

## Low-key Chicago doc making a big difference

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A mild, unassuming Chicagoan is a soft-spoken dynamo who has been single-handedly changing the economics of American health care.

Dr. Bruce Bloom and his Partnership for Cures has been asking the nation's medical profession this question: After the pharmas and taxpayers have spent billions for the development of new drugs to tackle specific diseases, can't these now be cheaply recycled by imaginative researchers to perform additional breakthroughs for "orphan" diseases that are still taking thousands of lives each year?

Bloom has provided his own dramatic answer: a market intelligence center that identifies those orphan diseases and the existing drugs that might be "re-purposed" to cure them, and then brings together funding sources with the best research labs that could meet the challenge.

"The key differences between this organization and any other," Bloom tells me, "are speed, economy and research investment. Speed means managing for fast-track research on drug rediscovery that creates new uses for already-FDA-approved drugs. Economy means capitalizing on years of prior development. And investment means that the university or lab puts its own skin in the game, usually 15 to 20 percent of the research cost."

The need is monumental. Bloom points out that U.S. industry and government have used more than \$900 billion for medical research since 1970, and yet only a handful of real cures have been created.

"We still use insulin to treat chronic Type I diabetes," he says. "Of the top 50 adult cancers, not a single one has actually been cured. There are no safe, effective and affordable treatments for multiple sclerosis, ALS, lupus and other catastrophic diseases. Meanwhile, less than 5 percent of the National Institute for Health funding is directed at innovation, and academia offers few incentives for researchers to develop cures that can have immediate patient impact."

So it was that in 2005, Chicago CPA and real estate executive George Goldman and his wife, Judy, funded the non-profit Partnership for Cures, to be led by Bloom, a Chicago native and former key executive at Bausch & Lomb, Kemper and CAN Bebi HealthPro. Since that time, deploying only \$13 million in partnership and matched funding, he has directed successful repurposed drug programs to effectively create advanced treatments for ALPS, familial dysautonomia, multiple myeloma, lung cancer and multiple sclerosis.

And the results? Remarkable. Some of the highlights:

- Researcher Dr. David Teachey at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia had a theory that the existing drug Rapamycin could be applied to the dreaded children's disease ALPS. "The PFC funding helped my research plan when no one else would," says Teachey. "In less than 24 months, I had the evidence that this drug could significantly reduce ALPS in mice, and began to use it for my patients who had not responded to any other treatment. Now that initial \$35,000 investment, matched by a research institution, has transformed the lives of thousands of children worldwide."

ALPS patients historically have faced 18 hospital visits per year costing \$150,000; the average cost of Rapamycin treatment saves more than \$100,000 per patient.

- In Chicago, with a son, Andrew, fighting dysautonomia -- a disease of the nervous system and blood pressure that often takes the lives of kids before they reach puberty -- parents Ann and Ken Slaw sought out the partnership and initiated a special fund to research a remedy for this classic orphan malady. This enabled researchers to investigate four botanical medicines that create a vital missing protein for these patients, and it now has vastly improved Andrew's length and quality of life, allowing him to finish high school.

But Bloom, 54, is just getting warmed up. He has just launched the Patient Impact Initiative, which is designed to raise \$100 million through a consortium of philanthropists, research institutions and industry to support an intensive five years of "rediscovery research." For this he's looking for new backers plus added support from existing sponsors like Harris Bank, Grant Healthcare Foundation and LUNGeivity in Chicago and the Rockefeller Brothers Fund.

Current projects, he says, could help patients with children's genetic diseases, Type I diabetes, lung cancer, blood cancer and a range of autoimmune diseases.

"The irony in all this," Bloom confesses, "is that anybody who wanted to could do this. And rarely do we challenge a researcher who says he doesn't have time to help us."

To find out more, contact Dr. Bloom at 312-696-1366 or [Bruce@4cures.org](mailto:Bruce@4cures.org)

