Mission & History of the Hairy Cell Leukemia Foundation

The Hairy Cell Leukemia Foundation was formed in 2013 when the Hairy Cell Leukemia Research Foundation, Inc. and the Hairy Cell Leukemia Consortium joined together. As one organization, the HCL Foundation is dedicated to:

✦ funding the latest research in HCL that will improve outcomes for patients
✦ advancing knowledge about HCL among oncologists and hematologists worldwide
✦ providing educational resources and comfort to patients and families affected by HCL.

Meet an HCL Investigator

One of the missions of the Foundation is to encourage young physician-scientists to embark on HCL research. Each issue of the Foundation’s brochure will profile a young HCL investigator. Here’s a brief profile.

Leslie Andritsos, MD
Associate Professor of Medicine
Director of Clinical Operations,
Division of Hematology Department of Internal Medicine
The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center

Dr. Andritsos holds a B.A. from Texas Tech University and M.D. from University of Texas Medical Branch. She did post-doctoral training at Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis, MO. Her latest research project is an international quality of life survey of patients to track their functional status, quality of life, and clinical outcomes over time. In addition to her active clinical practice, Dr. Andritsos is also leading the team responsible for the HCL Foundation’s Patient Data Registry program. When not practicing medicine, Dr. Andritsos is busy with her husband, Mike, and two children, Nicholas and Eleni.

News & Information

Hairy Cell Leukemia Foundation and The Sass Foundation for Medical Research Join Together for Grants & Fellowship Program

In early 2016, the Hairy Cell Leukemia Foundation joined with the Sass Foundation for Medical Research in a 5-year program to provide up to $2 million in research grants and fellowship awards focused on hairy cell leukemia. This joint initiative represents a major increase in funding for hairy cell leukemia research. Information about the Research Grants and Fellowship Program can be found by visiting the HCL Foundation website.

2017 HCL Foundation Scientific Meeting and Patient Seminar

In Spring 2017, the Hairy Cell Leukemia Foundation will again sponsor its annual conference, this year to be held at The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center in Columbus Ohio. The two day meeting will combine a scientific meeting for HCL investigators from around the world to exchange ideas and get updates on the latest research in HCL, with a separate FREE Patient Seminar. The Patient Seminar will allow patients and family members to participate in sessions led by top HCL physicians and researchers. This is also an opportunity for patients and families to meet with others who are on the same journey with HCL. To find out more, visit the HCL Foundation website at HairyCellLeukemia.org after January 2017.

Your Support

If you find any of this information useful, we would appreciate your support. The Hairy Cell Leukemia Foundation is a 501(c)3 volunteer driven organization.

Please visit our website hairycellleukemia.org to make a contribution on-line or mail your gift to:
Hairy Cell Leukemia Foundation
575 Madison Ave - 10th FL  New York, NY 10022

Thank you!
The Hairy Cell Leukemia Foundation Annual Conference

The HCL Foundation Annual Conference now in its fifth year, included a day of scientific meetings for HCL researchers from 12 countries followed by a day of seminars for about 100 HCL patients and family members. Each seminar was led by a pair of HCL researchers. The Patient Seminar was coordinated with the Haarzel-Leukamie-Hilfe e.V., a German HCL patient group led by Bärbel Krause. This annual conference supported and organized by the HCL Foundation continues to be free to all attendees.

Recent Research Funded by the Hairy Cell Leukemia Foundation

For the past five years, the HCL Foundation has provided hundreds of thousands of dollars in funding to researchers from around the world for studies that advance the science of HCL. This past year alone, the HCL Foundation provided $200,000 in grants to:

✦ Dr. Philip Thompson for a study of the abnormal protein pathways in both HCL and HCL-V at the MD Anderson Cancer Center (Houston, Texas)

✦ Dr. Ralf Küppers for a study to use RNA sequencing to evaluate the type of cell that transforms into the cancerous hairy cells at the University of Duisburg-Essen (Essen, Germany)

✦ Dr. Omar Abdel-Wahab for a study to evaluate additional genetic abnormalities contributing to HCL at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center (New York, New York)

✦ Dr. Brunangelo Falini and Dr. Enrico Tiacci for a pilot Phase 2 drug study to evaluate the effectiveness of using a combination of Rituximab and Vemurafenib in the treatment of HCL at the University of Perugia (Perugia, Italy)

Living with HCL

The journey with HCL is different for every patient. However, many patients have similar questions, so we’ve asked Dr. Michael Grever, MD Chair of the Department of Internal Medicine at The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center to answer a question often submitted to our website’s Ask an Expert page:

How soon after I receive treatment for HCL should I expect my blood counts to return to normal?

Dr. Grever: Each patient may be different. The time for blood count recovery to normal depends upon several features of the disease in each patient. For patients who begin therapy with very low counts, there may be a longer time required to achieve normalization of the blood counts. In general, blood counts can normalize by about two months after primary therapy. However, some patients have prolonged time to fully recover their blood counts. In my experience, the platelet count often may be the first parameter to show improvement with subsequent gradual improvement in the other blood counts. The lymphocyte counts are often abnormal for many months to over a year. With some of the newer agents (e.g., Vemurafenib) recovery of blood counts may be somewhat earlier.

Because there can be delayed improvement in the bone marrow findings, a bone marrow biopsy to assess complete remission following cladribine is often delayed for 4 to 6 months. In contrast, the bone marrow biopsy following pentostatin is often performed at the time of near normalization of the peripheral blood counts and disappearance of the enlarged spleen by physical examination and following completion of therapy. The purpose of performing a bone marrow biopsy is to confirm a complete remission. This effort is intended to determine the effectiveness of the primary therapy. An assessment of the quality of the response to the treatment can help in deciding if additional therapy is needed. As with every medical condition, each patient’s case is different. It is important that the patient remain under the care of a qualified medical care provider.

Medical Disclaimer: The information contained in this communication is intended for informational purposes only and is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis or treatment.