

Spotlighting the impact of your support!

CR&T Funds MPN Research: Two Program Assistants Making a Difference



Myeloproliferative neoplasms (MPNs) [MY-eh-lo-pro-LIF-er-uh-tiv NEE-o-plaz-uhms] are a group of rare chronic blood cancers that affect the bone marrow, causing abnormal growth and overproduction of blood cells. The three most common MPNs are polycythemia vera (PV) – too many red blood cells, essential thrombocythemia (ET) – too many megakaryocytes and platelets, and primary myelofibrosis (PMF) – scarring of the bone marrow which reduces the ability to produce blood cells.

Researchers have made significant progress in recent years: new therapies have been approved and clinical trials of several promising treatments are underway. Cancer Research & Treatment Fund, Inc. (CR&T) is fortunate to be the catalyst in funding some of these medical advancements. **CR&T funds research emphasizing the cause, prevention, treatment, and cure of myeloproliferative neoplasms (MPNs) and also funds other blood and solid tumor cancer research.** One of the many ways that CR&T is fulfilling this mission is by funding the work of Research Program Assistants at the Richard T. Silver Myeloproliferative Neoplasm (MPN) Center at Weill Cornell Medicine. The cornerstone of CR&T's research strategy is our commitment to the Richard T. Silver, MD MPN Center. Read more about our commitment by visiting www.crt.org/the-silver-mpn-center.

The Research Program Assistants work closely with the research team, particularly Drs. Silver, Abu-Zeinah, and Scandura to use sophisticated data collection and analyzing methods of machine learning and artificial intelligence for

clinical research projects, obtaining consent from patients, and working with de-identified patient data for clinical trials.

Another exciting aspect of the CR&T-funded Research Program Assistant program is that by assisting with data and research analyses, they contribute to research findings for manuscripts and publications leading to their names being included in published papers and abstracts. After their time at Weill Cornell, Research Program Assistants most often continue to graduate school or medical school.

To gain a better understanding, we asked our two current Researchers, what the program means to them.

Katie Erdos - Research Program Specialist:



Last spring, Dr. Silver asked if I would attend a webinar on MPN disease progression and report back on the presentation. Unbeknownst to me, one of the featured speakers of the webinar was a patient at the Richard T. Silver Myeloproliferative Neoplasm (MPN) Center at Weill Cornell

Medicine. The patient was one I knew well - a participant in one of our clinical trials that I managed. Hearing their testimony on the benefits of the care they received specifically at the Silver MPN Center and even referencing some of the research projects I was involved in was a powerful experience. That moment reinforced the fact that the work we were doing was

having a real, life-changing impact.

Because of the support of Cancer Research & Treatment Fund (CR&T), I have the incomparable opportunity to work directly with the distinguished physicians of the Silver MPN Center, such as Drs. Silver, Abu-Zeinah, and Scandura. Collaboration with and mentorship from these physicians has given me the opportunity to be published in top journals and on conference abstracts, making concrete contributions to the field.

One of our current research projects is focused on essential thrombocythemia (ET) and identifying potentially practice-changing insights with regard to early diagnosis and optimal treatment of ET. Working on meaningful projects and seeing the results come together as we finish up the data collection makes it even more fulfilling to come to work each day.

Drs. Abu-Zeinah and Scandura are teaching me to code which enhances my computing and analysis abilities. These skills further my research horizons and have allowed me to participate in machine learning and artificial intelligence projects, the fast-moving new direction of medicine. While my day-to-day work may vary, **the overall goal is the same: to answer important clinical questions that will improve patient care and advance the field of MPNs.**

It is due to the support of CR&T that we can pursue such groundbreaking research, which inspires me to continue this work and carry the lessons I learn at the Silver MPN Center throughout the rest of my career.



Katie Erdos graduated from Dartmouth College in 2020. At Dartmouth, she was on the Division I varsity women's rowing team where she was 1st varsity coxswain for all 4 years, served as a two-time captain, was Academic All-Ivy, CRCA scholar-athlete, and Pocock All-American. Katie has been a Research Assistant/Specialist at WCM for nearly 3

years and plans to attend medical school.

Publications:]<https://www.researchgate.net/scientific-contributions/Katie-Erdos-2225336736>

Neville Lee - Research Program Assistant:



My passion is to study and eventually practice medicine. Research has been my gateway to contribute to the field before receiving my medical degree.

Before I attend medical school, I want to understand the infrastructure and the nuances of being a treating physician. I am fortunate to be working with the team of Drs. Silver, Abu-Zeinah, and Scandura who weekly reinforce a multitude of concepts such as patient care and the particulars within the field of hematology.

