Amanda Balboni Iniguez Receives the Damon Runyon-Jake Wetchler Award for Pediatric Innovation

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The Damon Runyon-Jake Wetchler Award for Pediatric Innovation is given annually to a third-year Damon Runyon Fellow whose research has the greatest potential to impact the prevention, diagnosis, or treatment of pediatric cancer. In its second year, **Amanda Balboni Iniguez, PhD**, received the award at the annual Fellows' Retreat.

"We were thrilled to present this award to such an outstanding scientist, one who is brilliant and hard working, and at the same time, a warm human being fully dedicated to saving the lives of children. We feel a great deal of hope knowing that she is on our side in the fight against pediatric cancer," said Jean Singer, who founded the Jake Wetchler Foundation in memory of her son.

"It was a huge surprise to me to win the award for pediatric innovation. Of course, it is encouraging any time you receive recognition for your work, however, this was particularly special for me. It was an honor to meet Jean, who has bravely championed for innovative research in the field of pediatric oncology and is very familiar with the unique challenges this field faces," said Amanda. "Receiving recognition for my work from this foundation is a true privilege. I continue to dedicate my life to understanding some of the most devastating pediatric cancers and I hope to make a real difference in the lives of children affected with these diseases."

Amanda is studying epigenetic regulators as promising targets for drug discovery in cancer. These regulators act as the on/off switches that control the production of proteins and in cancer cells, the switches often malfunction causing disease.

The Jake Wetchler Foundation was established in honor of Jake, who beat Hodgkin's lymphoma at age 18, but then lost his life to leukemia at age 20 after a heroic fight. "Losing a child to cancer is pretty much the worst thing that can happen in your life. And when that happens, you try and do things to honor the memory of your child," explains Jean. "Jake would often say to us, 'Don't let the cancer win,' and by funding brilliant, innovative scientists, we hope to someday beat cancer. Pediatric research in particular is consistently shortchanged in research funding. We live in an age of unprecedented technology and scientific promise—now is the time to harness these advances in the fight against pediatric cancer."

Watch Amanda discuss her research here.

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