Foundation grant supports cancer therapy breakthrough

Preliminary findings from an investigation funded in part by the OMS Foundation indicate that an immunotherapy drug embedded in a slow-release hydrogel appears to be highly effective at killing cancer cells.

According to its developers, STINGel combines a new class of immunotherapy drugs called stimulator of interferon gene (STING) agonists with an injectable hydrogel that releases the drug in a steady dose to activate the immune system to kill cancer cells. The biogel was developed by Simon Young, DDS, MD, PhD, Assistant Professor of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery at the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston (UTHealth), and Rice University chemist and bioengineer Jeffrey Hartgerink, PhD. The OMS Foundation selected the project for a $75,000 Research Support Grant in 2017.

Immunotherapy drugs in clinical trials have shown promising results in advanced cases of head and neck cancer. However, the most effective strategies benefit just 15 to 20 percent of patients, said Dr. Young, and the drugs require multiple injections (sometimes indefinitely).

The new research, detailed in the Biomaterials journal, showed that slow-release multi-domain peptide gels (MDP) were more effective than common hydrogels in continuously delivering immunotherapy drugs to tumor sites for long periods of time. The MDP hydrogel, injected as a liquid, turns semisolid inside the body and slowly degrades over time, said Dr. Young. Immunotherapy drugs known as cyclic dinucleotides (CDNs) embedded in the gel specifically target cancer cells.

“The MDP gels developed by Dr. Hartgerink’s lab have been used in tissue engineering applications before,” said Dr. Young, “but we were entering uncharted territory using this system in a cancer immunotherapy context. While CDNs are quite effective in treating melanoma, they have been completely ineffective as monotherapy in mouse models of head and neck cancer.”

According to Drs. Young and Hartgerink, the concentration of CDN in the hydrogel is crucial. Delivery of CDN via simple injection results in rapid diffusion of the drug throughout the body, lessening its concentration at the tumor site. Delivering the same amount of CDN via STINGel concentrates the drug near the tumor for longer periods of time, increasing its effectiveness.

continued on page 4
**Save the date**

**OMS FOUNDATION ACTIVITIES AT 2018 AAOMS ANNUAL MEETING**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oct 11-13</td>
<td>OMS Foundation Booth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 10-11</td>
<td>Post-Walk Alliance Breakfasts at Yolk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 10-12</td>
<td>Alliance Health Walks at 7:30 each morning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 11</td>
<td>Alliance Annual Event in the Signature Room at 3:00pm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**Message from the Chair**

One of the most gratifying privileges of my position as Chair of the OMS Foundation is seeing my signature at the bottom of the award letters sent to our grant recipients. My fellow Board members and I are most often regarded as fundraisers, and rightfully so. As the Foundation’s first-string champions for research and education, our role is to raise the funds that support it.

The reward for the hard work of fundraising, though, lies in the disbursement of the money we have raised. In January, three OMS research teams received an infusion of confidence and monetary support when their Research Support Grant letters arrived in the mail. Their investigations are as diverse as their geography, and each promises to contribute to the knowledge bank that educates and advances our profession.

A University of Pennsylvania research team headed by Dr. Rabie Shanti was selected for the Foundation’s Stephen B. Millam Award (recognizing the highest-scoring Research Support Grant proposal) for its investigation of an innovative immunotherapy to improve outcomes for children undergoing primary palatoplasty.

The work being conducted in these labs has potential to be life-changing for our patients. And it is gratifying to know this research was made possible, in part, through the past generosity of donors just like you – practitioners, retirees, researchers, residents, Alliance members and OMSNIC agents. Every gift to the Foundation is an investment in the future and a commitment to support those who will follow in our footsteps.

Now, even as we celebrate the milestones of AOAM's first 100 years, the OMS Foundation has its sights set on the next 100. The future is deeply rooted in research.

To ensure our upward trajectory remains unswerving, we are offering a once-in-a-century recognition opportunity to our OMS Foundation donors in 2018. We have reserved a wall in the AOAM's headquarters to display a stately tree, its shimmering leaves inscribed with the names of donors, practices, societies and other friends of our specialty.

This is our anniversary gift to AOAM and the next generation of OMS practitioners: a commitment to supporting the research and education that keeps us moving forward. I cannot think of a more meaningful gift to mark this momentous occasion.

