LATEST NEWS: Stepping Up Our Drive Against Cancer

We are doing even more to support these extraordinary young scientists, whose ideas have the potential to make game-changing breakthroughs.

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Effective in 2019, the Damon Runyon-Rachleff Innovation and Damon Runyon Clinical Investigator Awards will be increased by 33% for new and current scientists. For 72 years, Damon Runyon has funded the brightest and boldest scientists—risk-takers whose innovative ideas have the potential to make game-changing breakthroughs. During this time, our researchers have pioneered new approaches for detecting and treating cancer, saving countless lives. We are committed to doing even more to support these extraordinary young scientists.

This investment allows the next generation of elite scientists to conduct work that will lay the foundation for careers filled with untold discoveries that are critical to finding new treatments and cures for patients. It ensures a continuous infusion of revolutionary ideas about the way we diagnose and treat cancer. Damon Runyon recognizes that without substantial funding, many of the most brilliant scientists simply may not have the resources to see their cutting-edge ideas to fruition.

“Damon Runyon’s decision to implement this increased investment recognizes the fact that the research projects our awardees are pursuing are expensive, and our goal is to provide them with the resources to be able to take risks and experimentally address important and bold questions in cancer research,” says Yung S. Lie, PhD, Damon Runyon President and Chief Executive Officer. “We hope that this increase is meaningful and helps our awardees to focus more time and effort on their research—rather than having to write more grants.”

Damon Runyon-Rachleff Innovation Award

The Damon Runyon-Rachleff Innovation Award supports young, exceptionally creative thinkers with “high-risk/high-reward” ideas that have the potential to significantly impact our understanding of and approaches to the prevention, diagnosis or treatment of cancer, but lack sufficient preliminary data to obtain traditional funding. Examples from previous years include: the gene editing technology CRISPR and single cell sequencing techniques that are revolutionizing not just cancer research, but biomedical research globally.

The Stage 1 award has increased its funding from $150,000 per year to $200,000 per year for two

years ($400,000 total), with the opportunity for up to two additional years of funding (up to four years for a total $800,000). Stage 2 support is awarded to grantees who have demonstrated progress on their proposed research during the first two years of the award.

Response to the announcement of increased funding has been overwhelmingly positive. “This is amazing news! Thank you for continuing to encourage innovative, out-of-the-box research and for helping to shape the future of the young investigators you support,” said current Innovator Rushika M. Perera, PhD.

Damon Runyon Clinical Investigator Award

The Damon Runyon Clinical Investigator Award is also receiving a boost. This critical program supports early career physician-scientists conducting patient-oriented research, so they are better able to move seamlessly between the laboratory and the patient’s bedside in search of breakthrough treatments. One of the best examples of this is Damon Runyon’s early funding for research on harnessing the immune system to kill cancer cells at a time when many were skeptical of this approach. Another is the support of research demonstrating that human papilloma virus could cause certain forms of head and neck cancer, in addition to cervical cancers.

The award has increased from $150,000 per year to $200,000 per year for a period of three years ($600,000 total). Damon Runyon also pays for up to $100,000 of medical school debt still owed by the awardee. These Clinical Investigators are eligible for an additional two years of support should they need extra time and funding to complete a promising avenue of research, or to initiate/continue a clinical trial.

“I can’t emphasize enough how much this support is truly transformational in giving us the freedom and flexibility to take risks, push the envelope with our work, and move into new and exciting areas,” said current Clinical Investigator Brian Capell, MD, PhD, in response to the increase in funding.

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