

ABOUT *the* GALA

Bears Care is a proud supporter of NorthShore Hospitals Foundation, Northwestern Medicine, Rush University Medical Center, University of Chicago Medicine and the University of Illinois Cancer Center in advancing the fight against breast and ovarian cancer. The success of the annual Bears Care Gala enables continued investment in our partners' critical work in 2026, outlined below, which includes the development of innovative research and therapies as well as reducing barriers to equitable cancer care for all women.

- Comparing annual vs. semi-annual doses of zoledronic acid in post-menopausal breast cancer survivors taking aromatase inhibitors, seeking to optimize levels of bone protection, cancer recurrence, and safety. Evaluate the dose-effect relationship of zoledronic acid, assess differences in pain, quality of life, adverse effects, and compare disease-free survival outcomes. Utilize findings to provide evidence-based guidelines to reduce toxicity and improve quality of life, enhancing survivorship.
- Providing financial assistance for scalp cooling in patients undergoing chemotherapy for breast and ovarian cancer to enhance access across diverse populations and assess the efficacy in patients with different hair types as well as different hair preparation techniques.
- Supporting Chicago-area consortium launch of multi-site clinical trials for breast cancer to increase patient access to novel treatments, diversify trial participation, and enhance research efforts across institutions, including shared centralized data, biospecimen, and image repository services.
- Characterizing protein alterations that drive high-grade serous ovarian cancer (HGSOC) to determine how these proteins contribute to tumorigenesis, identify and characterize common molecular drivers that distinguish fallopian tube precursor lesions from HGSOC, and facilitate discovery of novel treatments targeting the molecular drivers.
- Providing comprehensive navigational support (evidence-based strategy to mitigate financial burden, limited health literacy, transportation, and other challenges) to reduce cancer disparities in underserved communities by expanding access to genetic services and breast and cervical cancer screening.
- Increasing the efficacy of anti-cancer therapeutics through glycoengineering. Modifying the sugar complexes on pharmacologic agents and manipulating the tumor microenvironment may potentiate the anti-cancer effects of these agents as well as reduce tumor burden.
- Identifying new therapies to prevent ovarian cancer resistance to standard treatment and recurrence after treatment using a revolutionary technology with the ability to map gene expression occurring within specific cell populations in tumor tissue. Investigate how chemotherapy affects the tumor microenvironment, including possibly facilitating treatment resistance, to identify potential inhibitors/therapeutics that can be used to disrupt this process.
- Elucidating key mechanisms of steroid hormone receptor signaling in endometrial tumor progression, used to identify novel therapeutic targets with potential to improve patient outcomes.
- Identifying therapeutic targets for treatment of bone metastatic breast cancer, specifically studying the tubulin isotype TUBB3 (which mediates the protein complex driving breast cancer cell adhesion in bone) and related focal adhesion complex proteins roles in prevention of metastasis and/or development of chemoresistance.
- Elucidating additional mechanisms underlying the ovarian cancer protective effect of progestins and vitamin D on the fallopian tube. Develop the ideal dosing combination of progestin and vitamin D to maximize ovarian cancer preventive effect. Investigate the effect of different vitamin D preparations on inhibition of fallopian tube carcinogenesis to identify the most effective progestin-based hormone therapy.
- Retrospectively studying the association between breast arterial calcifications and long-term cardiovascular risk, to determine whether these findings can be extrapolated from routine mammograms to screening for early cardiovascular disease (including stroke, myocardial infarction) in diverse populations of women.
- Integrating hereditary cancer risk assessment into the primary care workflow in a health system serving communities disproportionately affected by cancer inequities, and historically excluded from genetic services, ensuring hereditary cancer risk is identified and acted upon.
- Analyzing differences in tumor microenvironment between patients that have responded well to chemotherapy and those that have responded poorly, to provide insight into microenvironment changes induced by chemotherapy, and potentially identify novel therapies to be used together or after initial chemotherapy to prevent recurrence.
- Providing adjunct funding for Illinois Breast & Cervical Cancer Program patient navigator to expand reach to more uninsured women, increase early-stage cancer detection rates, and enhance outreach and education to reduce barriers and improve participation among minority and rural populations.