

Summary of the 1999 Komen Foundation National Grant Conference

The Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation held its third annual National Grant Conference and first preconference session, "Reaching for the Cure: The Next Step," October 2-3 in Dallas. With the help of the Foundation's staff and more than 80 volunteers, the conference was a tremendous success. The meeting provided an exciting opportunity for more than 300 participants, including national grant recipients, Affiliate network grantees and members, breast cancer advocates, researchers and clinicians, volunteers, and

national staff members, to convene and discuss the innovative Komen Foundation-funded research being conducted in the fight against breast cancer.

This year's conference featured presentations from 57 speakers (national grant or award recipients in 1998 or 1999) representing more than 38 cancer research centers in 17 states and two countries. Included in the conference's plenary session presentations were two national award recipients (*see Award Winners, page 2*). Also participating in

this year's meeting were international Affiliate representatives from five countries, including Argentina, Germany, Greece, Italy, and Spain.

Enthusiasm was high as conference participants had an opportunity to interact with grant recipients and gather information about the latest in breast cancer research, including basic science developments; preclinical and clinical trial results; and breast cancer education, prevention, and screening. Novel breast cancer research efforts were relayed in lay language,

giving each participant an understandable framework to interpret findings.

Overall, the National Grant Conference accomplished its goals in showcasing the ongoing Komen Foundation-funded breast cancer research. The innovative, valuable, and inspirational research efforts of each of the National and Affiliate grantees gave participants a sense of pride in each grant recipient's contribution to finding a cure for breast cancer. 📌

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History of Komen Grants and Funding

The Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation runs one of the most innovative, responsive grant programs in breast cancer today. To fulfill its mission—to eradicate breast cancer as a life-threatening disease—the Foundation has provided funding since 1982 for basic, clinical, and translational (ie, cell biology) breast cancer research and innovative breast health education and breast cancer screening and treatment projects.

In 1992, the Komen Foundation established a National Grant Fund. The National Grant Program is one of the most innovative, responsive grant programs in

process by an independent peer review committee.

In addition to research grant funding, the Komen Foundation also offers several honors and awards each year for outstanding breast cancer research, including the Brinker International Award for Breast Cancer Research, the Professors of Survivorship, the Jill Ireland Award, and the Scientific Distinction Award.

Since the inception of the Komen Foundation, the National Grant Program has awarded approximately 400 grants totaling more than \$45 million. As of September

information and grant announcements are available at the Komen Web site, www.komen.org. The upcoming grant application deadline is April 1, 2000.

Consistent with national standards of awarding grants, local Komen Affiliates also fund non-duplicative, community-based breast health education

and breast cancer screening and treatment projects for the medically underserved. In 1998, more than 850 grants totaling nearly \$16 million were awarded by Affiliates, comprising funds raised through various local events, including the signature Komen Race for the Cure®. 

**Susan G. Komen Foundation
1999 National Award Winners**
Presenting at the National Grant Conference General Session

Scientific Distinction Award
David Page, MD

Jill Ireland Award
Lovell Jones, PhD

The Professors of Survivorship
Patricia Ganz, MD
Hester Hill, LICSW, BCD

“The current national grant portfolio includes more than 119 grants totalling approximately \$18 million.”

breast cancer today, funding diverse research projects each year (see *Award Winners, right, and National Grants, page 5*). Funds are disbursed (generally over two to three years) following an application review

1999, the current national grant portfolio included more than 119 grants totaling approximately \$18 million. In addition, in 1999 another \$17 million was awarded for 102 new grants. Application



Bonnie Lee Tucker, left, and Faye Luppi, right, with grant recipient Victoria Seewaldt, center.

Komen Foundation National Grant Categories

Postdoctoral fellowship

Three-year award to individuals working under the guidance of experienced cancer researchers; basic, clinical, translational, public health, or epidemiology research.

Dissertation research

Two-year award to fund doctoral candidates in the health and social sciences conducting dissertation research on breast health and breast cancer.

Population-specific research

Two-year grants for projects that identify unique needs, trends, and barriers to breast health among minority populations.

Basic, clinical, and translational research

Two-year grants in a variety of areas, including basic science studies, diagnostic methods, prevention, and diet and nutrition.

Imaging technology

New two-year grant enabled by matching funds from the Drown Foundation to research and develop methods for early breast cancer detection and diagnosis.

Project CRAFT

The kickoff for the National Grant Conference was a preconference session held the morning of October 2, 1999. The session focused on Project CRAFT (Clinical Research: Affiliates Funding Trials) and Affiliate grantee presentations. Project CRAFT was initiated in 1999 to promote local breast cancer clinical trial research and patient participation because the results of clinical trials are essential in finding a breast cancer cure. Affiliate representatives attended a clinical trial training workshop designed to help participants begin advocacy efforts to promote participation in clinical trials at the local level. Using a series of challenging activities and discussions, Margo Michaels, Project CRAFT consultant and workshop facilitator and Diana Rowden, who conceptualized Project CRAFT, empowered participants to return to their communities to advocate participation in clinical trials. 

