

YOUR SUPPORT CHANGES LIVES Impact Report 2018

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Rodger DeRose and Michele Pignatello

Your generosity helps people with disabilities recover function, regain independence, and live to the fullest. Each day, Kessler Foundation researchers and grant makers change lives, thanks to you.

Inside our Impact Report 2018, you'll find highlights of what we have accomplished together, and stories of those whose lives you've changed. Your support enables our scientists to research groundbreaking rehabilitation interventions and helps our grant makers create pathways to employment and independence for people with disabilities.

We could never achieve so much without you.

With gratitude,



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YOUR SUPPORT IMPROVES THINKING, LEARNING, AND MEMORY



Nancy Chiaravalloti, PhD

With a grant from the Dean Janeway Fund at the New Jersey Health Foundation, Nancy Chiaravalloti, PhD, is expanding her research on learning and memory. With support from donors like you, Dr. Chiaravalloti, director of Neuropsychology, Neuroscience and Traumatic Brain Injury Research, developed a memory training technique called the modified Story Memory Technique (mSMT) that teaches people to use context and imagery to learn and remember information in daily life.

"Our research has shown that mSMT improves learning and memory in people dealing with the cognitive challenges of multiple sclerosis and traumatic brain injury. Brain scans confirm the improvements,

and show prolonged benefits," said Dr. Chiaravalloti. "This new funding enables us to test this technique in older adults."

Minimizing the Impact of Aging

The study will compare two groups—healthy older adults and those with mild cognitive impairment—and look long term at the development of cognitive impairments, including dementia. "We know that as we age, our ability to remember declines, a process that adversely affects our daily lives. This raises important questions: Can mSMT help older adults? Could this low-cost, noninvasive treatment help people minimize age-related loss of cognitive function? If we find that mSMT is effective in this population, this could be an important step toward maintaining quality of life for older adults," Dr. Chiaravalloti explained. "Scientific evidence indicates that cognitive interventions like mSMT can delay the onset of cognitive problems that affect one in four older adults," she noted. "Combating these challenges of aging is an exciting prospect that we are anxious to explore."



Rosemarie Collopy

Forging a New Path after the Diagnosis of MS

In 1991, life was full for Rosemarie Collopy. An active cyclist, she was married, had satisfying work as a dental hygienist, and a new baby. Then came the challenges of multiple sclerosis (MS). For Rosemarie these were fatigue, weakness, balance problems, and difficulties with thinking and remembering. "The cognitive symptoms were the most frustrating and eventually forced me to give up my job," she recalls. Today, Rosemarie does her best to find fulfillment and help others with MS find their way, too. Seeking ways to 'pay it forward,' she discovered MS research at Kessler Foundation and, over the years, has participated in more than 20 studies.

"While research is designed to collect data that benefits the population with MS, some studies have benefited me personally," said Rosemarie. "Studies that challenged me to recall lists of items, for example, taught me ways to organize different types of information."

Besides volunteering for research, Rosemarie helps others with MS as a patient advocate. "I encourage people with MS to achieve their goals. The research at Kessler Foundation helps them do just that."

While research is designed to collect data that benefits the population with MS, some studies have benefited me personally. Studies that challenged me to recall lists of items, for example, taught me ways to organize different types of information.

-Rosemarie Collopy



Rosemarie Collopy and Ekaterina Dobryakova, PhD

Can Motivation for Reward Reduce Cognitive Fatigue?

A team of researchers at Kessler Foundation showed that the prospect of a monetary reward stimulates the area of the brain related to symptoms of cognitive fatigue, a common, often disabling symptom of MS. Participants underwent fMRI (functional magnetic resonance imaging) scans while performing challenging cognitive tasks. Compared to those given no prospect for reward, participants motivated by reward experienced significant reductions in fatigue associated with activity in that area of the brain. According to lead investigator Ekaterina Dobryakova, PhD, this study shows the potential for treating cognitive fatigue in MS with noninvasive, nonpharmacological interventions.

Your Philanthropy Launches Careers

The Hearst Foundations have partnered with Kessler Foundation to ensure the future of rehabilitation research by generously funding two specialized fellowships in cognitive rehabilitation. **Each fellowship funds two years of training for a promising young scientist.**

Kessler Foundation's first Hearst Fellow, Silvana Costa, PhD, is already discovering ways to improve the lives of people with cognitive disabilities caused by MS. During her fellowship, which she completed, Dr. Costa studied the effects of cognitive rehabilitation, correlating clinical findings with fMRI studies conducted at the Rocco Ortenzio Neuroimaging Center. Her success enabled her to attract major federal funding to continue her work as a research scientist at Kessler Foundation.

"The second Hearst fellowship, which begins in July 2018, will foster the professional growth of another promising young researcher," said Dr. Chiaravalloti.

YOUR SUPPORT IMPROVES QUALITY OF LIFE FOR **PEOPLE WITH SPINAL CORD INJURY**



Lipogems study participant Joe Monteforte, Trevor Dyson-Hudson, MD, and Gerard Malanga, MD

With funding from the Derfner Foundation, Kessler Foundation is expanding research in the promising field of regenerative medicine. One innovative study, led by Trevor Dyson-Hudson, MD, director of Spinal Cord Injury Research at Kessler Foundation and Gerard Malanga, MD, a well-known expert in orthopedic and sports-related injuries at Kessler Institute for Rehabilitation, is well underway.

