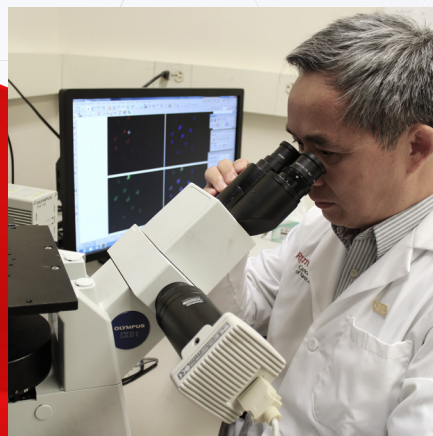


# Bringing Hope and Healing

*A Year in Review*

2024 - 2025



**RWJBarnabas**  
**HEALTH**



**RUTGERS HEALTH**  
**Rutgers Cancer Institute**





## Rutgers Cancer Institute: *Leading the Way to a Future Without Cancer*

As the state's *only* National Cancer Institute-designated Comprehensive Cancer Center, Rutgers Cancer Institute, together with RWJBarnabas Health, is poised to accelerate the development of innovative therapies and interventions, making a measurable difference in the lives of cancer patients and survivors. We are uniquely positioned to lead the charge against this devastating disease, especially within our diverse communities who face significant health disparities. With strategic investments in modernized research infrastructure, cutting-edge technologies, and world-class talent, we will accelerate breakthroughs in cancer metabolism, immunology, and treatments, ensuring no one is left behind. Together, we can accelerate progress towards a world free from the burden of cancer, driving innovation and delivering hope to those who need it most.

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Year after year, generous contributions from donors lead to meaningful strides in cancer research, diagnosis, and treatment. While research is supported through a combination of public, private, and institutional funding, philanthropic gifts like yours play a vital role in accelerating progress and expanding our impact.

This year, we are thrilled to have welcomed our first patients into the state-of-the-art Jack & Sheryl Morris Cancer Center, NJ's first and one of only 13 nationwide free standing cancer hospitals. As a National Cancer Institute (NCI) – designated Comprehensive Cancer Center, research is at the core of everything we do, where our discoveries become your care.

Our ability to translate scientific discoveries from the laboratory provides our researchers with more timely feedback, accelerating progress that can be translated into clinical practice.

Our teams of world-class scientists and clinicians are advancing research in areas such as cancer immunology, metabolism, immunotherapy, pharmacology, and precision medicine. These efforts are helping to bring new hope to patients and families across New Jersey and beyond.

Your support helps make this possible. Every gift contributes to discoveries, treatments, and lives changed.

**Thank you for being an important part of our mission. Together, we're building a future with better outcomes for all.**

Sincerely,



**Steven K. Libutti, MD, FACS**

William N. Hait Director, Rutgers Cancer Institute  
Vice Chancellor for Cancer Programs,  
Rutgers Biomedical and Health Sciences  
Senior Vice President, Oncology Services,  
RWJBarnabas Health

## A Message of Gratitude and Hope



As we reflect on the past year, marked by both challenges and remarkable progress, I am filled with immense gratitude for your unwavering support. Cancer continues to impact countless lives in New Jersey and around the world, but at Rutgers Cancer Institute we are responding with purpose and urgency—because research saves lives.

We are one dedicated team—your team, the state’s only NCI-designated Comprehensive Cancer Center, offering unparalleled expertise with world-class research and treatments. We are invigorated by the boundless possibilities for enhanced patient care with the opening of the Jack & Sheryl Morris Cancer Center, which will help us turn scientific breakthroughs into new and better treatments for cancer.

We stand on the shoulders of giants: legacy donors who have fueled our successes, founding faculty who established a strong scientific foundation and a culture of supportive and compassionate care, and key stakeholders and partners who have expanded our reach to every corner of New Jersey and beyond. To all this, we must add the most important inspiration of all: patients and families who have entrusted us with their lives.

As someone who understands how critical research is in the quest to conquer cancer, you know that we can’t afford to lose momentum. Your philanthropy fuels our work, driving discoveries and breakthroughs that bring hope and healing to our neighbors, our community, and our loved ones. You empower us to continue making progress and saving lives.

We won’t stop innovating until cancer is gone. Thank you for joining us in our quest to conquer cancer!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Loren Savage".



