



# SUPPORTING THE SCIENCE THAT BRINGS US HOPE



# TO OUR MAGEE FAMILY,

First of all, as we bring 2020 to a close and look forward to 2021, I hope this year's philanthropy report finds you safe, well and happy. We deeply value your support, and during a year of constant change, your commitment to scientific research has been incredibly important.

Our ongoing partnerships with foundations, corporations and individual donors throughout the international COVID-19 pandemic has contributed to our longevity and helped us find new ways to support our mission.

The pandemic brought changes and challenges that would have been unheard of this time last year. From school shutdowns to state-wide lockdowns, from remaining in our homes for several months to the normalization of mask-wearing and temperature checks, the "new normal" has changed so quickly that adapting can feel overwhelming under the best of circumstances.

While it felt like much of the world paused in early 2020, the research at Magee-Womens Research Institute and the patient care at UPMC Magee-Womens Hospital continued, under drastically different circumstances. In a year of change, both organizations pivoted to adhere to the pandemic's restrictions while still moving our crucial work forward. At the foundation, the fundraising efforts evolved into virtual opportunities in real time.

Scientific research doesn't stop in the midst of a pandemic - in fact, we learned just how critical laboratory research can be. With this report, you are the first to learn about a worldwide collaboration that includes four doctors seeking to do the impossible: helping people conceive biological children by creating eggs and sperm from skin cells. Known as the CHOSE project, one of its key members is Dr. Kyle Orwig with our Reproductive Endocrinology and Infertility program.

In addition, you will read about the many different ways individuals chose to support us over the last year. From Facebook fundraisers to annual gifts - from targeted campaigns for the NICU to support for training future women's health researchers - you found new, compelling ways to give.

On behalf of our staff, clinicians and researchers, thank you for your financial contribution and ongoing support. Your investment is a commitment to improving women's health worldwide, and we look forward to the day we can thank you in person. As the year comes to a close, we at Magee-Womens Research Institute & Foundation are hopeful. A deep commitment to scientific research is a way of life for us, and we are hopeful about the vaccines developed for COVID-19. More than that, we believe the work coming out of the research institute will result in breakthroughs for women's health - from lowering the risk of maternal morbidity to finding ways to stop ovarian cancer from spreading. Science is hope - against COVID-19, and so much more.

With warm regards,

Michael J. Annichine, Chief Executive Officer







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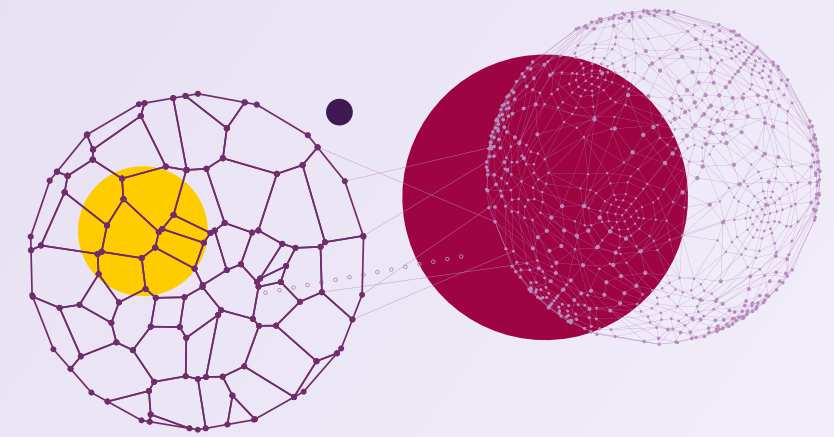
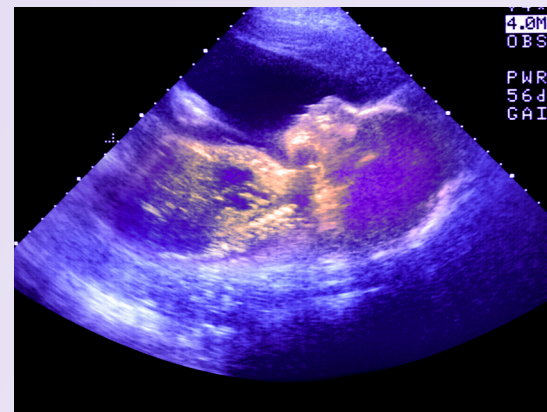
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# INTERNATIONAL TEAM SEEKS TO CREATE EGGS, SPERM FROM SKIN CELLS WITH HELP FROM MULTI-YEAR GIFT

