

New AGA/GCF research grant to fund exploration of the development of gastric cancer

March 11 2014

The American Gastroenterological Association (AGA) Research Foundation and the Gastric Cancer Foundation (GCF) are pleased to announce that the first AGA–Gastric Cancer Foundation Research Scholar Award in Gastric and Esophageal Cancer will support Mohamed El-Zaatari, PhD, from University of Michigan, as he conducts research into the role of myeloid cells in the transition from chronic inflammation to gastric pre-neoplasia.

Gastric (stomach) [cancer](#) is a deadly and frequently unheard of cancer. Worldwide, [stomach cancer](#) is the fourth most common type of cancer¹, and the second leading cause of cancer deaths . In the U.S., gastric cancer is an often-fatal disease with a relative five-year overall survival rate of approximately 27 percent²; and the disease receives just 0.4 percent of federal cancer research dollars³.

"To find a cure for stomach cancer, [basic science research](#) is essential to understand the evolution of the disease and its underlying causes," said Martin Brotman, MD, AGAF, chair, AGA Research Foundation. "We are proud to join with the Gastric Cancer Foundation to support Dr. El-Zaatari and his team as they work toward advancing the understanding of [gastric cancer](#)."

Dr. El-Zaatari's research centers around determining the process by which [chronic inflammation](#) causes certain cells to become pre-

malignant. Specifically, he aims to characterize changes in inflamed stomach microenvironment that lead to precancerous conditions. "We can use tools to look at the cell types and genes that are changing during the later stages of inflammation," he says. Ultimately what Dr. El-Zaatari and his colleagues learn could point to new targets for drug development.

Beginning in July 2014, Dr. El-Zaatari will receive \$90,000 per year for three years to carry out his research.

"The Gastric Cancer Foundation is working to increase the amount of funding and support dedicated to eradicating stomach cancer," said Wayne L. Feinstein, chairman of the board, GCF. "It is a significant milestone for us to partner with AGA and support Dr. El-Zaatari's important research project. We look forward to seeing the new data he uncovers and are proud to contribute to his success."

The AGA Research Foundation [announced its partnership](#) with GCF in August 2013. The two organizations have come together to create a \$2.25 million endowment to fund research that will enhance the fundamental understanding of gastric and [esophageal cancer](#) pathobiology in order to ultimately prevent or develop a cure for these diseases.

Provided by American Gastroenterological Association

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