Kathy A. Banks, DMD

---

**OMS Foundation's alliance serves the specialty well**

By Anthony Spina, DDS, MD

OMS NIC Director

Since 1959, the OMS Foundation has funded OMS-specific research and education programs with the goal of improving outcomes for OMS patients. And since 1987, OMS NIC (originally AAOMS Mutual Insurance Co.) has maintained a singular, similar focus on patient safety.

Given the compatibility of their objectives, it should come as no surprise that OMS NIC would emerge as an early and steadfast supporter of the OMS Foundation. In 2018, to honor AOAM’s centennial year, OMS NIC announced its desire to make a substantial corporate gift to the Foundation’s Annual Fund Campaign. OMS NIC and the Foundation subsequently agreed OMS NIC would fund a $100,000 gift-match challenge with a deadline of April 30 to generate excitement and momentum during the early stage of the campaign.

The prospect of doubling the value of their gift inspired many Foundation donors to give early, and the Foundation’s Centennial Tree recognition opportunity inspired them to new levels of generosity.

As a fundraising strategy, the gift match was a resounding success. By April 30, the Foundation raised substantially more than the $100,000 required to qualify for OMS NIC’s matching gift, and the 2018 campaign “Celebrating our Past, Envisioning our Future” was off to a strong start. It is OMS NIC’s hope the momentum generated by the gift match will propel the campaign to a successful finish.

OMS NIC’s support of the Foundation has taken many forms, including an annual gift to the Foundation Alliance’s Norma L. Kelly Resident Spouse Scholarship program. Spouses of OMS residents are eligible to apply for up to $1,000 to offset the expense of traveling with their partner to the AOAM Annual Meeting. OMS NIC’s donation is meant to honor the many OMS residents who serve on committees of the AOAM Board of Directors, its OMS NIC Case Review Committee, advisory board, faculty council and resident consultants.

Such selfless service to the specialty deserves special recognition. OMS NIC believes the spouse scholarship fund is an excellent way to recognize the value of their contributions.

OMS NIC’s support is not limited to corporate donations. Many of OMS NIC’s directors also have served on the Foundation’s Board, and legacy gifts to the Foundation from OMS NIC directors have ensured OMS NIC is well-represented on the Foundation’s Robert V. Walker Society roster.

OMS NIC’s independent agents also have contributed significantly to the Foundation and are currently midway through a five-year campaign to raise more than $50,000. OMS NIC serves the specialty and, as an OMS-owned and -operated company, we watch for opportunities to give back to the specialty. Support for the Foundation and its mission to fund research and education is one significant way OMS NIC achieves this goal.

---

**Featured Donor**

**2017–18 Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery Foundation Board of Directors**

- Dr. Kathy A. Banks, Chair
- Dr. Eric T. Genet, Vice Chair
- Dr. J. David Johnson Jr., Treasurer
- Dr. Karen E. Crowley
- Dr. Douglas W. Fan
- Dr. Victor L. Nannini
- Mr. William C. Passolt
- Dr. W. Frederick Stephens
- Dr. Thomas P. Williams
- Dr. Stephanie N. Zastrow, ROAOMS Liaison

**OMS FOUNDATION STAFF**

- Scott Farrell, MBA, CPA
- Mary DiCarlo
- Bozana Gasic
- Amanda Thomas

---

**OMS NIC’s alliance serves the specialty well**

By Anthony Spina, DDS, MD

OMS NIC Director

Since 1959, the OMS Foundation has funded OMS-specific research and education programs with the goal of improving outcomes for OMS patients. And since 1987, OMS NIC (originally AAOMS Mutual Insurance Co.) has maintained a singular, similar focus on patient safety.

Given the compatibility of their objectives, it should come as no surprise that OMS NIC would emerge as an early and steadfast supporter of the OMS Foundation. In 2018, to honor AOAM’s centennial year, OMS NIC announced its desire to make a substantial corporate gift to the Foundation’s Annual Fund Campaign. OMS NIC and the Foundation subsequently agreed OMS NIC would fund a $100,000 gift-match challenge with a deadline of April 30 to generate excitement and momentum during the early stage of the campaign.