BY NIKI KAPSAMBELIS

Whether reproduction was impacted by chemotherapy, genetics, or other factors, the goal of solving the most challenging cases of infertility is now within sight of a dream team that includes Magee-Womens Research Institute.



The worldwide collaboration includes four doctors who seek to do the seemingly impossible: help people conceive biological children by creating eggs and sperm from skin cells.

Known as CHOSE, the project's name is an acronym of the surnames of its investigators: Dr. Amander Clark from UCLA; Dr. Katsuhiko Hayashi of Kyushu University in Japan; Dr. Kyle Orwig from Magee; and Dr. Sherman Silber from the Infertility Center of St. Louis. (The "e" stands for "endeavor.")

The project is financed through a gift from the LucaBella Foundation, a private nonprofit based in Honolulu headed by an anonymous philanthropist from China. To date, the foundation has given about \$388,000. Dr. Orwig compares its potential impact to the 1978 birth of Louise Brown, whose arrival as the first baby conceived through in vitro fertilization has been hailed as one of the greatest medical breakthroughs of the 20th century, leading to the subsequent births of more than 6 million babies worldwide.

"Louise was possible because her mom was able to produce eggs and her dad was able to produce sperm," says Dr. Orwig. "Those are the three critical things you need: an egg, a sperm, and a uterus, but it doesn't necessarily have to happen in the usual way."

Dr. Orwig estimates that about 1 percent of the population cannot produce eggs or sperm, so they currently cannot conceive biologically. In the United States, that translates to roughly 1.3 million men and women between the ages of 20 and 50. Still others are trying to conceive with older eggs and could benefit from the younger eggs that this technology can create. And he emphasizes the importance of addressing infertility as a serious health issue.

"Fertility is incredibly important to people on a psychological level," he says, noting that infertility can have a devastating emotional impact on the infertile individual and stress relationships with partners, family and friends.

At the heart of the CHOSE project is a technique to make germline stem cells from skin biopsies. In 2011 and 2012, Dr. Hayashi published his seminal results demonstrating that those germline stem cells could be transplanted into testes or ovaries, where they produced sperm or eggs and offspring.

In 2016, Dr. Hayashi went further to show that those germline stem cells could be differentiated to eggs outside the body that could be fertilized and transferred to female mice to establish pregnancies, resulting in the live births of mouse pups. Present at those births was Dr. Silber, who performed the first ovarian tissue transplant in 2004 and introduced the Japanese method for vitrification - or rapid freezing - of embryos, eggs, and ovarian tissue to the United States. Ultimately, Dr. Silber is positioned to apply the cutting-edge technology clinically within his infertility center.

INFERTILITY (cont.) >>



## INFERTILITY (cont.)



Dr. Clark, a longtime collaborator with Dr. Orwig, is working to duplicate the technique in monkeys — an important next step in translating the technology to humans.

“Science can be unpredictable,” she says. “Sometimes we can make very rapid progress, and sometimes timelines and milestones can take longer than we anticipate.” Nonetheless, she predicts the team will be able to produce research-quality eggs and sperm within the next 10 years.

The potential for such a technique is vast. For example, Dr. Hayashi is part of a group that is seeking to use it to rescue the northern white rhinoceros, a near-extinct species whose population has dwindled to two aging females. High-quality stem cells have been cultivated from skin cells taken from the remaining rhinos, possibly saving the species from extinction and opening a host of possibilities for other threatened animals. In the future, the technology could even save human beings from the drastic impact of changes to the environment.