My journey to Weill Cornell Medicine started with a basketball teammate whose father is a doctor at Weill Cornell Medicine Qatar. Knowing my desire for research and a medical career, my teammate's father suggested that Dr. Abu-Zeinah, a WCM Qatar alum, and I meet. It was interesting to hear about the program, and months later, when a Research Program Assistant position became available, I was able to formally interview for the position.

A day in the week in this research position is dependent on the stage of the project. For one of our latest studies, we are in the data collection stage of our cohort of essential thrombocythemia patients and are manually reviewing the de-identified patient data details (no patient-identifying information is included in the data). In later phases of a project, we code to create models to analyze the overall trend of the data. In the final stages, we review the most up-to-date literature to compare our conclusions to the most recent contributions to the field and propose explanations for the collective observations. Simultaneously we are developing more efficient methods of data collection using current software, such as artificial intelligence. Because of funding from Cancer Research & Treatment Fund (CR&T), we have been able to focus on de-identified patient data, the foundation of our ongoing ability to draw new conclusions in our research.

I am grateful to have this experience at the Richard T. Silver Myeloproliferative Neoplasm (MPN) Center at Weill Cornell Medicine. My involvement is invaluable and is helping me to achieve my goal of becoming a physician.



Neville Lee graduated from Vassar College in 2022 where he was the captain of the varsity men's basketball team, earning Liberty League all-academic team 4 years, SAAC Award Winner of Men's Basketball. He was the social justice representative for the basketball team. Neville ended his collegiate basketball career with Vassar's first-ever Liberty League Championship in

2022. Neville has been a Research Assistant at WMC for nearly 1 year and eventually plans to attend medical school.

Continued research, new discoveries, and progress; your support of CR&T is making a difference!



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Recent Publications from our Medical Advisory Board (MAB)

CR&T's Medical Advisory Board (MAB) comprises prominent physician-scientists who guide the organization's research strategy. Here are some of their latest publications.

***Silver RT, Abu-Zeinah G.** Polycythemia vera: aspects of its current diagnosis and initial treatment. *Expert Rev Hematol.* 2023;16(4):253-266.

Marchetti M, Salmanton-García J, El-Ashwah S, **Abu-Zeinah G**, et al. Outcomes of SARS-CoV-2 infection in Ph-neg chronic myeloproliferative neoplasms: results from the EPICOVIDEHA registry. *Therapeutic Advances in Hematology.* 2023;14. doi:10.1177/20406207231154706

Mascarenhas J, Kremyanskaya M, Patriarca A, Palandri F, Devos T, Passamonti F, Rampal RK, Mead AJ, Hobbs G, **Scandura JM**, Talpaz M, Granacher N, Somervaille TCP, Hoffman R, Wondergem MJ, Salama ME, Colak G, Cui J, Kiladjian JJ, Vannucchi AM, Verstovsek S, Curto-García N, Harrison C, Gupta V. MANIFEST: Pelabresib in Combination With Ruxolitinib for Janus Kinase Inhibitor Treatment-Naïve Myelofibrosis. *J Clin Oncol.* 2023 Mar 7;JCO2201972. doi: 10.1200/JCO.22.01972. Epub ahead of print. PMID: 36881782.

***Silver RT, Erdos K, Taylor E 3rd, Scandura JM, Abu-Zeinah G.** Splenomegaly (SPML) in polycythemia vera (PV): its clinical significance and its relation to symptoms, post-polycythemic myelofibrosis (PPMF) and survival. *Leukemia.* 2023 Mar;37(3):691-694.

***Abu-Zeinah K, Saadeh K, Silver RT, Scandura JM, Abu-Zeinah G.** Excess mortality in younger patients with myeloproliferative neoplasms. *Leuk Lymphoma.* 2023 Mar;64(3):725-729.

Frindt G, Meyerson JR, Satty A, **Scandura JM**, Palmer LG. Expression of ENaC subunits in epithelia. *J Gen Physiol.* 2022 Oct 3; 154(10):e202213124.

Infante MS, ... **Abu-Zeinah G**, et al. B-cell malignancies treated with targeted drugs and SARS-CoV-2 infection: A European Hematology Association Survey (EPICOVIDEHA). *Front Oncol.* 2022 Oct 3;12:992137.

***Abu-Zeinah G, Di Giandomenico S, Choi D, Cruz T, Erdos K, Taylor E, Ritchie EK, Silver RT, Scandura JM.** Hematopoietic fitness of JAK2^{V617F} myeloproliferative neoplasms is linked to clinical outcome. *Blood Adv.* 2022 Sep 27;6(18):5477-5481.