The prospect of doubling the value of their gift inspired many Foundation donors to give early, and the Foundation’s Centennial Tree recognition opportunity inspired them to new levels of generosity.

As a fundraising strategy, the gift match was a resounding success. By April 30, the Foundation raised substantially more than the $100,000 required to qualify for OMS NIC’s matching gift, and the 2018 campaign “Celebrating our Past, Envisioning our Future” was off to a strong start. It is OMS NIC’s hope the momentum generated by the gift match will propel the campaign to a successful finish.

OMS NIC’s support of the Foundation has taken many forms, including an annual gift to the Foundation Alliance’s Norma L. Kelly Resident Spouse Scholarship program. Spouses of OMS residents are eligible to apply for up to $1,000 to offset the expense of traveling with their partner to the AOAM Annual Meeting. OMS NIC’s donation is meant to honor the many OMS residents who serve on committees of the AOAM Board of Directors, its OMS NIC Case Review Committee, advisory board, faculty council and resident consultants.

Such selfless service to the specialty deserves special recognition. OMS NIC believes the spouse scholarship fund is an excellent way to recognize the value of their contributions.

OMS NIC’s support is not limited to corporate donations. Many of OMS NIC’s directors also have served on the Foundation’s Board, and legacy gifts to the Foundation from OMS NIC directors have ensured OMS NIC is well-represented on the Foundation’s Robert V. Walker Society roster.

OMS NIC’s independent agents also have contributed significantly to the Foundation and are currently midway through a five-year campaign to raise more than $50,000. OMS NIC serves the specialty and, as an OMS-owned and -operated company, we watch for opportunities to give back to the specialty. Support for the Foundation and its mission to fund research and education is one significant way OMS NIC achieves this goal.
A fitting legacy for a life well-lived

By J. David Johnson Jr., DDS, OMS Foundation Treasurer

It comes as no surprise to his friends that, following his death, the OMS Foundation received a $25,000 R.V. Walker contribution from Dr. Jim Ingrassia.

Jim believed in the mission of our Foundation, and his gift is an appropriate symbolic punctuation for a life well-lived. He served as a role model for many oral and maxillofacial surgeons who, like me, had the good fortune of knowing him.

In addition to being a courageous, kind and elegant leader of our specialty, he was the epitome of a true and loyal friend.

Jim attended Ohio State University, where he received degrees in pharmacy and dentistry. At OSU, he met the love of his life, his beautiful wife, Beth. After three years in the Air Force, he entered Ben Irby’s program at the Medical University of South Carolina, finishing in 1977. He went into practice in Charleston, where he remained until his retirement in 2006.

I got to know Jim through the Southeastern Society of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons (SSOMS). Jim joined SSOMS in 1980. During the next 26 years, he missed only one SSOMS meeting, the year his father died. Jim became interested in SSOMS leadership in the late 1980s and began to work his way through the committees and officer positions, ascending to the presidency in 2005.

That year, the meeting was at The Cloister at Sea Island. It is a meeting that still holds records for attendance, exhibitor participation and financial success – mostly due to Jim’s extraordinary efforts.

Jim’s 2005 SSOMS presidential year also was the year he lost his dear wife, Beth, after a five-year battle with cancer. In August 2004, my wife, Elizabeth, was killed in a motor vehicle collision.

Typical of Jim’s generous spirit, he decided to dedicate the 2005 SSOMS annual meeting to Beth and Elizabeth. I will never forget the phone call Jim made informing me of this decision. We talked about “our two Beths,” our friendship, our careers and our involvement with SSOMS.

My children and I also will never forget the kind – and accurate – comments he made about Elizabeth from the podium during his presidential dinner. At that event, he presented each of my children a rose in honor of their mother.

In 2011, Jim was honored with the SSOMS Distinguished Service Award. At an event during the 2011 SSOMS meeting, I made the point of walking with him, thinking that I was providing him needed support due to the debilitating effects of Parkinson’s disease from which he was suffering.

As we slowly walked together, Jim made observations and posed questions that made me realize it was he who was providing the greater level of needed support. At the end of our walk, I found myself wishing to be half the man Jim Ingrassia was.

Jim is missed by his countless friends, and, through his posthumous gift to the Foundation, he continues to serve as an example for all of us.