

February 22, 2018

Update from the Desk of the Medical Director:

The Dio Cancer Fund's mission has been rooted in the prevention and early detection of cancers. The challenge that faces the medical community is how to develop simple and cost-effective methods to provide cancer screening to the general population. The charge of screening for cancer generally lies in the hands of primary care or general physicians like myself. As Ronnie James Dio's doctor, if I had had some of the simple screening tools for cancer, perhaps I would have been able to detect his stomach cancer early and, ultimately, saved his life.

The modern premise of cancer screening involves being able to tap into the unique genetic blueprint of each individual. Each and every one of us has a sequence of DNA that is already expressed in our cells. Mutations and other variants in our genetic code already exist and can be detected by modern science. The knowledge of the genetic code gives doctors the power to aggressively monitor the genetic variations over time with screening and detection of changes that lead to the expression of cancer.

Over the past several years, Wendy Dio and the entire board of the Dio Cancer Fund has been committed to use the funds that were so generously given by Ronnie's world-wide fans to the Fund to support and sponsor the development of screening tools for stomach and other cancers. We have committed some \$300,000 over a three year period to the development of a screening tool for gastric cancer at the M.D. Anderson Cancer Center in Houston where Ronnie was treated in the later stages of his disease. With this grant, the hospital was able to parlay that seed money into multi-million dollar grants from the National Institute Health (NIH). Additionally, the Dio Cancer Fund donated some \$400,000 to the Vanderbilt University Hospital in Nashville to support a blood test to detect gastric and esophageal cancers.

For the past two years, the Dio Cancer Fund's board has been collaborating with and sponsoring an amazing laboratory within the Dental Research Institute at UCLA. The Director of the Institute, Dr. David Wong, came to UCLA from Harvard, and his primary research mission is to develop a simple saliva test to screen and detect cancer through the use of the "*Liquid Biopsy*." Dr. Wong's charismatic personality is truly contagious as he incites such passion and excitement about the promise of being able to have a non-invasive cancer screening test available to primary care physician's offices around the globe. He famously touts that he has the largest collection specimens of "spit" (saliva) in the world! Dr. Wong and his research team have been active participants in our fund-raising events sponsored by the Dio Cancer Fund, allowing them to have direct engagement with the Ronnie's fans and donors.

Recently, we received some exciting news from Dr. Wong's laboratory. His lead researcher, Dr. Karolina Kaczor-Urbanowicz, recently published an article in the scientific journal *Bioinformatics*. The article confirms the research Dr. Wong has been doing in developing a genetic screening test for gastric cancer through the use of saliva

swab testing. The article specifically acknowledges that the support for Dr. Kaczor-Urbanowicz's research is due in large part to the generous financial support of the Dio Cancer Fund. Looking forward, the results of the research will bring us one step closer to being able to have this saliva test in doctor's offices. In the coming year, Dr. Wong's laboratory will be submitting this for regulatory approval with the FDA.

The Dio Cancer Fund excited about the future of early detection of cancer and the ultimate goal of being able to save lives. Wendy Dio and the Board's efforts and commitment to supporting individual laboratories and researchers is unique in the cancer charity community.

As the Medical Director of the Dio Cancer Fund, I look at each and every research project that we fund with your generous donations and ensure that they are going directly to the amazing scientists who are working to detect cancer. As Wendy's motto goes, "*Early Detection Saves Lives.*"

On behalf of Wendy Dio and the Board of Directors of the Dio Cancer Fund, I sincerely thank each and every one of you for your generous support and ongoing commitment to honoring Ronnie and his mission to stop cancer before it starts!

The Best of Health,

Sandeep Kapoor, MD  
Co-founder and Medical Director  
The Ronnie James Dio Stand Up and Shout Cancer Fund