**Loren Savage**

Associate Vice President, Rutgers Health  
Chief Development Officer, Rutgers Cancer Institute

## Message from the Leadership Council Chair



he past year, the Rutgers Cancer Institute Leadership Council continued to play a vital role in championing the mission of Rutgers Cancer Institute and extending the reach of its life-saving work.

Specially selected for their commitment to the fight against cancer, the Council members represent a diverse cross-section of New Jersey's top industries, including pharmaceutical, finance, technology, legal, and more. By sharing their time, professional expertise, personal networks, and resources they help raise awareness of the center's groundbreaking work and connect more people to its mission.

In 2024 and 2025, we took an exciting step forward by expanding the Leadership Council, welcoming a new cohort of dedicated individuals. Our goal is to grow to 20 members whose diverse backgrounds and talents will add momentum alongside the Center's expansion in research and clinical care.

To stay informed and strategize ways to support and amplify the center's work, the Council meets regularly with Rutgers Cancer Institute's William N. Hait Director Steven K. Libutti MD, and the Philanthropy Office leadership team. One of the key responsibilities is hosting meaningful events that bring donors, researchers, and community members together. This past summer, the Council led a special gathering in Martha's Vineyard, where guests had the opportunity to hear firsthand about the progress being made in areas such as cancer health equity and innovation in clinical research.

We are deeply grateful for the generosity, leadership, and unwavering commitment of our Leadership Council members. Their involvement continues to shape the future of Rutgers Cancer Institute and the lives of those we serve.

On behalf of the entire Council, thank you for being part of this mission. Your support makes all the difference.

Warm Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Subha V. Barry".



**Subha Barry**  
Chair, Rutgers Cancer Institute Leadership Council

# 2024 - 2025 Leadership Council Members

**Subha Barry - Chair**

*President*  
Seramount

**Robert E. Campbell - Emeritus Chair**

*Vice Chairman of the Board (Retired)*  
Johnson & Johnson

**David Blatteis**

*Business and Healthcare Law Attorney*  
Norris McLaughlin

**Vanessa Broadhurst**

*Executive Vice President*  
*Global Corporate Affairs*  
Johnson & Johnson

**Cristal Downing**

*Executive Vice President and Chief*  
*Communications & Public Affairs Officer*  
Merck

**Lisa Evoli**

*Senior Vice President and Chief Human*  
*Resources Officer*  
Catalent

**William N. Hait MD, PhD**

*Chief Scientific Advisor*  
American Association for  
Cancer Research  
*Founding Director*  
Cancer Institute of New Jersey  
(now Rutgers Cancer Institute)

**Caroline Helmy**

*Director of U.S. Net Revenue*  
*Management*  
Zoetis

**Duncan MacMillan**

*Co-Founder (Retired)*  
Bloomberg LP

**Paul Mignon**

*President Global Deployment Solutions*  
Syneos Health

**Angus Miller**

*Senior Vice President -*  
*Wealth Management*  
Bank of America Merrill Lynch

**Richard Rosenzweig, Esq.**

*Strategic Legal Advisor and*  
*Former EVP, Corporate Development,*  
*General Counsel and Secretary*  
Dentsply Sirona

**Val Skinner**

*American LPGA Tour Professional Golfer*  
*Founder*  
Val Skinner Foundation

**Susan Wolford**

*Board Member*  
Savvas Learning Company,  
Lightbridge Academies,  
and PowerNotes



*Jack & Sheryl Morris Cancer Center / New Brunswick, New Jersey*

# Just the Numbers: 2024

## Research

Research Members

**320**

Research Projects

**412**



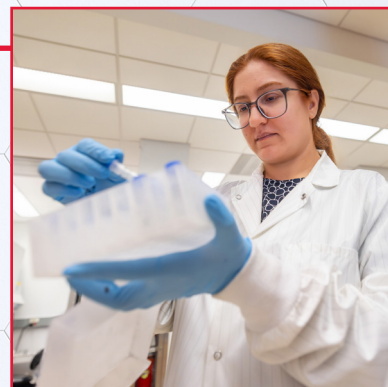
## Clinical Trials Active

Clinical Trials

**341**

Clinical Trials Enrollment

**5,388**



## Clinical Care\*

Pediatric Patients

**3,042**

Adult Patients

**103,879**

New Patients Visits

**51,721**

New Analytic Cases

**12,399**



*\*Across all of RWJBarnabas Health*

# Tomorrow's Treatments Today:

## National Excellence in Research and Patient Care

Rutgers Cancer Institute is New Jersey's only National Cancer Institute (NCI)-designated Comprehensive Cancer Center, a distinction that fewer than two percent of cancer centers nationwide hold. This reflects the rigorous work of researchers and staff who prepare a comprehensive application every five years.

