Sarcoma Spotlight

Sarcoma SFA Foundation of America
finding the cure in our time

October 2023

Stand Up to Sarcoma Gala Recognizes Sarcoma Community

SFA's Stand Up to Sarcoma Gala on September 19 marked the event's 21st year, and we packed the ballroom of Capitale in New York City to raise money for research and much-needed sarcoma awareness. SFA's community of supporters, patients, caregivers, and families came together to honor those who have devoted their work to assist people affected by sarcoma, and to the survivors and patients who inspire us every day. Three-time Emmy© Award-winning actress, two-time Emmy-nominated director, Cady McClain, was a fabulous host. The evening concluded with amazing entertainment from Max von Essen.

We are grateful to the 2023 Honorees and all they do to support people affected by sarcoma: Anjali Albanese, MSW, LSW, OSW-C, Compassionate Care Award; David M. Loeb, MD, PhD, Nobility in Science Award; Katie Wintergerst, Amira Yunis Courage Award; Jacky Hunt-Broersma, Courage Award; Jordan's Dream Fund, Vision of Hope Award; and Mark Thornton, MD, MPH, PhD, Patricia Thornton, and John Brooks, MD, Sarcoma Legacy Award.

We are grateful to everyone who joined us for this event and to the event sponsors. Their partnership is crucial to the success of the Stand Up to Sarcoma Gala and to advancing SFA's mission.

Revisit the memories made and view all the photos from the evening here.

We hope you will join us for the 2024 Stand Up to Sarcoma Gala!

Clockwise from left: Supporters enjoy the Gala at Capitale; Award presenter and Jets defensive end John Franklin-Myers with Gala host Cady McLain; sarcoma survivor Natasha Nathan and Sarcoma Legacy Award winners Mark Thornton, Patricia Thornton and Jack Brooks; Gala cocktail napkins that announce SFA's accomplishments.

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Research Roundup

by Dean Frohlich, PhD

This month I would like to highlight three publications that demonstrate the progress being made in sarcoma research, the first of which focuses on rhabdomyosarcoma (RMS). RMS is typically divided into tumors in which a gene called FOXO1 is fused with another gene (fusion-positive RMS) and those in which FOXO1 is not fused to another gene (fusion-negative RMS). Generally, tumors without the fusion have a better prognosis. In the first paper, "Loss of Chromosome 3q Is a Prognostic Marker in Fusion-Negative Rhabdomyosarcoma," the authors investigated tumors that have either gained or lost large sections of DNA called chromosomes in fusion-negative RMS. Their studies indicate that a loss of a portion of chromosome 3 in the tumors was associated with worse outcomes for patients, but that a gain of chromosome 8 is associated with better outcomes for patients compared to patients whose tumors have the correct number of each of those chromosomes. These results give an indication of the risk for patients whose tumors have these differences in chromosome numbers. It also indicates that researchers need to investigate the genes on these chromosomes to identify potential therapeutic targets.

In the second study, "Larotrectinib efficacy and safety in adult patients with tropomyosin receptor kinase fusion sarcomas," the researchers used a new drug (Larotrectinib) that is very selective to inhibit the activity of a different gene fusion protein called tropomyosin receptor kinase (TRK). They analyzed data from three different clinical trials and found that there was a durable response in over 50% of patients with sarcomas that had a TRK fusion. This is impactful for patients with these fusions and adds to the rational of sequencing sarcoma patients' tumors to identify potential therapeutic targets.

Lastly, leiomyosarcoma (LMS) is an aggressive sarcoma for which current therapies achieve low response rates. Most LMS have significant chromosomal damage in part from the inactivation of two tumor suppressor genes (TP53 and RB1) and other DNA damage repair defects. In the pre-clinical study, "Hyper-Dependence on NHEJ Enables Synergy Between DNA-PK Inhibitors and Low-Dose Doxorubicin in Leiomyosarcoma," the researchers worked to identify therapeutic targets that could take advantage of the DNA damage and cause the tumor cells to die. Using LMS cell lines and mouse models, they demonstrated that inhibition of two proteins (PRKDC (DNA-PKcs) and RPA2) that are involved in a specific type of DNA repair in combination with a low-dose chemotherapy (doxorubicin) had synergistic activity without noticeable toxicity. These findings identify this combination as a potentially clinically actionable in LMS and warrants further investigation.

Clinical Trials Corner

by Kristi Oristian, PhD

This month SFA is highlighting NAVIGATE, a Phase II trial for patients who have a specific abnormality in their tumor that involves the NTRK gene. This study, sponsored by Bayer, is open to adults ages 18 and older who have advanced or metastatic solid tumors, including sarcomas, with a fusion in NTRK1, NTRK2, or NTRK3.

