

February 2022

Dear Friends,

Happy New Year to the Miles for Myeloma community. 2021 was quite a year enduring this pandemic, and most of us are weary. Yet our community is in a great place where people believe in science to overcome a variety of illnesses and continue to generously contribute to our fight against myeloma. I have hope that this same sentiment will extend to fighting COVID, and we will return to a healthier world. We have vaccines that are both safe and effective and will give us back the life we all crave.

Late last year, I attended the American Society of Hematology conference. I was recovering from ankle surgery and couldn't put weight on my right foot. I made it to the meeting on a scooter and crutches. Because I love science and I love our community, the trip was well worth it. At this conference there was a lot of excitement about the role of immunotherapy in eradicating myeloma. Our immune system can be very powerful and capable of killing myeloma cells if we use the right tools to maintain and enhance the killer cells in our body. Our researchers at the IU Simon Comprehensive Cancer Center and around the world are building the foundation to enhance the activity of these cells. Stay tuned for more to come in the next year.

One of the articles published at the meeting was titled "Baby Ride my CAR" and that is exactly what we want to offer our patients. We have an FDA approved treatment using CAR T cells. These cells are the patients' own immune cells genetically modified to recognize myeloma cells and to destroy them. The results are impressive, and yet there is room for improvement. We have found current cells are working for a couple of years and then some patients are relapsing. You may ask, "Why not use CAR T cells again?" and of course we can try that, but myeloma cells are evil, and they find a way to hide. In addition, the cost of additional CAR T cells is quite steep. Our answer is "Ride our CAR". We want to produce our own CAR T cells that are effective and reasonably priced. I am thrilled to announce that Indiana University School of Medicine's Brown Center for Immunotherapy hired Dr. Huda Salman this past fall to lead the way in producing our optimized CAR T cells to cure myeloma.

What is equally as impressive is your ongoing commitment to Miles for Myeloma. When the pandemic began in early 2022, I challenged this community to The Myeloma Million: an effort to combine donors, dollars and distance to reach a total of one million. I'm so proud to say that we reached our goal in December. I've always said, not everyone could cycle long miles, but anyone could raise awareness for myeloma research and enhanced patient care. You stayed active while we were apart; logging more than 220,000 miles these past two years!

And your generosity continues to inspire. In 2021, we raised \$402,490! Hundreds of donors gave gifts of every size. Each has tremendous impact toward curing myeloma and making it history.

I wish all of you a happy new year. Please stay safe, take care of you, your family and your neighbor. We love you and we need you around so we can all be together in 2022 at the 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Miles for Myeloma, closer to ending the pandemic and curing myeloma.

Peace,



Rafat Abonour, M.D.  
Harry and Edith Gladstein Professor of Cancer Research



For the second year in a row, the Miles for Myeloma ride and gathering was cancelled due to the pandemic. In September, a small group of patients, researchers and I celebrated the 17<sup>th</sup> year of Miles for Myeloma by gathering at Eagle Creek Park for a commemorative 1-mile loop.

Despite the cancellations, I'm grateful to our pharmaceutical partners who continue to make our events possible, including:

2021 presenting sponsor Oncopeptides,

Platinum sponsor, BMS

Gold sponsors, Amgen, Karyopharm Therapeutics, Takeda and Jansen,

Tour Champion supporter Adaptive Biotechnologies.