### **Bench to Bedside and Back Again**

Designed with intentional proximity between researchers and clinicians, the new Jack & Sheryl Morris Cancer Center embodies the idea of "bench to bedside and back again" with discoveries in the lab driving new treatments for patients, and clinical experience sparking the next big research question. It's a collaborative cycle deeply woven into the fabric of Rutgers Cancer Institute and RWJBarnabas Health.

### **A Vision in Progress**

The new research floor at the Morris Cancer Center was intentionally built to support cutting-edge research, with state-of-the-art laboratories to host ten additional research teams in the Institute's original building which is

connected by a skybridge. Through clinical trials research in the Morris Cancer Center and across our health system, coupled with the day-to-day interactions among our scientists and clinicians, our work is to translate discoveries into clinical practice – transforming the way we treat cancer.

### **Translating Science into Therapies**

Howard S. Hochster MD, FACP,

Distinguished Professor of Medicine,

Associate Director for Clinical Research and Director, GI

Oncology, Rutgers Cancer Institute and Director of Oncology Research, RWJBarnabas Health, is currently leading microbiome research across multiple oncology teams. The research focuses on how cancer surgery, particularly in the gastrointestinal

tract, affects the microbiome.

"We're trying to understand how to support good bacteria after surgery and during treatment," explained Hochster. "The goal is to develop a therapeutic product that could improve recovery and outcomes. That kind of work starts in the lab, but it's shaped by what we see in patients."

**Clinical trials are critical for advancing the treatments that will help everyone with cancer.**

*- Howard S. Hochster MD, FACP*

### **Clinical Trials:**

#### **Tomorrow's Treatments Today**

Hochster is also a strong advocate and leader for clinical trials, where laboratory ideas are put into practice in patient care. "When I started in oncology 40 years ago, there was one drug for colon cancer. Now, there are twelve," he said. "Every one of them was approved through a clinical trial. Clinical trials are critical for advancing the treatments that will help everyone with cancer. And not only that, but it's also only by enrolling in a clinical trial that you can get tomorrow's treatment today."

The Morris Cancer Center's integration of inpatient, outpatient, radiation, and research services within a single footprint enables more efficient, patient-centered clinical trials. Hochster points to Peptide Receptor Radionuclide Therapy (PRRT) as one example—a form of targeted radiation therapy in which proteins carry radioactive isotopes directly to tumors.

#### **Basic Science with Patients at the Core**

Zhiyuan Shen MD, PhD, Associate Director for Basic Research at the Rutgers Cancer Institute and Professor in the Division of Radiation Cancer Biology in the Department of Radiation Oncology, and in the Department of Pharmacology at Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School conducts research at the molecular level,

studying how genomic instability drives cancer and how cancer cells respond to DNA damage.

"Although I focus on basic research, I always have patients in mind when I formulate hypotheses and design experiments," Shen said. "These are fundamental questions, but they're directly tied to why some patients respond to therapy and others don't."

Research continues in full force, rooted in our legacy research building and intersected throughout the Morris Cancer Center and across RWJBarnabas Health, moving toward a future where discovery and care are more connected than ever.



# Shifting the Standard:

## How Clinical Research is Advancing Treatment for Small Cell Lung Cancer

At Rutgers Cancer Institute, research is more than science - it's a pathway to hope. This past spring, that hope became reality for Joseph Bailey, who in 2022 was diagnosed with metastatic Small Cell Lung Cancer (SCLC), a fast-moving disease and the deadliest form of lung cancer with historically limited treatment options. Thanks to his enrollment in a clinical trial at Rutgers Cancer Institute, Bailey gained early access to a promising new therapy and, in the process, helped shape better outcomes for patients with SCLC.

Tarlatamab is a type of immunotherapy that helps the body's immune system recognize and target the cancer. In 2023, Bailey became one of about 30 participants to enroll in a Phase 1b, early-stage clinical trial studying the combination of Tarlatamab and other treatments that help the immune system fight the cancer, with and without chemotherapy. This study was foundational: not only did it provide insight into how the new drug might work in combination with other treatments, it also contributed valuable safety and dosing data that helped fuel further investigation.