“It is an example of how collaboration across the planet works,” says Dr. Silber, who refers to CHOSE as “pure science” and adds, “it seems to be the most intense of all human aspirations, to have a child.”

“The project could also create fertility options that lead to healthier babies for older parents, because eggs created through the technique would be younger than those retrieved from a woman’s ovaries via IVF,” says Dr. Silber.

According to Dr. Clark, the most important challenge to the project’s success is safety. The eggs and sperm must be of the highest quality, resulting in healthy offspring. Ultimately, the group’s goal is to show multiple generations in which the pregnancies and offspring are normal, she says.

To ensure safety, the International Society for Stem Cell Research is developing strong guidelines, Dr. Clark notes. She anticipates they will be available in 2021.

If perfected, she views the CHOSE technology as another tool to help people in their desire to have families.

“Reproduction is absolutely essential to the existence of humans on earth. For those couples who really want to have a biological child, to be told they cannot is absolutely devastating,” she says. “It is an avenue that should be pursued so that we can help these couples realize a family of their own in the way that they choose.”



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# TOASTING DARCEL FAHY AND THE OVARIAN CANCER RESEARCH SHE CHAMPIONED

BY NIKI KAPSAMBELIS

In the summer of 2010, a young woman woke up from exploratory surgery at UPMC Magee-Womens Hospital to devastating news: at the young age of 25, with no family history or genetic markers, she had advanced ovarian cancer.

It was a defining moment in Darcel Fahy's short life, and it marked the beginning of her legacy. After that day, she set two goals for herself: that she would live the rest of her life to the fullest, and she would fight to help other women facing the same diagnosis.

## **She accomplished both.**

Darcel left a lasting impression on those who knew her, particularly Dr. Robert Edwards, who chairs Magee's Department of Obstetrics, Gynecology and Reproductive Sciences and is an investigator with Magee-Womens Research Institute specializing in gynecologic cancer.

The two formed a close bond, and Darcel doggedly participated in Dr. Edwards' research, including two clinical trials. She donated heavily to a tissue and blood bank that he oversees. And she drove from her home near Windber, Pennsylvania — about 90 minutes from Pittsburgh — in pursuit of aggressive treatment that would extend her life and inform research.

She worked tirelessly to raise awareness, raise money, and speak out about ovarian cancer. "She wanted ways to help people, and if not find a cure, find a way to detect it," says her husband, Mike.

The five-year survival rate of patients diagnosed with Stage 3c ovarian cancer, like Darcel, is just 39 percent, according to the American Cancer Society. Darcel lived for 7½ years, and Mike Fahy credits her care under Dr. Edwards with extending her life. She died on Oct. 20, 2017; even in the last few weeks of her life, she was still asking to participate in research.

After her death, Mike — who has brewed beer both professionally and as a hobby — created a coffee milk stout called With You Always through Whitehorse Brewing in Berlin, Pennsylvania, where he once worked. In September 2019, he sold it as a fundraiser for ovarian cancer research at Magee.

This year, they again offered the stout as a fundraiser for Magee, supplemented by a virtual campaign.

Unbeknownst to the Fahys, Darcel's other wish was coming true in 2017, the last year of her life. On April 17, 2017, a woman she never met — Dr. Carolyn Kubik, a Magee-trained infertility specialist — learned that, like Darcel, she had advanced ovarian cancer. Her first call was to Dr. Edwards, whom she knew professionally.

Like Darcel, Dr. Kubik is a woman who faces challenges head on. When cancer came for her, she was determined to rule it.

Dr. Edwards surgically removed the cancer that had spread throughout her abdomen, then began 18 weeks of intravenous and intraperitoneal chemotherapy at UPMC-Passavant. By Halloween, her ports were removed, and her tumor marker has been normal ever since.

The treatment via combination intravenous/intraperitoneal chemo was part of a protocol that Dr. Edwards has been researching and promoting nationally for about 20 years. Though not yet universally accepted, three clinical trials have demonstrated its effectiveness compared to standard therapy, Dr. Edwards notes.