Patel AJ, Warda S, Maag JLV, Misra R, Miranda-Román MA, Pachai MR, Lee CJ, Li D, Wang N, Bayshtok G, Fishinevich E, Meng Y, Wong EWP, Yan J, Giff E, Pappalardi MB, McCabe MT, Fletcher JA, Rudin CM, Chandralapaty S, **Scandura JM**, Koche RP, Glass JL, Antonescu CR, Zheng D, Chen Y, Chi P. PRC2-Inactivating Mutations in Cancer Enhance Cytotoxic Response to DNMT1-Targeted Therapy via Enhanced Viral Mimicry. *Cancer Discov.* 2022 Sep 2;12(9):2120-2139.

Pemmaraju N, Verstovsek S, Mesa R, Gupta V, Garcia JS, **Scandura JM**, Oh ST, Passamonti F, Döhner K, Mead AJ. Defining disease modification in myelofibrosis in the era of targeted therapy. *Cancer.* 2022 Jul 1;128(13):2420-2432.

Mascarenhas J, Kosiorek HE, Prchal JT, Rambaldi A, Berenzon D, Yacoub A, Harrison CN, McMullin MF, Vannucchi AM, Ewing J, O'Connell CL, Kiladjian JJ, Mead AJ, Winton EF, Leibowitz DS, De Stefano V, Arcasoy MO, Kessler CM, Catchatourian R, Rondelli D, **Silver RT**, Bacigalupo A, Nagler A, Kremyanskaya M, Levine MF, Arango Ossa JE, McGovern E, Sandy L, Salama ME, Najfeld V, Tripodi J, Farnoud N, Penson AV, Weinberg RS, Price L, Goldberg JD, Barbui T, Marchioli R, Tognoni G, Rampal RK, Mesa RA, Dueck AC, Hoffman R. A randomized phase 3 trial of interferon- α vs hydroxyurea in polycythemia vera and essential thrombocythemia. *Blood.* 2022 May 12;139(19):2931-2941.

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Marchetti M, Vannucchi AM, Griesshammer M, Harrison C, Koschmieder S, Gisslinger H, Álvarez-Larrán A, De Stefano V, Guglielmelli P, Palandri F, Passamonti F, Barosi G, **Silver RT**, Hehlmann R, Kiladjian JJ, Barbui T. Appropriate management of polycythemia vera with cytoreductive drug therapy: European LeukemiaNet 2021 recommendations. *Lancet Haematol.* 2022 Apr;9(4):e301-e311.

***Abu-Zeinah G, Silver RT, Abu-Zeinah K, Scandura JM.** Normal life expectancy for polycythemia vera (PV) patients is possible. *Leukemia.* 2022 Feb;36(2):569-572.

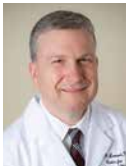


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**15th International Congress
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www.MPNcongress2023.com



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This dynamic program features 5 days of comprehensive learning, analysis of emerging data, and the discovery of innovative treatment methods, all providing a glimpse into the future of lymphoma, myeloma, and leukemia disorders.

<https://www.lymphomaandmyeloma.oncnet.com>

LLM Congress is chaired by CR&T Medical Advisory Board Member **Morton Coleman, MD**, and Co-chaired by 6 of his esteemed colleagues including CR&T Medical Advisory Board Member **John P. Leonard, MD**.

Dr. Ann Mullally Named the Richard T. Silver Visiting Professor



The 2023 Richard T. Silver Visiting Professorship was held at Weill Cornell Medicine (WCM) on May 17. This year's speaker was Ann Mullally, MD, Associate Professor, Harvard Medical School, Attending Physician, Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, Associate Physician, Brigham and Women's Hospital, Associate Member, Broad Institute.

Established with a major gift from Cancer Research & Treatment Fund (CR&T), the Richard T. Silver Visiting Professorship is named in honor of CR&T's founder. The lecture is given by a distinguished speaker from another institution, with the aim of broadening the horizons and perspective practitioners in the field of hematology oncology. Attendance is open to the entire faculty, fellows, and house staff of the WCM Department of Medicine, including the Division of Medical Oncology.

Physicians from Lower Manhattan, New York-Presbyterian Queens, Rockefeller University, Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, The Hospital for Special Surgery, and private practitioners are also invited to attend.

Dr. Mullally received her medical degree from the University College of Dublin National Univ SOM. She completed her medical Residency at Johns Hopkins Hospital in Internal Medicine and her Hematology Oncology Fellowship at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute. In 2018, she was elected as a member of the American Society for Clinical Investigation (ASCI), one of the nation's oldest and most respected medical honor societies of physician-scientists who translate findings in the laboratory to the advancement of clinical practice.