"This has been a patient population for whom we have not seen advances in cancer care in decades," said Missak Haigentz Jr. MD, Chief of Thoracic and Head and Neck Medical Oncology at Rutgers Cancer Institute and Clinical Director of Oncology

Integration at RWJBarnabas Health. "This trial represents the power of early-phase clinical research to transform Small Cell Lung Cancer treatment. It's inspiring to see our patients directly contributing to discoveries that could shift the standard of care."

Bailey, while on this treatment, received outpatient care at the Jack & Sheryl Morris Cancer Center, showed tumor regression and durable disease control for more than two years. He reports strong quality of life and enjoys camping, skiing, attending concerts, and sitting down for dinner with his wife. Grateful for this second chance, he serves as an advocate for cancer research.

"Being part of this trial gave me access to a treatment that's worked for me," said Bailey, expressing pride at championing "something bigger than myself" and an eagerness to "share my story for anyone who is hesitating to join a clinical trial."

At Rutgers Cancer Institute, innovation doesn't stop with the drug itself. Following its FDA approval in May 2024, Haigentz and Michael Kane, RPh, BCOP, Executive Director of Oncology Pharmacy Services and Research Pharmacy, Rutgers Cancer Institute developed a plan to administer Tarlatamab as a complete outpatient treatment care, making Rutgers Cancer Institute the first center in the tri-state

area to do so. Hospitals across the region, including nationally recognized cancer centers, have since contacted them for guidance on replicating this approach.

Behind every treatment milestone is a foundation of research that is designed, tested, and brought to life through collaboration between scientists, clinicians, philanthropists and brave patient volunteers. Their courage and curiosity fuel the discoveries that bring us closer to a cure. Together, we can ensure that more patients—today and tomorrow—have access to the most promising care science has to offer.



## Donor Support in Action: Stefanie Lampf Kennedy Foundation Fuels Lung Cancer Research

Under Haigentz's leadership, the Lung/Thoracic Oncology Program continues to expand its clinical trial portfolio and push the boundaries of cancer research. Philanthropic partners are playing a critical role in advancing this mission. The Stefanie Lampf Kennedy Foundation's generous \$250,000 pledge to lung cancer research is a catalyst for advancing research and lifesaving discoveries at Rutgers Cancer Institute. This transformational gift will directly support the Lung/Thoracic Oncology Research Program to support the growth of innovative and collaborative research and improve outcomes for patients in New Jersey and beyond.

The Stefanie Lampf Kennedy Foundation was founded in 2023 in memory of Stefanie Lampf Kennedy, who passed away from a rare form of lung cancer at the age of 39, leaving behind her husband, three children, her siblings and parents. The Foundation's mission is to support lung cancer research so that no parent will ever have to lose their child to cancer.

***“As New Jersey’s only NCI-designated Comprehensive Cancer Center, our patients have access to innovative clinical trials and the most advanced surgical expertise. The incredible science and breakthroughs happening within our Urologic Oncology Program is being translated into new treatments for our patients. It takes a team, including our talented surgeon-scientists and researchers, survivors, and continued support from the Rutgers Cancer Institute giving community, to bring more possibilities and hope to our patients facing cancer. We are grateful to our donors who support our work.”***

Thomas Jang MD, MPH, FACS,  
Professor and Chief of Urologic  
Oncology, Rutgers Cancer  
Institute, and Program Director  
of Urology Residency Program at  
Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson  
Medical School

## Patient-Centered Solutions: Advancing Bladder Cancer Care

Bladder cancer is among the most common cancers in the U.S., with non-muscle invasive bladder cancer (NMIBC) accounting for almost 75 percent of newly diagnosed bladder cancer. Recurrence and progression are concerns in patients with intermediate- and high-risk NMIBC.

For years, these patients were often treated with Bacillus Calmette-Guérin (BCG), a type of immunotherapy delivered directly into the bladder. However, due to long-standing BCG shortages and varied patient responses, our urology oncology team and researchers across the country are exploring more tailored and effective solutions, including AI-powered diagnostics and alternative drug therapies.

### **Alternative Intravesical Therapies and AI**

One clinical trial is exploring a combination of gemcitabine and docetaxel (GEMDOCE) that is delivered directly into the bladder in place of BCG. “We are strong supporters of a Phase III study called BRIDGE, which is measuring event-free survival in patients with high-grade non-muscle invasive bladder cancer who have not previously received BCG treatment,” said Saum Ghodoussipour MD, Director of Bladder and Urothelial Cancer Program, Rutgers Cancer Institute and Principal Investigator of the clinical trial. “Our goal is to determine which therapy helps patients remain cancer-free longer and ultimately have better long-term outcomes.”

