

Newsletter

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President

Research Foundation of the ASCRS

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A Message from the President

It has been a busy and exciting year for the Research Foundation. Ronald Bleday, MD, immediate Past President, facilitated a breakfast in Tampa that brought together the Board of Trustees, Research Committee and Young Researchers Committee members to reflect on accomplishments and opportunities. It was terrific to be together again and hear so many perspectives on improving the Foundation's value for our constituency. Tampa also saw the most robust fundraising campaign ever, with over \$40,000 donations received. We are always extremely grateful for the support; we can continue evolving and serving our membership through such efforts.

In alignment with feedback and our strategic plan, we have advanced a few priority areas, including identifying strategies to engage new researchers and institutions in the Foundation's activities, specifically those not previously funded or participated in our activities. We're already working toward these goals by testing new grant opportunities, including a unique Limited Project Grant around Quality Improvement and Health Equity, a medical student summer research experience for students underrepresented in medicine to engage with colorectal surgery, a training fellowship grant for emerging and young colorectal surgeons to participate in professional development activities. We've also revamped our committee charters and member selection process.

All of this would not have been possible without our committed volunteers who participated in a host of task forces and the commitment of Krista Baran, Director, Research Foundation | Governance.

CREATE (*Colorectal REsearch Aims review by a Team of Experts*)

With increasing numbers of academic colorectal surgeons committed to extra-mural research funding, a new monthly work group was launched last summer to allow members to receive peer reviews on their potential grant specific aims. Under Emina Huang, MD's, Lily Maguire, MD, Scott Regenbogen, MD, J. Joshua Smith, MD, PhD leadership, 10-20 surgeons join the monthly Zoom, and interested researchers sign up in advance. Time is allowed at the beginning for the group to review the draft-specific aims and the discussion follows. There have been diverse topics covered, from translational colorectal cancer genetics and diverticulitis decision support to tumoroid-based computational models for rectal cancer biomarker discovery and the discussion is always robust. We hope that our members will use this resource to complement the input of local mentorship and collaborators to submit the most competitive applications possible to any funding mechanism (e.g., National Institutes of Health, ASCRS, ACS etc.).



Diversity and Inclusion in Surgery - Colorectal Opportunity in Research (*DISCOVeR*)

To diversify the funnel of colorectal researchers, the Research Foundation received a small grant from Intuitive Foundation to pilot a summer medical student research program in colorectal surgery. A taskforce led by Ann C. Lowry, MD, with Elizabeth C. Wick, MD, Gifty Kwakye, MD, MPH, Arden M. Morris, MD, Julian A. Sanchez, MD and Samantha Cooley, MSW participating, designed a summer research experience to be conducted under the mentorship of Gifty Kwakye, MD MPH, and Arden M. Morris, MD. The applications were outstanding, and we look forward to working with the selected students. We plan to expand the experience next summer to more mentors and mentees. If you are interested in potentially serving as a mentor, please reach out to learn more.

Grant Opportunities

The colorectal community's interest in asking and answering important clinical and translational questions is as vibrant as ever! We continue to offer a diverse portfolio of grant opportunities, with our flagship grant being the Career Development Award, that supports early mentored career investigators with \$75,000 per year for two years. In addition, we fund medical student summer research, resident research, and limited project grants that are open to everyone. This spring marked the re-offering of the Eugene Salvati, MD Limited Project Grant. The grant was endowed by Dr. Salvati's large contingent of grateful mentees and peers. The grant will be offered every other year in partnership with the Salvati Society.

We continue to partner with Intuitive Foundation to fund robotics and colorectal surgery research. To enhance this opportunity, we will increase the grant size and allow the work to be done over two years. The deadline will be moved to the fall. More details are to come, but we encourage you to start thinking about meaningful collaborative questions that could be fundable.

Meet the Challenge at #ASCRS23

Join colleagues at the 2023 Annual Scientific Meeting and Meet the Challenge for the Research Foundation. We have modernized our systems, and for the first time, we will be able to accept on-the-spot online donations from any device. The first 250 meeting attendees that donate at least \$50 will receive a pair of Research Foundation socks. Quantities are limited!

For some of our more senior members and researchers, we hope you will reflect on your career-spanning commitment to the Foundation and consider aiming for lifetime donations totaling at least \$10,000. We look forward to annually recognizing our members who meet this commitment with a special award.

Come see us at the Welcome Reception on Saturday, June 3 starting at 4:30 PM in the Innovation Center!



Norman D. Nigro, MD, Research Lectureship

Join us for the Norman D. Nigro, MD, Research Lectureship at the ASCRS Annual Scientific Meeting on June 6 at 2:05 PM PT. Clifford Y. Ko, MD, Director of Research and Optimal Patient Care at the American College of Surgeons, will speak on Improving Improvement. Dr. Ko has been a leader in advancing surgical performance measurement and quality and mentored scores for trainees and junior faculty members, including many colorectal surgeons. Dr. Ko is a former member of the Research Committee and Young Researchers Committee and recipient of a Limited Project Grant in 2001, titled *Predicting Outcomes in Colon and Rectal Cancer Using Population-Based Databases*.

In the spirit of highlighting our accomplishments but also recognizing our rising stars, the 2021 Career Development Award recipient, Cyrus Jahansouz, MD, University of Minnesota, will briefly share his work, titled *The Role of Surgical Bowel Preparation and Microbiota on Anastomotic Dehiscence*, prior to Dr. Ko.

Spotlight on Research: Career Development Award

The Career Development Award is the Foundation's pride and joy. Many of our recipients have gone on to receive funding from other sources, had prolific research programs, contributed to our society across all fronts, and helped to mentor the next generation of colorectal surgeons. Highlighted below are the two most recent recipients. Please be on the lookout for them and congratulate them if you spot them in Seattle.

In 2023, Maria Widmar, MD, MPH, Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, received the Foundation's Career Development Award for study titled, *"Economic Analyses in Rectal Cancer"*.

In 2022, Gabriela Poles, MD, University of Rochester, received the Research Foundation's Career Development for study titled, *"Exploring Best Practices for Surgical Shared Decision Making in Older Adults"*.

Research Forum

We invite you to join us for the Research Forum from 1:40 – 2:25 PM PT on Sunday, June 4, in Seattle. Drs. Nelya Melnitchouk, Chair, and Russell Farmer, Vice Chair, of the Young Researchers Committee are co-moderating this session. The session will highlight resident and fellow research and promote discussion. Please come and support the next generation.

Finances and Budget

We had our strongest fundraising year ever in 2022. We are grateful to the many new contributors as well as long-term supporters. In 2022, contributors at a leadership level (\$1,000) received a Patagonia® fleece jacket in gratitude for their generosity. As a result of our strong fundraising season and wise resource stewardship, we remain a financially strong foundation with just over 7 million dollars in assets. We were able to award \$254,500 money in grants to promising colorectal investigators.

Leadership and Committees

In 2023, the Research Foundation introduced a new self-nomination process for membership on the [Research Committee](#) and [Young Researchers Committees](#). We appreciate the interest and look forward to seeing new faces in our summer meetings. Be on the lookout for emails regarding self-nomination for 2024, coming this Fall.

The Research Foundation thanks the following committees for their service and dedication of the last year.

- [Research Foundation Board of Trustees](#)
- [Research Committee](#)
- [Young Researchers Committee](#)