Among the women who contributed to those earlier clinical trials: Darcel Fahy.

Today, Dr. Kubik is cancer free and back to work helping couples eager to start a family.

For Mike Fahy, knowing that Darcel's fight bought more time for other women represents a victory: "I think for her, it would have made it all worthwhile. That was everything she ever wanted."



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# LEAVING A LEGACY

## MAGEE PHYSICIAN-SCIENTIST FUNDS RESEARCH PROGRAM



“I’ve had an enormously gratifying career,” said Steve Caritis, M.D. “The opportunity to balance patient care with clinical research has been incredible, and my hope is to pass that kind of satisfaction onto residents and fellows who care for pregnant women at Magee.”

Now in his 50th year as a practicing specialist in Maternal Fetal Medicine (MFM) at UPMC Magee-Womens Hospital, Dr. Caritis has gifted \$500,000 in support of obstetrical residents and MFM fellows to explore clinical research. He hopes his gift will spur research interest in trainees so they can explore research and see if it inspires them.

“Our residents have little time to conduct research during their residency as they are often overwhelmed with their clinical work. Our MFM fellows, on the other hand, have the time and are required to undertake research as part of their training but frequently do not have access to funds to support their research. This lack of opportunity discourages trainees from considering research as a part of clinical care in their career. My goal in providing research support is to enable trainees in obstetrics to participate in research to see if it is something they would like to pursue,” said Dr. Caritis.

Over the course of his career, Dr. Caritis focused on research in addition to his clinical practice. His early work focused on understanding the causes of premature birth, while his more recent work examines pharmacology as it relates to pregnant women.

“Most medications taken by pregnant women have not been studied in relation to her physiology,” said Dr. Caritis. “The dose of a medication for a pregnant woman is based on research done on men and non-pregnant women. The physiologic changes in pregnancy affect every aspect of how a medication is handled by the body. Thus, dosing for pregnant women is woefully inaccurate. This commonly leads to excessive

medication for some women and an inadequate dosage for other women. This is something we want to change.”

Currently, Dr. Caritis directs projects studying buprenorphine and 17-hydroxyprogesterone caproate in pregnancy. Buprenorphine is used to treat opioid use disorder and may have advantages over methadone for women struggling with the condition. 17-hydroxyprogesterone caproate is a medication that may reduce the risk of preterm birth in women who experienced preterm birth previously.

“If a person is interested in clinical research, the opportunities at Magee are unparalleled,” Dr. Caritis said. “Not only is the leadership - both academic and administrative - incredibly supportive, but we have incredible resources here. In addition, our patient population is diverse, and, as a referral center, Magee is a magnet for complicated pregnancy cases. This allows research studies to be done that cannot be done in smaller centers. It’s a real opportunity for anyone working in obstetrics.”

Over time, Dr. Caritis would like to see his gift grow through funding from Magee alumni.

“Our residency and fellowship programs are the most sought after in the country. The training provides people who chose a life in pregnancy care the support and education they need to succeed. Our training programs have populated the field of obstetrics and gynecology and maternal-fetal medicine nationally; Magee educators, researchers and administrators should be proud of this achievement,” he said.

The gift will begin funding resident research in the spring of 2021.



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# SOOTHING OUR SMALLEST PATIENTS

Liam Finnigan was born more than 3 months premature and spent over 3 months in the NICU before he lost his battle. During that time, music was always something that seemed to soothe and comfort him.

His parents, Chris and Melanie, established the Liam Finnigan Music Program in his honor. Today they provide sleep soothers to babies in the NICU, comforting them with lullabies, therapy options, and even voice recordings from their loved ones.

“Being able to offer a little extra help to these babies and their families while going through a difficult – and often frightening time – is a special way we can honor Liam,” said Melanie.