In parallel, Artificial Intelligence (AI) models are used to study images of bladder cancer tissue at high magnification. The AI model looks closely at tumor cells and their surroundings to find signs that may predict how well a patient will respond to treatments like BCG or GEMDOCE. In a study with nearly 1,000 patients, Vignesh Packiam MD, Director of Clinical and Translational Research in Urologic Oncology, used AI to predict which treatment would work better. Patients with a certain AI-identified biomarker did better with GEMDOCE than BCG, while those without it had similar results with either treatment. This could help doctors choose the best treatment for each patient.

### Other Therapies in Development

There are several other translational studies that the team is working on, researching genomic tumor characteristics, circulating tumor DNA in the blood and urine, and even growing patient-derived tumor organoids to predict response to specific therapies.

“As we move into precision medicine, having more effective tools will help us give the best treatment to each individual patient.” says

Packiam. “Using biomarker-directed treatments and more cutting-edge therapies, will allow patients to have more bladder-sparing approaches.”

Rutgers Cancer Institute has an extensive portfolio of therapy options for NMIBC which can often be given

to patients at satellite centers close to their home. There is also an array of clinical trials with multiple options for patients at each disease state they may be in. Combined with surgical expertise

and translational biomarker- directed management, Rutgers Cancer Institute offers a premiere destination for patients diagnosed with NMIBC.

Through relentless research and state-of-the-art surgical expertise, we are leading the way in developing more precise, patient-

centered care for bladder cancer—offering new possibilities to those who need it most.

**Our goal is to determine which therapy helps patients remain cancer-free longer and ultimately have better long-term outcomes.**

*- Saum Ghodoussipour MD*

### Bladder Cancer 10th Leading Cause of Cancer Deaths

**84,000+**

New Cases

**17,000+**

Deaths

*\*Estimated rates in the US for 2025 according to the NIH National Cancer Institute.*

# Cancer Game Changers: Shedding Light on Health Equity and Systemic Barriers

“Cancer Game Changers” is an event series that brings together visionary individuals united in reshaping the future of cancer research and care. These gatherings offer donors and community members unique access to Rutgers Cancer Institute experts leading groundbreaking innovations.

In June, the Development Office hosted “Cancer Game Changers: Cancer Health Equity”, an inspiring evening that highlighted Rutgers Cancer Institute’s efforts to eliminate cancer disparities across New Jersey through the work of the Cancer Health Equity Center of Excellence (CHECoE). The program illuminated the critical role philanthropy plays in finding solutions that research grants alone cannot fund—especially in reaching underserved communities, building trust, and supporting rapid innovations that address community needs.

The event was moderated by Antoinette (Nan) M. Stroup PhD,

Assistant Director of Catchment Area Surveillance & Research, who led an eye-opening conversation with Rutgers Cancer Institute experts focused on turning the tide of inequity.

Opening the dialogue, Anita Kinney PhD, RN, FAAN, FABMR, Director of

ScreenNJ and the CHECoE and Associate Director for Population Science and Community Outreach and Engagement at Rutgers Cancer Institute, spoke candidly about the sobering reality that poverty, race, geography and other social drivers continue to determine cancer outcomes. Rutgers is addressing these barriers through culturally tailored education materials, digital chatbots to explain cancer risk,

outreach programs, and cutting-edge research that reach underserved communities. Kinney emphasized that every screening completed and barrier removed translates into better cancer outcomes — more lives saved, more families kept whole.

**... a pledge that healing can happen in every zip code, that innovation belongs in every neighborhood, that no one, no matter who they are or where they come from will fight cancer alone...**

*- Atiba Page, Sr Mgr, Talent Sourcing & Engagement, Bristol Myers Squibb, Event Attendee, Stage IV Cancer Survivor*

“Equity in cancer prevention means ensuring that zip code, income, or background never determine who survives,” said Kinney. “We are already seeing cancers detected earlier and outcomes improve across New Jersey — but sustaining this progress depends on continued investment in CHECoE’s work. Every dollar spent on prevention and equity saves lives. Continued funding ensures that our communities don’t lose the ground we have fought so hard to gain.”

Building on Kinney’s message, Mariam Eskander MD, MPH, Assistant Director, Clinical Affairs, CHECoE reflected on the poor survival rates of patients who arrive at the clinic with late-stage cancers that could have been prevented or diagnosed earlier. Her research focuses on the impact of systemic barriers and building pathways to increase access to care and clinical trials, especially for underserved and underrepresented populations.