Patients enrolled in this study will receive a medicine called Larotrectinib (also known as Vitrakvi), an FDA-approved drug that blocks TRK proteins such as NTRK. Patients would receive the medicine as either a capsule or liquid, taken orally twice daily for 28 days. Patients may experience shrinkage of their tumor.

This study will help doctors determine if the medicine blocks the NTRK fusion and stops growth of the cancer. To be eligible for this study, patients must have advanced or metastatic NTRK fusion-positive cancer. Your doctor will know how to determine if your sarcoma has an NTRK fusion.

There are additional eligibility criteria, including minimum organ function requirements. Patients interested in this study should review these criteria with their doctor. To learn more about this study, patients can talk to their doctor, contact the investigator at the location nearest you or your primary treatment center, or contact the study sponsor.

SFA Presents Inga-Marie Schaefer, MD, with Inaugural Last Mile Sarcoma Research Award

by Matthew Mattioli

SFA is excited to announce the recipient of its first-ever Last Mile Sarcoma Research Award. Inga-Marie Schaefer, MD, who works at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston, Mass., has received this grant for her project titled "Finding Ways to Help Control Cell Growth in GIST."

The Last Mile Sarcoma Research Award, named to coincide with the research funding raised from SFA's Race to Cure Sarcoma series, was developed to leverage larger government dollars for sarcoma research. This grant award, a first-of-its-kind from SFA, provides $150,000 in funding to help strengthen the future proposal for a National Cancer Institute (NCI) R01 grant. Ultimately, bringing the research over the last mile to qualify for funding.

Inga-Marie Schaefer, MD, is Assistant Professor in Pathology at Harvard Medical School and Associate Pathologist at Brigham and Women's Hospital. Dr. Schaefer is also Affiliate Faculty in the Department of Pathology at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute. She is a board member of the Connective Tissue Oncology Society (CTOS) and an editorial board member of the scientific journal Genes, Chromosomes & Cancer.

"The Sarcoma Foundation of America is excited to award this inaugural Last Mile Research Grant to Dr. Schaefer," says Brandi Felser, SFA CEO. "As the leading private funder of research in the sarcoma community, this award reflects SFA's dedication to sarcoma research and its mission to advance the field."

SFA News

Clinical Trials Education Session Now Available Online for Viewing

SFA was proud to host the webinar "Clinical Trials in Sarcoma Research" on September 27. We thank Katie Wintergerst and Drs. Gorlick and Gounder for presenting powerful information about the role of clinical trials in sarcoma treatment during yesterday's education session. If you missed the live broadcast, you can view the recorded session here: https://bit.ly/46vjKRA.

New Staff Join SFA

Matt Mattioli has joined the SFA staff as Communications Manager. Prior to joining SFA, he worked at at the Life Raft Group, an organization whose mission is to raise awareness and support individuals and families affected by GIST, a rare sarcoma.In his role at SFA, he will be responsible for the Foundation's social media program, newsletter and other communications activities. When he's not working, you'll find him enjoying quality moments with his two dogs, Louie and Onyx.

Good Luck to the Race to Cure Sarcoma Marine Corps Marathon Team!

On October 29, 2023. the SFA Marine Corps Marathon Team will participate in the 10k, half marathon and full marathon. The team has trained for months to prepare and will don their RTCS Marathon Team shirts to raise awareness about sarcoma. Click here to view all team member profiles on our website. If you are interested in sponsoring a specific team member or the SFA Race to Cure Sarcoma Marine Corps Marathon Team, please click here.SFA is Looking for People to Join our Team!Are you interested in advancing outcomes for sarcoma patients? If so, consider joining the SFA team. SFA is hiring a Development Coordinator to assist with our Race to Cure Sarcoma events and our fundraising efforts. We are also looking for a Communications Director to lead SFA in growing awareness about sarcoma and sharing information to advance SFA's mission. Learn More

Race TO Cure SARCOMA
SARCOMA FOUNDATION OF AMERICA
RTCS 2023

CALENDAR

Our last four Race to Cure Sarcoma (RTCS) events are on tap and heading to your neighborhood! RTCS events are family-friendly, fun and raise dollars for sarcoma research. See the latest information below.

Denver October 21, 2023 REGISTER!
Tampa November 4, 2023 REGISTER!
Nashville November 5, 2023 REGISTER!
Los Angeles November 19, 2023 REGISTER!

Take part in an RTCS event near you! Whether you run, walk or make a donation from the sidelines, your support makes all the difference in funding leading edge research to find a cure! Online race pages will remain open through November for those who still wish to fundraise.

Below are just some of the highlights of our most recent RTCS events in Philadelphia, San Diego, and New York City. The tropical storm in New York City caused the race to happen virtually but that did not stop the NYC sarcoma community!

Philadelphia




San Diego


New York City (Virtual)