“Research shows babies who listen to the music exhibit a dramatic improvement in their vital signs. Improvement in vital signs means many little ones can dramatically improve outcomes. With more than 1,899 babies cared for in UPMC Magee’s NICU,

we hoped the program would give babies comfort, as well as parents who cannot be at the bedside.”

After their story was featured on the local news, generous community members rallied to donate to the program in support of some of the most vulnerable patients at UPMC Magee-Womens Hospital.

This year, the Liam Finnigan Music Program has raised over \$20,000. Particularly during the pandemic, this initiative has brought peace and comfort to NICU babies and families. Melanie and Chris see the success of this program as an opportunity to expand the music program throughout UPMC, and help even more families.





# SON RAISES AWARENESS, RESEARCH FUNDING FOR ENDOMETRIAL CANCERS IN MOM'S MEMORY

**Kelly Jo Carley loved to know what was going on in her three sons' lives. She was the fun mom, the one who never minded when their friends came over to hang out; she was always trying to tease out of them whether her sons had girlfriends.**

In the office where she worked, her big smile was a familiar sight; everyone knew her, because she was talkative, approachable.

But there was a subject Kelly kept to herself: the inexplicable bleeding she had been experiencing. Perhaps out of embarrassment, as the lone woman in her immediate family, she was silent.

Around Thanksgiving 2018, she felt short of breath, but she still didn't say anything about her symptoms until December, when she went to see a new doctor. He sent her to the local hospital for some tests; that facility sent her to UPMC Magee-Womens Hospital. There, she received a startling diagnosis: Stage IV uterine cancer, with blood clots in her lungs.

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**“None of us were clued in. And it was too late once everything started happening,”**  
said her son, Shawn Carley.

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Kelly's situation is all too common, according to Alison Garrett, an obstetrics and gynecology chief resident at Magee. Busy with jobs and families and the tasks of daily life, women experience abnormal bleeding but don't seek care, or perhaps lack insurance, and don't find out they have cancer until it is advanced.

Garrett said she was interested in the topic because there are many opportunities to improve care and lead to better outcomes. When caught early, uterine cancer

is often curable through surgery alone, although a small subset of patients will face a recurrence. To prevent that, doctors will administer radiation therapy after surgery.

Dr. Ronald Buckanovich, Garrett's mentor, estimates that 65,000 women face a diagnosis of endometrial cancer each year after experiencing postmenopausal bleeding. Of that number, a majority are early stage and surgery alone cures about 90 percent of these cases. But survival rates drop when women delay seeking treatment, and when it recurs, treatments are less effective, he notes. Additionally, endometrial cancer impacts African American women at higher rates, but it does not have much advocacy or funding that would help explain the disparities.

After her diagnosis, Kelly Carley underwent chemotherapy treatments, with her husband, Bill, driving her more than 100 miles round trip each time from their house in Homer City, Pennsylvania, to Pittsburgh. Initially, she went back to work, coming home on her lunch hour to crash on the couch.

Kelly was at Magee for treatment during her family's Christmas party, but she made it back in time for the actual holiday. Her husband and sons waited on her, cooking and making the holiday as special as she always had.

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**“The whole time, everyone felt optimistic,”**  
says Shawn, now 31. **“I never thought in a million years that it was terminal.”**

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When she resumed her chemotherapy treatments after Christmas, Kelly stayed overnight in Pittsburgh while Bill drove back and forth to see her. On Jan. 15, 2019, the family gathered in her hospital room to celebrate Bill's 60th birthday.

Four days later, Shawn's phone rang at 2 a.m. It was his brother, David, speaking for their father, who was too overcome to talk. Bill had driven home from the hospital and gone to bed, only to be woken up with a call from the hospital telling him that Kelly had died. Had he known she was so close to death, he never would have left; “that should tell you how optimistic we were,” Shawn said.

Eleven months later, on what would have been his mother's 56th birthday, Shawn decided to do something in her honor: he created a Facebook fundraiser to raise money for research that will aid in the detection, treatment, and prevention of uterine cancer.

