



CAIRIBU ARCTICS COMMUNITY FORUM

ENGAGING PATIENT-DRIVEN FUNDING SOURCES



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY November 12, 2025

ARCTICS COMMUNITY FORUM

FEAT: JIM BROOKS, MD, LISA KARSTENS, PHD, RAYMOND WEZIK, ESQ, HILARY FURLONG, CFRE

GOAL: Explore how to secure philanthropic research support through grateful patient programs and partnerships with institutional philanthropy offices

Summary

Investigator Perspectives

Introductions

- **Dr. Jim Brooks**, PI of the O'Brien Urology Center and Co-PI of the Stanford K12 Urologic Research Career Development Program, has a long history of funding from federal and philanthropic sources.
- **Dr. Lisa Karstens** is a bioinformaticist at Oregon Health and Science University studying the urobiome and a leader of the CAIRIBU Urobiome Research Interest Group. Her research has been funded by federal and philanthropic sources.
- **Hilary Furlong** is the senior director of development and major gifts at Stanford Medicine Development. Her oversees annual fundraising efforts of \$10-15 million.
- **Raymond Wezik, JD** is Vice President and Deputy Executive Director of the Urology Care Foundation, the official foundation of the American Urological Association. In his role, he engages with endowment funding from members and patients.

Dr. Lisa Karstens' Experience with Patient-Driven Funding

- **Dr. Lisa Karstens** shared her experience with the **Circle of Giving at OHSU**, a program supported by women passionate about women's health research.
- The program pools funds from donors to support research awards, making contributing to science accessible to the general public.
- Although much of the funding focuses on women's health, the program also funds early-stage research that is a new direction for an investigator. The Circle of Giving grants support a variety of different projects, including clinical research, translational research, and basic research.
- **Dr. Karstens** discussed the application process. Similar to traditional scientific funding, independent peer reviewers review the scientific merit of applications.
- The grant process differs in that **the bulk of the main application is in non-scientific language**. Further, once the top five applications are ranked, Circle of Giving selection committee volunteers (non-experts) review the top applications.
- The granting day presentation allows donors to select the final awardee, incorporating a high level of donor engagement in research.
- **Dr. Karstens** emphasized how the direction of funding is evolving to involve the general public and the importance of framing one's science in a way that is relatable, accessible, and relevant to non-expert audiences.

Dr. James Brooks' Advice for Fundraising from Patients

- **Dr. James Brooks** emphasized the importance of getting to know your development officer to learn about opportunities and ensure your fundraising does not violate patient privacy or other policies.
- **He emphasized the importance of having an "elevator pitch,"** particularly one using non-scientific language to explain research and bring it back to how it impacts patients.
- **Dr. Brooks** suggested having a wish list of graded items to present to donors to be able to succinctly describe where their funding goes and understanding their capacity to donate.
- **Provide written summaries of your project (in lay language) and your wish list to your development officer to present to donors.** Giving talks (at your development officer's request) may not immediately result in funding, he said, but developing a reciprocal relationship where you help each other out benefits investigators in the long run.

- **Dr. Brooks** highlighted the importance of building ongoing, reciprocal, genuine relationships with donors and treating them like family. This entails listening to donors and their concerns, keeping them informed about how your research has progressed and its significance, and acknowledging their contributions. **Lab tours are a great way to show donors what your day-to-day is like, lets them meet your trainees, and learn more about your research.**

Institutional Representatives' Insight

Hilary Furlong's Role in Facilitating Fundraising Priorities

- Her development office's role is to facilitate the intersection of priorities between the medical school/center and donors.
- As is typical of development fundraising office structures, her office handles corporate and foundation relations, planned giving, and annual funds. Her specific role focuses on major and principal gifts – donations from individuals and family foundations ranging from \$250,000 to \$10 million.
- **Ms. Furlong** reiterated Dr. Brooks' advice about having an elevator pitch, one that tells the story your problem and how you can provide the solution through your research. Being able to convey your science in non-scientific terms and connect basic science to patients' experiences is also crucial.
- People give to people – being able to identify prospective donors and then gradually building relationships with donors and development officers is critical. **For basic scientists who do not directly interact with patients, partnering with clinicians can help identify prospects.**
- Development offices tend to solicit donations, she said, but it pays off for investigators to identify when patients express gratitude and step forward and make requests as well.
- Ms. Furlong said that development offices use wealth screening tools to assess the priority and effort to dedicate to a prospective donor.

Ray Wezik's Overview of the Urology Care Foundation (UCF)

- **Mr. Wezik, JD** discussed the UCF's funding efforts, including the Bridge Award and the Transformative Research Award.
- Having had personal experience with patients and coming from advocacy roles, Mr. Wezik described his expertise in curating patient alliances and advocating for appropriations for medical research.
- UCF is primarily a member driven organization, he explained. As a result, many of UCF fundraising efforts tap into the networks and resources of members. Having conversations with people and explaining exactly what their donations fund has helped the UCF raise money for the Transformative Research Award.
- **Mr. Wezik** highlighted the importance of endowments and the role of the UCF in funding research, humanitarianism, and patient education.

Lisa Karstens, PhD, is an Associate Professor at Oregon Health & Science University in the Departments of Medical Informatics and Clinical Epidemiology and Obstetrics and Gynecology. She is also the Co-Division Head of the Division of Bioinformatics and Computational Biology at OHSU. Her research interests broadly span using bioinformatics to understand complex human disease. Her current research focuses on using bioinformatic approaches to understand bladder disorders, with a specific focus on understanding how the human microbiome contributes to bladder health and disease. While Dr. Karstens' research is interdisciplinary, her expertise is in bioinformatics- specifically microbiome, metabolomics, and neuroimaging analysis. She collaborates with clinicians and molecular biologists on a regular basis on a variety of projects.

James Brooks, MD, is the Keith and Jan Hurlbut Professor, Vice-Chair and Chief of Urologic Oncology in the Department of Urology at Stanford University. Much of his work has focused on prostate and kidney cancer, and his laboratory has recently expanded research into benign urological conditions including benign prostatic hyperplasia, renal obstruction, and urinary infections. He is Director for the U54 funded Stanford O'Brien Urology Research Center focused on research into benign urologic conditions and Co-PI of the Stanford K12 Urologic Research Career Development Program.. He has participated in several cancer research consortia including The Cancer Genome Atlas (TCGA), the Early Detection Research Network (EDRN) where he was Associate Chair of the Prostate Cancer Working Group, and the Molecular and Cellular Characterization Center Consortium for which he served as Co-Chair.

Hilary Furlong, CFRE is Senior Director of Development, Major Gifts at Stanford Medical Development. She is an experienced development leader with a demonstrated history of success in higher education, academic medicine, and healthcare. She is passionate about advancing medical research, education, and programs to enable innovative solutions that reduce suffering and contribute to enhanced health and well-being.

Raymond Wezik, JD is Vice President and Deputy Director of the Urology Care Foundation. He was previously AUA's Policy and Advocacy Director. Before joining the AUA, Ray was a Director at the International Myeloma Foundation. In his role, he was responsible for many aspects of setting and implementing the Foundation's strategic direction, including public policy, patient outreach, advocacy, funding, and awareness. In addition to his extensive experience and commitment to foundation work, Ray holds a Juris Doctor from Tulane University Law School and is a licensed attorney.

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