

ACHIEVING CURES TOGETHER

APRIL 2021 NEWSLETTER



ACT'S LATEST WEBINAR ON COVID VACCINES: HOW THEY WORK, WHAT WE KNOW & WHAT WE DON'T

In February, ACT hosted a webinar surrounding the COVID Vaccines. Guest speaker, Dr. Alexander Khoruts shared the history behind vaccine development, how it has evolved over time, the intricacies of the COVID virus and the varying formats of different vaccines both in development and being administered.

Dr. Khoruts also shared a new clinical trial his team at the University of Minnesota's Microbiota Therapeutics Program is investigating. Researchers are studying immune response to the vaccine, while looking at multiple factors including prior COVID illness, which vaccine was administered, and patients with underlying conditions requiring immune suppressant medications. The study is still open for new participants who have not yet been vaccinated but hope to soon. If interested in participating in the study, contact us at info@achievingcures.com.

If you missed the webinar, you can view the recording by registering at: www.achievingcures.com/webinar/february2021



SAVE THE DATES

With spring upon us, it is the perfect time to dust off your running shoes and hit the trails! ACT is thrilled to announce we will be Charity Partners for both the **2021 Colfax Marathon in Denver, Colorado** and the **Medtronic Twin Cities Marathon** this fall.

Due to COVID, the traditionally springtime Colfax Marathon has transitioned to the weekend of October 15-17, 2021. Send us a note at info@achievingcures.com if you are interested in running and we'll send you registration details as soon as it opens later this spring!

The Medtronic Twin Cities Marathon weekend is slated for October 2-3, 2021! Race organizers are offering both in-person and virtual race options for runners, with safety precautions in place for in person races. We have spaces open for the Marathon & 10-Mile race and are looking for runners to join our team. There is no fundraising requirement to run on our team, but team members that raise \$1,200 or more will have their standard race entry fee reimbursed. Visit www.achievingcures.com/2021tcmarathon to sign up for our team and receive our charity code for the official race registration.

Contact us at info@achievingcures.com with any questions!



MEDTRONIC
TWIN CITIES
MARATHON
WEEKEND

OFFICIAL 2021
CHARITY TEAM

Thank
You

MILLION DOLLAR GOAL

Over the past five years, the Achieving Cures Together Community has united under the mission to save lives by advancing microbiome research. Through your support, **we have raised over \$1,000,000! THANK YOU!** Your contributions supply lifesaving microbial therapeutics to patients suffering from antibiotic resistant *C. difficile* infections and to clinical trials around the country.

As the only academic based donor program and microbial therapeutic manufacturer, your support provides the only option many patients have for treatment. Thank you for being the fuel that continues moving ACT forward, saving lives and advancing research to find cures.



MEET OUR NEW INTERN, STACEY DAI

Hi, my name is Stacey and I am a senior at the University of Minnesota studying psychology, public health, and learning technologies. I am passionate about psychology and health research, and I am also interested in learning about design.

After graduation, I hope to use my understanding of both of these different fields to create helpful solutions and experiences for people to improve lives. In my free time, I enjoy drawing, learning how to take pictures, and exploring new coffee shops. I am looking forward to learning from and connecting with the Achieving Cures Together community!



THE DOCTOR'S

CORNER

Updates from the UMN Microbiota Therapeutics Program

Fighting C. difficile infections

Microbiota transplant treatments have been put on hold in most of the US due to COVID. However, we continued to provide this curative therapy to Minnesota patients free of charge for the transplant material. We have also extended a helping arm to our clinical collaborators Dr. Monika Fischer (Indiana University), Dr. Colleen Kelly (Brown University in Rhode Island), and Dr. Jessica Allegretti (Harvard University). All treatment outcomes are tracked in a prospective registry that was started in the summer of 2019. Patients are periodically contacted over the course of a year so that we learn more about the impact of this treatment. Currently we have over 200 treatments recorded in this registry. Overall, we have treated close to 1,000 patients since the inception of our program with a cure rate of approximately 98%.

Active interventional clinical trials

- The placebo-controlled trials of microbiota transplant therapy for autism led by Drs. James Adams and Rosa Krajmalnik-Brown at the Arizona State University are on track with their recruitment goals. Preliminary results leading up to this trial showed marked improvement in GI function of these patients and some improvements in behavioral problems.
- Similarly on track are the placebo-controlled trials led by Dr. Armin Rashidi at the University of Minnesota in patients on intensive chemotherapy and receiving bone marrow transplantation for acute leukemia. We predict that keeping the gut microbes closer to health will decrease the common complications of infections and graft-versus-host disease in these patients.
- The placebo-controlled trial on ulcerative colitis led by Dr. Byron Vaughn at the University of Minnesota is finally back on track after we've been able to restore production of selected microbiota transplant material for these patients.

COVID research

Our Microbiota Therapeutics Team jumped into action to collaborate with Dr. Marc Jenkins and his team in the Center for Immunology at the University of Minnesota to study the immune response to COVID vaccines in healthy people and patients receiving various immunosuppressive therapies, such as those with inflammatory bowel diseases. These vaccines have been a giant leap in science and remain our best bet to beat the pandemic. However, we are learning while in active flight. For example, we have yet to learn how well the vaccines will work in immunosuppressed patients and whether some patients will require additional boosters going forward. In this research we are able to track the developmental steps of spike protein-specific B cells and antibody titers over time. The results will give us greater depth of knowledge about the immunology of the different vaccines in different patient populations.

Challenges

Our main challenge right now is to maintain our GMP facility and trained people for manufacturing the microbiota transplant products. This is a unique resource for research in the US that is independent of drug companies. It would not be in existence today without Achieving Cures Together!

- Dr. Alexander Khoruts, University of Minnesota



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