

October 4, 2023

Elizabeth Ann Weathers Breast Cancer Research Fund
Community Foundation for Greater Chattanooga
1270 Market Street
Chattanooga, TN 37402

Re: Progress update and 2023 Grant

Dear David Tenenbaum - Fund Advisor

On behalf of the entire breast cancer research team, I am writing to express our deepest appreciation for the generous support from The Elizabeth Ann Weathers Breast Cancer Research Fund. Ann's Fund is allowing us to ask the right questions and find the right answers. To that end, the ARTEMIS Trial supported by this fund has led to new discoveries about the behavior of the very aggressive triple receptor negative subtype of breast cancer. At The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center, we share what we learn for the benefit of cancer care at large. We have published our findings in peer reviewed medical journals with many more publications in the queue. Sharing knowledge in this way can prime evidence-based improvements to standards of care across the world.

A unique arm of this trial allowed us to tailor patient care based on individual responses to therapies. What we found was astonishing. The addition of immunotherapy in tumors (that did not adequately respond at the first phase of treatment) had disappeared by the time of surgery. We strive for this outcome, and when it occurs, it is known as a "pathological complete response." Yet, although we know what we can accomplish, there are many more milestones to reach on the journey ahead. For example, we are now asking, "why do some patients respond positively to treatment while others do not?" And by analyzing the genomic and protein landscapes of tumors and how they evolve over time, we aim to unlock clues to complex mechanisms of drug resistance. With a new body of knowledge, the team can then formulate innovative, tailor-made therapies for each individual patient.

The right talent will allow us to sustain the momentum we have created. We have recently recruited experts in bioinformatics who can unravel multi-dimensional data from the expansive sets of biological data we have gathered. This is a highly technical approach that also weaves together radiographic and blood-based analyses at multiple timepoints to discern unique vulnerabilities — ones that can be specifically targeted with newer medical therapies. Likewise, we have recruited new faculty with fresh insights who will continue to collaborate with their colleagues across the institution. Please know, our compass remains fixed to one direction, which is to transform the way we characterize and treat aggressive forms of breast cancer. Thank you for your support, and we look forward to sharing more with you soon.

Sincerely,



Debu Tripathy, M.D.
Professor and Chair
Department of Breast Medical Oncology