The gift of hope
An update on your investment in world-class cancer research.

You’re helping doctors like Krish Patel, M.D., bring life-saving trials to patients with no other option.
Darlene Jensen was running out of options. Her oncologist had tried every treatment available to treat her stage 4 lymphoma since her diagnosis in 2016. But nothing seemed to work, and by late last year tumors were pressing on her bladder, colon and spine.

Without even exerting herself, Darlene struggled to catch her breath, and she’d lost her appetite as fluid began to build up in her abdomen. Down to just 80 pounds, Darlene was declining fast. But as the proud mother of two grown daughters and grandmother to a new grandbaby, she had a lot to live for.

Unable to do anything more for her, Darlene’s oncologist referred her to Swedish, knowing she would have access to the latest in immunotherapy research. It’s because of donors like you that her doctor made that decision. Philanthropy has fueled life-saving clinical trials and made the Swedish Cancer Institute (SCI) a beacon of hope for those with no other options.

Harnessing the immune system
Our oncologists at the Swedish Center for Blood Disorders are pioneers in the search for new blood cancer treatments that employ patients’ immune system. The approach can not only be more effective than chemotherapy, but it can also spare patients its debilitating side effects. “Immunotherapies—particularly those that use immune cells as weapons against a patient’s cancer—have been gamechangers,” says Krish Patel, M.D.

Darlene’s oncologist, John Pagel, M.D., wasted no time enrolling her in an immunotherapy trial only available at two other centers that uses chimeric antigen receptors (CARs), an engineered version of something our cells already use. Receptors are proteins embedded in the surface of immune system cells that help identify friends from foes, including cancer. But as cancers like lymphoma progress, they get better at hiding in plain sight. CARs work like a cancer detector, helping the immune cells to see through cancer’s disguise.

Until now, CAR therapies have used T cells, which can be directed to attack cancer cells by
An investment in caring

Our social workers fill many roles: therapist, travel coordinator, grant writer, shoulder to cry on, cheerleader. When a patient needs help, there’s no limit to the ways social workers can support them and their family.

Degree programs aren’t designed to prepare social workers for all these roles, making continuing education vital to their professional development. But thanks to a grateful patient named William Jarrell who made a generous gift through his will, our team has the opportunity to attend conferences and classes to continue expanding the support they can provide to our patients.

So far, our social workers have pursued training in cognitive behavioral therapy, acceptance and commitment therapy, cultural competence, personality styles and self-care. The skills they learn will benefit patients across the Swedish system.

“Every day there’s a new situation that we haven’t encountered before,” says oncology social worker Caryn Stewart. “It’s everything from supporting you in survivorship so you can continue to live your life to supporting you and your family with approaching the end of life.”

Mr. Jarrell’s bequest will also allow our social work team to come together for an annual retreat to bond and support each other, as well as learn self-care techniques.

A new lease on life

Darlene began the cycle of infusions for the CAR NK trial last December, along with a conditioning chemotherapy. While it was slow going at first, her tumors began to shrink. Now, a few months after the trial’s end, Darlene’s cancer is in remission with no evidence of any disease. Along with her energy, she’s regained her appetite and is back to enjoying food and cooking for her family, a routine she desperately missed. Our team’s hope is that Darlene has been cured and will not require any further treatment.

After being so sick for so long, Darlene can scarcely believe how her life has turned around in the space of just a few months. “It’s been amazing to go from such a low place to where I’m at now,” she says. “I think I would have been gone a long time ago had it not been for this trial.”

What’s even more exciting is immunotherapy’s potential for wider use. “It’s our ambition that what we learn in using these therapies for blood cancers will translate to patients with solid tumors,” Dr. Patel says.

It’s not an exaggeration to say Darlene wouldn’t be here today without this groundbreaking trial. By supporting research at SCI, you’re giving patients like her the chance to recover and live life free from the specter of cancer. Thank you.
Continue your support for comprehensive cancer care

At the Swedish Cancer Institute, patients will find both innovative treatments and a strong support system for them and their families. Here are a few ways you can continue to make a difference for our patients.

**Leading-edge research**
From unraveling cancer genomes to harnessing the immune system to attack blood cancers, advanced techniques and clinical trials can provide treatment tailored to each person’s cancer. You can ensure our patients have access to world-class care right here at home.

**Taking care of the caregivers**
It takes a special kind of caregiver to work with patients who have cancer. But this work can be emotionally draining and lead to burn out. Programs like Schwartz Rounds help caregivers cope with the feelings and stress that can come with caring for very sick patients. You can make this experience possible for more caregivers.

Thank you for investing in the health and well-being of our community.

To learn more about patient-centered cancer care at Swedish, please contact:

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