“Even if this helps raise awareness for one person, don't hide it,” he said. “Don't be embarrassed to talk about these things with your friends and family, and especially your doctor.”

The fundraiser garnered \$2,650 for the type of research that Garrett and others at Magee-Womens Research Institute are pursuing. According to Buckanovich, such funding is vital, because endometrial cancer is underfunded, yet so curable.

“It was a good thing to do in her honor, I thought,” said Shawn, who was overwhelmed by the support the fundraiser received. “I'm not a pushy guy. I feel grateful for everybody who contributed.”





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# FY20 FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

## ANNUAL CAMPAIGN

Category	FY2020
Direct Grant Revenue	\$39 M
Current Number of awards	160
UPMC Staff	169
Pitt Staff (for research only)	34
Faculty	69
Research Units	59



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# A GRANDMOTHER'S ANNUAL GIFT CELEBRATES GENERATIONS UNITED BY MAGEE

In her 101 years, Melva Deitt has seen a lot of the world, from breathtaking castles in Russia to the intimidating streets of Morocco.

But in the end, it's the house where she raised her only daughter – and where her daughter raised Melva's only grandchild – that holds her heart.

"I always say: I've had a wonderful life. I had good parents, a good husband, a wonderful daughter, and a wonderful grandson," she recalls.

For the latter, Melva is especially grateful: Curtis Paul Bucher, born prematurely on Sept. 11, 1989, so tiny that Melva's daughter, Eileen, dressed him in Cabbage Patch Kids doll clothes when she brought him home from UPMC Magee-Womens Hospital.

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As a preemie, Curtis began life in Magee's neonatal intensive care unit, and his grandmother was so pleased with his care that she donates \$1,000 to Magee every year on his birthday.

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At 36, Eileen was expecting her first – and, as it would turn out, only – child when she went to the hospital for routine monitoring in late July 1989. She appreciated her obstetricians, Dr. Robert Kaminski and Dr. Robert Stern, who kept close tabs on her. She even remembers Dr. Stern calling Dr. Kaminski from the Bahamas, where he was vacationing, to check on her.

"I swear, those two doctors slept at the hospital," Eileen recalls. "Anytime I went in for any kind of test, one of them was always there."

That July, in the 27th week of her pregnancy, Eileen was busy making plans when the technician asked her how she was feeling.

"I thought I was having indigestion," Eileen says; otherwise, she felt fine. But the technician broke the news: it wasn't indigestion; she was in early labor.

Shocked, Eileen refused to believe it. Her baby was due Oct. 8, the same birthday as Melva's mother. And she protested that she wasn't ready to give birth just yet; she had things to do.

Magically, both doctors appeared at her bedside, convincing her to stay while they assessed her. They put her on bed rest for the remainder of her pregnancy; labor that premature classified her as high risk.

After that, Melva accompanied her to the hospital for her frequent checkups, sometimes two or three times in a week. On Sept. 11, 1989, Eileen and her husband went to the hospital at 4 a.m. for yet another test. The doctor gave her a choice: they could induce labor that day, or she could come back again the next day.

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"I was not a morning person to begin with," says Eileen. "I said, 'if you have time today, let's just do it now.'"

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Curtis Paul Bucher, named for both of his grandfathers, arrived weighing 3 lbs., 11 oz. He stayed in the NICU for two weeks before he gained enough weight to go home.

For Melva, it was love at first sight. Her beloved husband of 40 years, Paul Deitt, had died the previous year, in the miserable summer heat of 1988, just 17 months after being diagnosed with asbestosis. A man who seldom raised his voice, Paul didn't smoke or drink, and always came home to right after work. He was especially close to Eileen: "The three of us were it," Melva recalls; he would have loved his grandson.

Out of gratitude for the prenatal care Eileen received, and the care that allowed Curtis to thrive in the NICU, Melva established the tradition of donating to Magee.

Now, in adulthood, the three generations remain close, often sharing dinner together.



"They're great buddies. He adores her, she adores him," says Eileen. "All my mom has to do is whistle, and he'd be there for her."







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