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Michael F. Price Memorial Grant from DeGregorio Family Foundation Awarded for Progress in Research to Disrupt Cancer Stem Cells

NEW YORK, May 21, 2024 –[The DeGregorio Family Foundation](#) with support from the [Esophageal Cancer Awareness Association](#) has awarded \$100,000 to Dr. Anthony Capobianco, PhD, Professor at The DeWitt Daughtry Family Department of Surgery and the Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine. The Grant is named in memory of Michael F. Price, the noted value investor and philanthropist, who was an early supporter of the Foundation.



Dr. Capobianco's research is dedicated to targeting cancer stem cell populations by dual inhibition of the Notch and Wnt pathways in upper GI cancers with novel experimental drugs being developed by StemSynergy Therapeutics. This funding is in addition to \$75,000 awarded in 2023 and could increase, depending on results.

The primary cause of death from cancer is due to resistance to standard therapy and metastasis. It is widely accepted that these properties of cancer are driven by distinct populations of cells termed cancer stem cells (CSCs). Through Dr. Capobianco's research he has identified two cell components that are critical to the maintenance of these CSCs: Wnt and Notch developmental signaling pathways.

"My research funded in part by the Foundation has demonstrated that we can eliminate these two populations using pathway-specific inhibitors – two drugs, NADI-351, SSTC3. Ablation of both populations had a dramatic increase in efficacy," said Dr. Capobianco. "To further advance these results and to provide a model for future clinical protocol, we added a standard of care chemotherapeutic Docetaxel. Addition of this drug to the protocol appeared to work with the Notch and WNT inhibitors to improve the durability of the treatment."

The current funding is to better understand the two drugs in combination with chemotherapy in patient-derived xenograft mouse models. These preclinical studies will lay the foundation for future clinical trials.

Said Dr. Capobianco, "The grant from the DeGregorio Family Foundation has been very instrumental in providing the discovery research to find new cures for gastroesophageal cancer."



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-Dr. Anthony Capobianco

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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.

The DeGregorio Family Foundation, founded in 2006 after a 10th member of the DeGregorio family died of stomach cancer, has raised more than \$10 million to fund innovative research focused on curing gastroesophageal cancer. “We are honored to continue to support this research to test destroying the cancer stem cell population in upper GI with novel experimental drugs,” concluded Lynn DeGregorio, President and Founder.



The DeGregorio Family Foundation funds innovative research focused on curing gastric and esophageal cancers—[click here to donate](#) and...

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