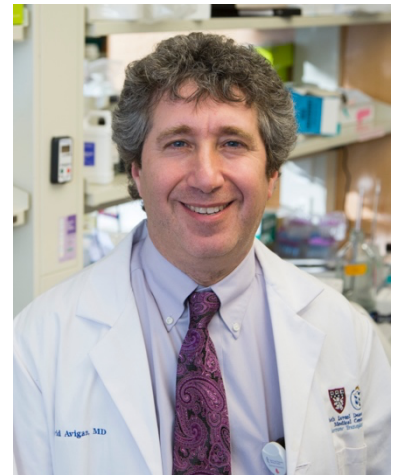


## **Grant Awarded to Develop Gastric Cancer Vaccine to Prevent Relapse After Surgery**

NEW YORK, Feb. 1, 2024 – [The DeGregorio Family Foundation](#) with support from the Torrey Coast Foundation Gastro Esophageal Investigator Network Initiative ([GEMINI](#)) has awarded \$75,000 to David E. Avigan, MD, of Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center and Harvard Medical School for the development of a personalized dendritic cell/organoid-based vaccine for the treatment of gastric cancer. Depending on results, this grant funding could increase up to \$500,000.

Gastric cancer is the fourth leading cause of cancer mortality worldwide with mean life expectancy after standard therapy of 12 to 15 months. In patients undergoing surgical resection, the majority will relapse from sites of disease not seen at the time of diagnosis.



Avigan and his team hypothesize that a cancer vaccine targeting gastric cancer can help to train the immune system to eradicate tumor cells throughout the body and prevent disease relapse after surgery. They have developed a personalized cancer vaccine in which patient-derived tumor cells are combined with immune-educating cells known as dendritic cells (DCs) which stimulate an immune response against a patient's cancer cells.

In previously completed clinical trials in patients with blood cancers, they have demonstrated that vaccination results in powerful immune responses and low incidence of disease relapse. In the present study, they will examine whether designing this type of vaccine against gastric cancer will be effective in generating an immune response directed against gastric cancer cells. They will use a novel approach to generating the vaccine to culture cancer cells outside the body as a part of vaccine production.

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**“ We hope our work will create a new path forward to harness the power of the immune system to prevent relapse in patients with gastric cancer.**

**- Dr. David E. Avigan**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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In the first part of the study, Avigan and his team will demonstrate that they can effectively create the vaccine using tumor cells from patients with gastric cancer undergoing surgical resection and DCs generated from their peripheral white blood cells. They will then conduct a pilot clinical trial to study the safety, immune response and clinical effects of patients with gastric cancer who are having surgical removal of their tumor.

“We hope our work will create a new path forward to harness the power of the immune system to prevent relapse in patients with gastric cancer,” said Dr. Avigan.

In 2020, gastric and esophageal cancers combined killed over 1.3 million people worldwide. Patients continue to face poor prognoses following gastric and esophageal cancer diagnoses due to their chemo-resistant behavior and ability to metastasize.

“Dr. Avigan’s vaccine research is very exciting and could directly impact the lives of so many,” concluded Lynn DeGregorio, President and Founder of the DeGregorio Family Foundation.

*The DeGregorio Family Foundation, founded in 2006 after a 10th member of the DeGregorio family died of stomach cancer, has raised more than \$8 million to fund innovative research to cure gastric and esophageal cancers. It is the only public foundation focused on funding research grants for both of these cancers.*



***The DeGregorio Family Foundation is the only public foundation focused on funding research grants for both gastric and esophageal cancers—[click here to donate](#) and...***

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