Dr. Mullally is a translational cancer researcher in the field of myeloid malignancies, with a focus on myeloproliferative neoplasms (MPN). Her laboratory studies the biology, genetics, and therapy of myeloid cancers using primary human samples, murine models, and multiple in vitro model systems. Dr. Mullally's MPN research interests include myelofibrosis, the biology of mutant calreticulin (CALR) in MPN, JAK2^{V617F} MPN stem cells, and improving the efficacy of JAK2 inhibitors and familial forms of MPN. The overarching goal of the research in her laboratory is to advance the understanding of the biology of MPN and to translate this into improved treatment options for patients dealing with these diseases.

CR&T and WCM are proud to have welcomed Dr. Mullally as this year's guest speaker.

The overarching goal of the research in her laboratory is to advance the understanding of the biology of MPN and to translate this into improved treatment options for patients dealing with these diseases.



Above: Rev. Patrick O'Connor, pastor of First Presbyterian Church, and volunteers



CR&T Supports Prostate Cancer Screening Day

Since 2011, CR&T has been proud to co-sponsor the Annual Prostate Screening and Health Fair, held at First Presbyterian Church in Jamaica, Queens. Prostate cancer is the most commonly diagnosed nonskin cancer in America. If detected early, the disease has over a 90 percent survival rate. The 2023 event was held on April 29, where 115 men were able to receive free prostate cancer screenings.

The event is conducted by the church in collaboration with Douglas Scherr, MD, professor of urology and clinical director of urologic oncology at Weill Cornell Medicine. The health fair offers many other free tests for men and women, including HIV, blood pressure, diabetes, and cholesterol exams, as well as dental screening and nutritional counseling. Events like this one play a crucial role by providing preventive services to underserved communities.

For more information about First Presbyterian Church, the health fair, and its other community initiatives, please visit www.crt.org/other-events.

continued from back panel



Andrew Schafer, MD, a member of the CR&T Medical Advisory Board, is retiring as Chairman of the Scientific Advisory Board of the MPN Research Foundation after serving in that capacity for approximately 15 years. At the same time, he has been unanimously elected to the MPN Research Foundation's Board of Directors. CR&T is now a designated partner of the MPNRF, along with the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society, the Aplastic Anemia and MDS International Foundation, and several other non-profit organizations and charitable foundations. Dr. Schafer will become the first physician to serve on the 10-person Board of Directors. He is an active clinician, a former president of the American Society of Hematology, and continues to do research in the MPNs which he began with his first basic research publication concerning the MPNs in the New England Journal of Medicine in 1979. He has previously served as Chairman of Medicine and Physician-in-Chief at three major academic medical centers, Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, the University of Pennsylvania, and Cornell. He was elected to the National Academy of Medicine in 2012, one of 80 inductees internationally.



Alexander Swistel, MD, was honored with an endowed chair in Oncoplastic Breast Surgery, established with a gift from the grateful von Maltzahn family. Many years ago, Dr. Swistel added the concept of aesthetic surgical techniques to established radical surgery for breast cancer. He started a program at Weill Cornell that was based on incorporating plastic surgical techniques to wound closure to minimize scars after realizing that, while more women were being cured and surviving the diagnosis, more women were also becoming socially withdrawn and depressed as the resultant surgery had left them physically scarred. The Oncoplastic Breast Surgery program is the first of its kind in this region and the premise is to train future surgeons to use the same techniques in their practice to help patients thrive after their surgery.



CR&T NEWS

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Since 1968, CR&T has funded the world's most promising physician-scientists, equipping them with the resources to advance the treatment of various types of blood cancers, including myeloproliferative neoplasms (MPNs), leukemia, non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, Hodgkin's disease and multiple myeloma, as well as other common cancers, such as breast and lung cancer.

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www.crt.org/international-patient-symposium-on-myeloproliferative-neoplasms,
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for scholarship information.



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November 16, 2023 • Cancer Survivor Hall of Fame Dinner

RECENT NEWS FROM OUR MAB

CR&T's research grants program is guided by its Medical Advisory Board (MAB), which comprises some of the world's leading physician-scientists. Our MAB members regularly speak at prestigious medical conferences, publish the results of important studies, and are honored for their contributions to research and patient care. Here are some of their latest achievements.



Richard T. Silver, MD was recognized in September of 2022 for his leadership in challenging norms, persistence in evaluating promising opportunities, and enthusiastic support for innovation by receiving the PharmaEssentia 2022 Pioneer Award which celebrates the diligence, persistence, passion, and commitment of industry pioneers.

Richard T. Silver, MD, is honored that key opinion leaders (KOLs) in the MPNs, hematologists specializing in myeloproliferative neoplasms in Taiwan, Korea, and Japan (MPN Asia), and the Hematology Society of Taiwan bestowed Richard T. Silver, MD with its Lifetime Achievement Award at its international meeting April 8, 2023 (left photo). You can view his acceptance speech on the CR&T YouTube channel by visiting: <https://youtu.be/ZXuPK1ZUN5Q>

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