**Project CRAFT promotes
breast cancer clinical trials
at the local level.**



Nancy Brinker, left, and grant recipient Kristen Smith, MD.



Affiliate grant recipients Catherine Quinn, left, and Mary Morris, right, discuss their Komen-funded programs which provide support to uninsured breast cancer patients.



Affiliate Grantee Presentations

Affiliate Grantee Presentation Overviews

Minority Breast Health Education

- ⇒ **Los Angeles County, California Affiliate.** Cancer Legal Resource Center, a community-based program providing information and educational outreach regarding cancer-related legal issues; presented by Barbara Ullman Schwerin
- ⇒ **Bayou Region Affiliate.** "Health Awareness Tea (HAT) Program," a fun, interactive social event designed to reach African American women, which promotes the importance of performing early breast cancer detection practices; presented by Karen Jackson
- ⇒ **New York City Affiliate.** The Homeless Program of Saint Vincent's Hospital, a program that provides breast cancer education, screening, diagnosis, and treatment to homeless women; presented by Elizabeth Monahan

Screening

- ⇒ **New York City Affiliate.** Patient Navigator Program of the Cancer Control Center of the Harlem Hospital Center, a program that provides cancer screenings for medically underserved and underinsured women, with reduced waiting time from diagnosis to treatment services; presented by Brenda Poignard Blane
- ⇒ **Maine Affiliate.** Breast Cancer Project, Women's Law Section, Maine State Bar Association, a project designed to enhance early breast cancer detection in incarcerated women; presented by Faye E. Luppi
- ⇒ **Arkansas Affiliate.** St. Bernard's Regional Medical Center Work Site Mammography Program, a mobile mammography unit that takes breast care directly to women in industrial settings; presented by Jane B. McDaniel

Treatment Support

- ⇒ **Los Angeles County, California Affiliate.** Los Angeles (L.A.) County Komen Affiliate Breast Cancer Treatment Fund Project, a program that provides affordable and accessible breast cancer treatment to L.A. County residents without discrimination; presented by Catherine Quinn
- ⇒ **Dallas, Plano, and Tarrant Counties, Texas Affiliates.** Bridge Breast Center, Inc, a breast cancer center that provides diagnostic and treatment services to low-income, underinsured women; presented by Mary Morris
- ⇒ **Tarrant County, Texas Affiliate.** Cancer Care Services, a program that provides financial, emotional, and social support to cancer patients and their families; presented by Craig Schaefer

Survivorship

- ⇒ **Orange County, California Affiliate.** Healing Odyssey, a weekend retreat that provides self-healing tools and support to female cancer survivors; presented by Nancy Raymon
- ⇒ **Greater Portland, Oregon Affiliate.** Survivorship in Rural Oregon, a support and educational group for women breast cancer survivors in Lake County, Oregon; presented by Nancie B. Bogardus
- ⇒ **Vermont Affiliate.** Casting for Recovery, a fly-fishing retreat that enables women with breast cancer to experience physical, emotional, and spiritual healing; presented by Seline H. Skoug

The afternoon of the pre-conference session was devoted to Affiliate grantee presentations. More than 850 Komen Affiliate STEP (screening, treatment, and education programs) grants were awarded to programs across the country, necessitating a competition of program overview descriptions. Twelve winners in four program areas — minority breast health education, screening, treatment support, and survivorship — were selected for presentation. Meeting participants were inspired by the remarkable projects that have been implemented in communities throughout the United States to boost breast health and breast cancer awareness and provide support to the many women faced with the challenges of breast cancer. 🌱



Karen Jackson performs the HAT (Health Awareness Tea) program during a session.

Plenary Presentations

Before the start of the plenary presentations at the National Grant Conference on October 3, 1999, all participants viewed a short video entitled, *For the Cure*, featuring Nancy Brinker, sister of Susan G. Komen and founder of the Foundation, and Victoria Seewaldt, MD, a Komen postdoctoral fellowship award recipient. The gripping video succeeded in relaying great hope for finding a breast cancer cure through Komen Foundation-supported research efforts, and it heightened anticipation of the day's research presentations.

David Page, MD, professor of pathology and preventive

medicine at Vanderbilt University Medical School in Nashville and the 1999 Scientific Distinction Award winner, gave the first plenary presentation. He discussed predictors and risks of breast cancer (eg, the role of benign breast disease in the development of breast cancer), while emphasizing the impact on an individual woman. Dr. Page presented his recent work on predicting the risk of breast cancer using a molecular marker, transforming growth factor beta II.

Lovell Jones, PhD, professor of gynecologic oncology and biochemistry and molecular biology at the University of

Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center in Houston and the 1999 Jill Ireland Award winner, discussed his current research focusing on the correlation between healthy eating habits and improved outcomes in women with breast cancer. As cofounder of the Intercultural Cancer Council of Houston, Dr.

Jones stressed the need for cultural sensitivity in clinical trials, in particular the importance of increasing minority participation in clinical trials. He gave meeting participants food for thought with the following quote: "If you always do what you always did, you always get what you've already got." 🍌

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Roy Jensen, national grant recipient, presents BRCA1 research.



