

PHILANTHROPISTS WITH A MISSION

Philanthropists Norman and Irma Braman recognize the promise of medical research and its powerful lifesaving potential. So when they decided to fund a health care initiative through the family's foundation two years ago, they set their sights on a university-based cancer center, and UM/Sylvester was at the top of their list.

"We feel very strongly about the importance of the relationship between research and clinical treatment, and UM/Sylvester provides that," says Mr. Braman, who is a former owner of the Philadelphia Eagles and owns eight auto dealerships in Miami, Palm Beach, and Denver.

"What we really wanted to do was something to improve health care for the community and then decided to make it specific," adds Mrs. Braman. "Breast cancer affects so many women. I don't know anyone who hasn't been touched by it somehow."

What followed was a generous \$5 million contribution, announced in October 2002, which helped create the Braman Family Breast Cancer Institute at UM/Sylvester, a center devoted to advancing research in breast cancer prevention, diagnosis, and treatment. The institute combines basic science with clinical trials and world-class care to discover more effective treatments for breast cancer patients. The institute aims to change the face of cancer care in South Florida through the expansion of breast cancer research to transform breast cancer diagnosis and treatment, with the ultimate goal of curing this disease.

In addition to this sizeable initial donation, the Bramans are helping UM/Sylvester raise \$8 million more over



Joaquin Blaya, UM/Sylvester Board Chair, Norman and Irma Braman, and Joseph D. Rosenblatt, M.D., at the recent *In the Garden* gala.

the next five years for breast cancer research. Mr. Braman will do this, in part, as a member of the University of Miami Board of Trustees and UM/Sylvester's Board of Governors.

"We have been involved in fundraising from the very beginning and that will continue," says Mr. Braman, who cites the late Jay Weiss, a close friend, as an inspiration to do more in the area of philanthropy. The Bramans' dialogue with

the community already has brought in several new UM/Sylvester Founders.

"Norman and Irma are community-minded philanthropists with a clear vision regarding the improvement of cancer care in South Florida," says Joseph D. Rosenblatt, M.D., UM/Sylvester's Associate Director of Clinical and Translational Research. "Through their generous creation of the Braman Family Breast Cancer Institute, we have been able to recruit outstanding faculty such as the institute's director Joyce M. Slingerland, M.D., Ph.D., F.R.C.P. (C), and its clinical associate director Stefan Glück, M.D., Ph.D., F.R.C.P. (C), who are bringing molecular advances to the bedside and creating vital new options for our patients. The Bramans have been a driving force in the development of a world-class clinical and research effort in breast cancer at UM/Sylvester."

The Bramans agree. Much of the success of the institute, they say, can be attributed to the work and leadership of Slingerland, who was recruited to UM/Sylvester in 2002 to head the institute and direct breast cancer research efforts at the cancer center.

“We really think the team that she has brought here is top notch,” says Mrs. Braman. “Joyce has a great deal of compassion for her patients and her patients love her. That’s very important.”

A recognized authority on cell cycle regulation and molecular biology of breast cancer, Slingerland heads a major laboratory effort and has continued to recruit key individuals to increase expertise in the areas of molecular biology, epidemiology, clinical trials, and psychological support research in breast cancer.

trials has increased three-fold—providing patients with new breast cancer therapy.

In addition to the eight new faculty recruits already on board, others will join the team during the 2004-2005 academic year, including a breast cancer geneticist to lead research on genetic predisposition to breast and ovarian cancer. That individual will complement and help expand the genetic counseling services already available at UM/Sylvester.

What’s more, as a result of the ongoing multidisciplinary basic science research being conducted, institute members have applied for a number of highly competitive grants from the National Cancer Institute (NCI) in the last year, says Slingerland. These grants aim to promote interdisciplinary research that will bring advances in cancer prevention, diagnosis, and treatment to patients. To carry

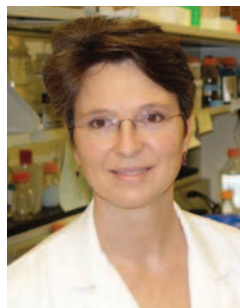
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Glück, an internationally renowned physician-scientist, was recruited to act as the clinical associate director, overseeing the integration of all aspects of clinical care in breast cancer from diagnosis to treatment.

“The Braman Family Breast Cancer Institute at UM/Sylvester gives us a unique opportunity to perform a number of interesting clinical trials that include the most modern laboratory research (e.g., molecular pharmacology, genomics, and proteomics) and the ability to identify new markers as targets for therapy,” says Glück.

Through the efforts of Slingerland and Glück, the number of clinical trials—trials of new drug agents for treatment of breast cancer or new methods of surgical or radiation treatment of the breast—has expanded substantially. A total of 15 new breast cancer trials have opened in the last 28 months and another seven new trials are pending. “We are encouraged by the increased clinical activity and continue to work to provide a better service to our patients,” Slingerland says.

The institute already has made a good deal of progress in its quest to serve South Florida. Breast surgeries have increased by 30 percent. The number of cases referred to the institute has doubled and the entry of patients into clinical



Joyce M. Slingerland, M.D.,
Ph.D., F.R.C.P. (C)

research, scientists and clinical investigators work together to plan, design, implement research programs that impact understanding of the molecular causes of breast cancer as well as its prevention, detection, diagnosis, and treatment.

Slingerland and her colleagues have defined a number of basic science research projects—each with a clinical application with a new diagnostic or predictive tool for outcome or therapy. Additionally, the institute has initiated a new “Developmental Grants Program” that provides a mechanism for funding new projects. This program will bring new investigators to the field of breast cancer and provide seed funding for small grants to support development of larger projects that can be submitted to the NCI for funding.

The continued expansion of research excellence and the ongoing commitment of philanthropists like the Bramans may lead to one thing—better medical treatment for patients and a potential cure for this disease.

“Our hope is that someday breast cancer will be treated more effectively so that every patient will be given increased quality of life,” says Mrs. Braman. “That would be a real breakthrough and a source of great personal satisfaction for us.”