Shining a spotlight on the power of community-driven data, Sarah Scharf, DrPH, MPH, Executive Director of CHECoE and Deputy Director of ScreenNJ, delivered a compelling look at CHECoE’s statewide reach. Over the past eight years, the team has cultivated trusted relationships with more than 375



partners across all 21 counties in New Jersey. Their efforts have reached nearly 200,000 community members and 40,000 care providers, facilitated screenings for over 110,000 individuals, and led to the detection of hundreds of cancers, changing lives in the process. “The numbers are powerful, but what stays with me most,” said Scharf, “are the people we aren’t able to reach, not because the need isn’t there, but because we don’t have the funding or capacity to reach everyone who needs us, a gap we can close with increased support and investment.”

“Cancer Game Changers: Cancer Health Equity” was more than an evening of dialogue—it was a call to action. And it reinforced a vital truth that while grants power research, philanthropy powers transformation and sustained action. It funds the trust-building, the innovation, and the long-term community presence that are critical to closing the gap.

## Immediate Impact: Pediatric Stem Cell Transplantation and Cellular Therapies

At Rutgers Cancer Institute, research drives breakthroughs in treating children with cancer and blood disorders. As New Jersey's only NCI-designated Comprehensive Cancer Center, we never waver in our determination to develop effective therapies that are personalized for children and adolescents.

The New Jersey Pediatric Hematology and Oncology Research Center of Excellence (NJ PHORCE) at Rutgers Cancer Institute, supported by the State of New Jersey, ensures that children, adolescents, and young adults across the state benefit from research-driven advances in care, including precision medicine, stem cell transplantation, CAR T-cell therapy, and gene therapy. These are not distant possibilities; they are making an impact today.

Niketa Shah MD, Chief of Pediatric Bone Marrow Transplantation and Cellular Therapies at Rutgers Cancer Institute, leads a team working closely with Bristol-Myers Squibb Children's Hospital at Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital. One of only two programs in the state to offer pediatric

cellular therapy and autologous and allogeneic blood and marrow transplantation, this partnership continues to advance therapies for children with high-risk cancers and inherited blood disorders.

"My vision is to offer stem cell transplants and cellular therapies to

our pediatric patients near their homes, eliminating the need for pediatric patients to travel far or out of state for treatment," said Shah. "This approach provides an opportunity to revive parents' dreams for their children."

CAR T-cell therapy is among the most promising

innovations, empowering a child's own immune cells to seek and destroy cancer. Rutgers Cancer Institute is also a certified Gene Therapy Treatment Center, exploring treatments that target the root causes of genetic diseases like sickle cell disease and thalassemia.

Pediatric cancer research receives far less federal funding than adult cancer research. But thanks to generous donors and partners - especially Embrace Kids Foundation, one of our

**This approach provides an opportunity to revive parents' dreams for their children.**

*- Niketa Shah MD,  
Chief of Pediatric Bone  
Marrow Transplantation  
and Cellular Therapies at  
Rutgers Cancer Institute*



largest and longest-standing supporters - private investment has helped strengthen pediatric cancer research at Rutgers Cancer Institute. “Supporting this work means helping kids live longer and healthier lives,” said Glenn Jenkins, Chief Development Officer and Acting Executive Director of Embrace Kids Foundation.

At Rutgers Cancer Institute, cutting-edge science, compassionate care, and committed donors make discovery possible. With every new study and clinical trial, the goal remains the same— to turn today’s research into tomorrow’s cures so children and adolescents have a future.

***“Embrace Kids had been making major gifts to Pediatrics at RWJBH and Rutgers since 1991. We made our largest funding commitment a decade ago to support top-notch physicians and researchers for pediatric oncology/hematology. The Embrace Kids Endowed Chair was established in 2018 and pivotal to recruiting Dr. Peter Cole as the medical and research leader in Pediatric Hematology/Oncology at Rutgers Cancer Institute. For 34 years, we have seen how excellent the care is for pediatric patient families on the RWJBH-Rutgers campus in New Brunswick. In continuing this tradition to keep pediatric patients local, we decided to support the bone marrow transplant and gene therapy programs which helped to recruit Dr. Niketa Shah.”***

**Glenn Jenkins**  
Chief Development Officer/Acting Executive Director,  
Embrace Kids Foundation



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