Linda White-Nunes, national grant recipient, presents MRI research.



David Page, left, and Lovell Jones, right, address current breast cancer issues at the plenary session.

Highlights of National Grantee Presentations

Concurrent sessions for presentations by national grant recipients were held in the morning and afternoon.

Morning Sessions

The morning concurrent sessions featured 18 presentations addressing 1 of 5 of the following research areas:

- ⇒ Population-specific outreach programs, such as breast cancer screening and education for inner-city African American women and support groups for American Indian women with breast cancer.
- ⇒ Therapeutic interventions, such as the development and testing of novel Taxol analogs and the role of diet in drug resistance in breast cancer treatment.
- ⇒ Tumorigenesis/cell function, such as the development of a novel vaccine.
- ⇒ Genetic issues, such as BRCA1 expression in breast cancer cells and identification of a gene that suppresses breast cancer.
- ⇒ Detection, such as the development of tests to diagnose breast cancer at the earliest possible stage and the use of magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) in detecting breast cancer.

Afternoon Sessions

The afternoon concurrent sessions featured 14 presentations focusing on 1 of 3 of the following research topics:

- ⇒ Population-specific outreach programs, such as breast health education for native American women and Alaskan natives and breast cancer screening for black women with low literacy.
- ⇒ Nutritional aspects, such as brown seaweed as a breast cancer preventive and vitamin A compounds for preventing breast cancer.
- ⇒ Cell function, such as the role of insulin-like growth factor in breast cancer.

Research findings and content of the grantee presentations were diverse and included these topics: breast cancer screening and education projects primarily aimed at minority populations; studies with new chemotherapy or biologic drugs initiated in animal studies and now entering testing in humans; and laboratory work studying breast cancer cells and their markers. Also included was a presentation by Italian Affiliate representative Riccardo Massetti of the Italian Breast Cancer Educational Program. 📷



Linda Burhansstipanov discusses the Native American Breast Cancer Network.



Linda Kay Peterson, left, and Elda Railey, center, congratulate postdoctoral fellow Viola Harris.



Riccardo Massetti, of Komen's Italian Affiliate, presents the Italian Education Project.

Townhall Meeting

Next Frontiers for Breast Cancer Research

The townhall forum gave meeting participants the opportunity to ask the experts questions related to breast health and breast cancer. The expert panel included Komen national award winners Dr. David Page, Dr. Patricia Ganz, and Hester Hill, as well as Susan Braun, president and CEO of the Komen Foundation. Interesting discussions were spurred by thoughtful questions. Several questions and responses from panel members are summarized in the panel at right. 🗣️



Townhall Questions and Answers

What is the survivorship professor?

In 1999, the Komen Foundation funded 2 survivorship professors who will provide guidance in survival issues for breast cancer patients and publicly speak about survival. As a clinical social worker and breast cancer survivor, Hester Hill works to provide psychological healing to women with breast cancer. In addition to implementing breast cancer treatment and prevention clinical trials, Dr. Patty Ganz, a medical oncologist, has a research interest in quality of life issues for cancer patients.

Will the Komen Foundation establish grants in alternative or holistic medicine?

Susan Braun indicated that there was a strong possibility that the Komen Foundation would head in this direction; however, a final decision has not been reached. Both Dr. Page and Dr. Ganz echoed that because alternative medicine cannot be scientifically validated, it needs to be tested in another way.

Why is so much breast cancer research dedicated to basic science trials and not epidemiology or population-based studies?

Dr. Ganz responded that population-based studies (ie, studies that evaluate large groups of people in order to control or prevent cancer) are harder to do and more time consuming compared with basic science studies (ie, laboratory research studies).

What is the next big anticipated advance in breast cancer research?

Panel members agreed that to find a cure for breast cancer, little steps are required, including better preventive strategies and the ability to target specific interventions more effectively.

Conference Participants Meet Survivorship Professors at Closing Reception

National Grant Conference participants met Komen's new Survivorship Professors, Dr. Patty Ganz, a medical oncologist at the University of California, Los Angeles, and Hester Hill, a breast cancer survivor and psychosocial

oncology clinician at the Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center in Boston, during a special closing reception. On display at the reception were 20 poster presentations including one prestigious Young Investigator

presentation awarded by the American Association for Cancer Research (Renata Pasquailini, PhD, "Targeting Breast Cancer Blood Vessels,") one presentation of the Komen Foundation/ University of Texas

Southwestern Clinical Fellowship (Kristin Smith, MD and Tomasine Fodera, MD,) 18 postdoctoral fellowship presentations, and a breast health CD-ROM educational program. 🗣️

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the foundation

The Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation was established in 1982 by Nancy Brinker to honor the memory of her sister, Susan G. Komen, who died from breast cancer at the age of 36. The Foundation is an international organization with a network of volunteers working through local Affiliates to eradicate breast cancer as a life-threatening disease by advancing research, education, screening and treatment.

The Foundation runs one of the most innovative, responsive grant programs in breast cancer today. In addition to funding research, the Foundation and its Affiliates fund non-duplicative, community-based breast health education and breast cancer screening and treatment projects for the medically underserved.

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