



## Athena Partners 2009 Grantees

Athena Partners is committed to helping to find a cure for women's cancers and providing educational resources for those touched by the disease. Athena funds innovative and effective programs targeting research and education that make a significant contribution in advancing knowledge and supporting patients and their families. Athena Partners is pleased to support the following initiatives and organizations in 2009.

### Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center

**Breast cancer – Dr. Muneesh Tewari, MicroRNA research:** Dr. Tewari's work holds promise for both treatment and early detection of breast cancer. If he can identify which micro-RNAs are altered in cancer, the path to developing drug treatments against them is a lot shorter than with typical protein-targeting drugs. Certain micro-RNAs are only made by tumor cells, and Tewari recently discovered these in blood samples — a finding that he called "very surprising." If this early work continues to be promising, a blood test could be used to detect lots of different types of cancer or to show how well a treatment works.

**Breast cancer – Drs. Porter and Li:** Ductal carcinoma in situ (DCIS) makes up about 20 percent of all breast cancers diagnosed in the United States. DCIS patients have a very high survival rate, but they also face an elevated risk of developing a second breast cancer. Drs. Peggy Porter and Chris Li plan to look for characteristics that may distinguish those individuals at high risk of a second breast cancer from those at lower risk. The ability to predict which patients are likely to develop another breast cancer and which are not would help doctors and patients make informed choices about DCIS treatment and follow-up care.

**Ovarian cancer - Dr. Robyn Andersen** and her colleagues have developed a survey to collect women's reports of persistent, recent-onset symptoms linked to ovarian cancer. They have already shown that this Symptom Index may be particularly useful when combined with blood tests for the CA125 and HE4 biomarkers as a first-line screening strategy. Support for Dr. Andersen will allow her to continue studying how best to use the Symptom Index in combination with other screening tools as well as to investigate the feasibility of using the Symptom Index in a primary care setting. For example, she plans to evaluate how readily these procedures might be adopted by women and their health care providers, including how willing patients will be to use the Symptom Index and to undergo additional screening if it is recommended.

### Huntsman Cancer Foundation

**Breast cancer – Dr. Philip Bernard:** The Bernard Lab at the Huntsman Cancer Institute is a "translational" research lab committed to the discovery and clinical implementation of

biomarkers for classification, detection, and monitoring of cancer in humans. Only recently have scientists known that there are different breast cancer subtypes that lead to differences in outcome. The group narrowed down 50 genes that play an important role in identifying subtypes of breast cancer. Based on the type of tumor, doctors will now be able to prescribe only the treatment that will be most beneficial. The research translates into a simple test that became available in 2009. The group is currently designing prospective clinical trials using the test, which they refer to as the Breast Bioclassifier.

### **Susan G. Komen for the Cure**

The HealthPoint, “Breast Cancer Patient Navigation and Case Management” Program will ensure that patients have the necessary supportive services and assistance with systems navigation to complete their treatment plan. The program will provide one-on-one crisis intervention, navigation support to access program and groups, and psychosocial assessment and treatment to support successful completion of breast cancer treatment.

### **American Cancer Society**

American Cancer Society Breast Cancer Research focuses its funding on investigator-initiated, peer-reviewed proposals. This process ensures that scientists propose projects they believe are ready to be tackled with available knowledge and techniques, rather than working on projects designed by administrators removed from the front lines of research. This intellectual freedom encourages discovery in areas that scientists believe are most likely to solve the problems of cancer.

### **Marsha Rivkin Center for Ovarian Cancer Research**

Marsha Rivkin Center funds promising pilot studies in ovarian cancer. The discoveries from these studies in turn lay the groundwork for major research initiatives. Data gathered from these studies often allows scientists to further pursue research ideas through highly competitive national government grants necessary to complete these projects.

### **Seattle Cancer Care Alliance, Women’s Wellness Clinic**

Women’s Wellness Clinic is designed to promote overall health and wellness. The clinic serves the needs of patients with a prior diagnosis of breast or gynecologic cancer who are many years past their original treatment, or women who are at increased risk for breast or gynecologic cancer based on family or personal history. This clinic provides the tools for a healthy lifestyle while providing state-of-the-art cancer surveillance.

### **Team Survivor Northwest**

Team Survivor Northwest provides a broad range of fitness and health education programs to enable women cancer survivors, in any stage of treatment or recovery and at any fitness level, to take an active role in their ongoing physical and emotional healing.