initiative on track. That’s why our Forum for Discovery—our collaborative scientific meeting—will be presented virtually on October 27, 2020. This invaluable meeting gives LRA-funded researchers the opportunity to share important discoveries made through their research.

Staying Connected: Lupus and COVID-19

- What parallels exist in the overactive immune response seen in lupus and COVID-19?
- Are people with lupus more or less at risk for COVID-19?
- Are medications used by people with lupus more or less effective in COVID-19?

These are just a few of the questions that were answered in the LRA’s live webcast “Lupus and COVID-19: What You Need to Know on May 21st.” If you couldn’t attend—or want to hear it again—go to our website www.lupusresearch.org

Visit lupusresearch.org to make a donation, learn more about lupus and our funded lupus research, or find out about our Walk with Us to Cure Lupus program.
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A 1-2 Punch Approach To Treating Lupus

member, Professor Charles Mackay’s study of Type 1 diabetes.”

As promising as this dietary approach may be, Dr. Mackay cautions that treatment by diet alone may not be enough. Undertaking a second line of inquiry, she is testing an approach that involves first depleting key pathogenic immune cells. This is followed with diets that are bacterial metabolite interventions.

If Dr. Mackay’s one-two approach is on the right track, she may have found a way to correct autoreactivity and restore normal immunological tolerance in lupus patients.

Moving forward, Dr. Mackay will investigate whether high-fiber diets actually create positive changes in the metabolism and set in motion biological processes with healing properties.

“If we can successfully harness this kind of knowledge, we can develop treatment with surgical precision—rather than simply hoping that diet will work for every patient,” Dr. Mackay summarized her work.

Dr. Mackay is one of the most distinguished figures in the world of lupus research—but she would be the first to say that research is only one part of the equation.

“The grant from the LRA has given us the support we need to design and carry out thorough research studies. We wouldn’t have the resources to undertake this work without the LRA,” says Dr. Mackay. “And I’m truly grateful because research—like mine and the other investigations that this great organization funds—must go on!”

Making Rapid Discoveries Through a Powerful Partnership

In August of 2019, the LRA had the great fortune to form a unique new partnership with Bristol Meyers Squibb (formerly Celgene Corporation) — the creation of the LRA BMS Accelerator Awards. The aim: Fast-track bold cutting-edge research projects.

To get this initiative off the ground and running, the Celgene Corporation made an extraordinarily generous pledge of $3 million! Today, the LRA is pleased to announce that after a rigorous review process and the world’s most brilliant lupus researchers have been selected as grantees.

“We await good things from these top-flight investigators as they broaden the understanding of the underlying mechanisms of disease...address how much the disease varies from person to person...and identify novel biomarkers,” said Kenneth M. Farber, President and CEO of the LRA.

MEET THE LRA BMS ACCELERATOR AWARDS RECIPIENTS

Marta Alcoro-Riquelme, MD, PhD
New Targets for Lupus Through Mechanistic Modeling of Multi-OMIC Data
Fundacion Publica Andalusa Progress

Ilana Britto, PhD
Biomarker Identification in SLE Identified via MicroRNA-Histone Interaction
Cornell University

Patrick Gaffney, MD
Epigenomic Profiling in Human SLE
Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation

Joel Guthridge, PhD
Dissecting Molecular Heterogeneity of SLE Patient Treatment Response
Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation

Michelle J. Kahlenberg, MD, PhD
Longitudinal Systemic and Organ Specific Heterogeneity in Lupus
The Regents of the University of Michigan

Vivian Kawai, MD
Virtual Translomic and Proteome in Lupus Pathogenesis and Heterogeneity
Van derbilt University

Chandra Mohan, MD, PhD
Genomics as a Guide to the Renal Immune Landscape in SLE
University of Houston

Victoria Werth, MD
Immunologic Markers for Heterogeneity of Cutaneous Lupus Erythematosus
The Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania

Dr. Jane Salmon

MAJOR PRIZE AWARDED

The LRA is delighted to announce the recipient of our 2020 Lupus Insight Prize. The prize—which recognizes the work of an investigator who has charted new ground in lupus research—goes to Jane Salmon MD, from the Hospital for Special Surgery.

Staying tuned. A future 2020 Lupus Research Update issue will feature a full article on Dr. Salmon’s extraordinary work.

Enthusiastic...charming...exuberant...these are qualities Lauren Maley has in spades—so much that you might not easily grasp the extent to which lupus has impacted her young life.

Officially she has been coping with lupus for the past five years—but in reality, it has been much longer.

A false-negative lupus test resulted in years of suffering and a false start to treatment. “I went for that test, biopsy, biopsy with nothing conclusive—as I was getting sicker and sicker,” said Lauren.

At this point in Lauren’s life, she was traveling a tough, lonely road—coping with all the angst of embarking on a career...and lupus.

Despite having the disease, Lauren, with a sharp eye and blazing ambition, made a name for herself as a dealer in the competitive art world. She sold works of art valued at more than a million dollars annually.

Patrons relied on her knowledge and taste. But Lauren could not rely on her own health. “I had so many complex symptoms; skin rashes, memory issues, constant fatigue, and weight loss,” shared Lauren.

Fortunately, Lauren is one of the lucky ones. The latest FDA-approved lupus drug (the first in 60 years) has been working for her! But instead of focusing on herself, Lauren looks for ways to help others.

She has raised an astounding $10,000 participating in the past few LRA Walks to Cure Lupus events in Los Angeles.

Lauren Maley (Bond from right) is an avid supporter of the LRA—and a great fundraiser, too.

“I support this incredible organization because it not only funds the most groundbreaking research—it also devotes 100% of every dollar a donor gives directly to the research,” said Lauren.

And knowing that progress in research depends on participation in clinical trials, Lauren has expressed interest in joining one—since her doctor gives her the green light to become involved at this level.

Lauren is also outspoken when it comes to protecting the health of people with lupus. “What the general public doesn’t realize is that people with compromised immune systems already lived in fear of infection before COVID-19,” shared Lauren.

“So, the pandemic is an even scarier time for us.”

Lauren’s concern for others offers a breath of relief and a precious glimmer of hope—especially these days.

BEING SMART ABOUT RESEARCH

When it comes to solving the mysteries of lupus, we must explore all potential avenues of discovery—including the brain.

This is why the LRA is funding important research and a clinical trial to address neuropsychiatric lupus—the wide range of symptoms involving the brain that can vary from “brain fog” to stroke to psychosis.

We’re also working with the Harvard Brain Tissue Resource Center on an initiative that will help recover donated brains from deceased individuals with lupus.

The decision to register to donate an organ for research is not an easy one—but making such a commitment is a priceless gift and legacy that will most definitely advance lupus research and lead to the way in finding new treatments for others for generations to come.

If propelling lupus research in this way is something you would consider, please go to www.lupusresearch.org or brainbank for a full brochure on this important subject.

Or, you can call the LRA at 646-884-6084 and leave us a message and we will get back to you.

FACES OF LUPUS

Advocating for Others with Lupus
And Raising Critical Funds for Research