Are there new ways to treat shoulder injuries in wheelchair users with spinal cord injury? Can we safely relieve pain and avoid surgery?

Drs. Dyson-Hudson and Malanga are testing a treatment for joint pain, called Lipogems, in wheelchair users with spinal cord injury. Surgery is often the only option for patients whose symptoms persist despite medication and physical therapy, according to Dr. Dyson-Hudson. Lipogems entails harvesting, processing, and injecting of people with disabilities.

a sample of a person's own fat, under ultrasound guidance, into the shoulder joint. Fat cushions damaged tissues, fills structural defects, and contains cells and compounds with healing properties.

"Because wheelchair users have a high risk for poor outcomes after surgery, exploration of alternative treatments is extremely important," explained Dr. Dyson-Hudson. "The participants treated so far have reported less pain and greater range of motion," he noted.

These promising results have inspired the Derfner Foundation to fund a postdoctoral fellowship, deepening its commitment to Kessler Foundation's research in regenerative medicine.

"Training and mentoring young scientists is key to making gains in this nascent field," said Jay Lieberman, trustee of the Derfner Foundation. Mentored by Drs. Dyson-Hudson and Malanga, the first Derfner-

The scientists at Kessler Foundation are well equipped to harness the tools of regenerative medicine for the benefit

—Jay Lieberman

Lieberman fellow, Nathan Hogaboom, PhD, is exploring upper extremity complications in individuals with spinal cord injury. Dr. Hogaboom came to Kessler Foundation from the University of Pittsburgh, where he studied injury prevention in wheelchair users, and conducted research on the influence of biomarkers on the degenerative processes of the shoulder joint and its surrounding tissues.

Dr. Hogaboom's expertise expands the capacity of Kessler Foundation's research to investigate promising regenerative medicine rehabilitation. This new fellowship is an important step toward exploring how regenerative medicine can improve quality of life for people with spinal cord injury.

"The scientists at Kessler Foundation are well equipped to harness the tools of regenerative medicine for the benefit of people with disabilities," remarked Lieberman. "We look forward to following their progress."

Changing Society for the Better through Research



Joe Monteforte

Chronic shoulder pain was a way of life for Joe Monteforte, a wheelchair user with a spinal cord injury sustained in a construction site accident. With a history of shoulder trauma caused by power lifting, strenuous workouts, and now, wheelchair use, Joe resorted to oral and topical pain medications, cortisone injections, and finally, rotator cuff surgery on his left shoulder that took months to heal. Joe dreaded the prospect of surgery on his right shoulder. With his doctor's encouragement, Joe became involved in research at Kessler Foundation, where he learned about Lipogems, an experimental shoulder procedure. Joe was the first to volunteer. He received a single injection of his own fat tissue into his right shoulder. "After the procedure, I drove home. No hospital stay was required, and recovery time was minimal," he reported, "unlike the nine months of recovery after shoulder surgery."

At his six-month follow-up visit, Joe's doctors were pleased. He was pain free. "I'm back to doing things I haven't done in years," he remarked, "like working out and getting a good night's sleep. I can wheel five miles without pain and enjoy outings with my wife. Most important, my attitude has changed–I feel great!"

His attitude has changed in other ways. Before his injury, Joe was skeptical about the need for research. "Getting involved at Kessler Foundation changed my view," he admitted. "Research changes our society for the better, just like technology."

YOUR SUPPORT HELPS PEOPLE REGAIN MOBILITY—AND INDEPENDENCE

With your support, researchers at Kessler Foundation have been studying how robotic exoskeletons can benefit individuals paralyzed by spinal cord injury or stroke. With a grant from the Reitman Foundation, they are extending their research to adolescents and young adults with traumatic brain injury.

Helping Children with TBI Through Technology



Kiran Karunakaran, PhD and Karen Nolan, PhD

"Our research shows that robotic exoskeleton training has the potential for tremendous impact on walking ability, community participation, and quality of life for individuals with brain injury," explained Karen Nolan, PhD, senior research scientist in Human Performance and Engineering Research. For this pilot study, adolescents and young adults train in the robotic exoskeleton over a four-week period. Participants wear a Fitbit at home, school, and in the community to record their activity. This information enables Dr. Nolan and her team to measure improvement in steps taken and increases in activity.

"We know that repeated practice with the exoskeleton can lead to recovery of motor ability," said Dr. Nolan, "but we don't know how this occurs." With additional funding from the New Jersey Health Foundation, Dr. Nolan and postdoctoral fellow Kiran Karunakaran, PhD, are studying brain changes in motor recovery using a portable, noninvasive technology called fNIRS (functional near infrared spectroscopy). The fNIRS is easy to use and provides data comparable to functional MRI.

"Understanding the changes in brain activity after injury and during recovery will help us design more effective rehabilitation," noted Dr. Karunakaran.

Changing His Path After Brain Injury

A brain injury in 2016 altered the life of Gary Valinoti, but with expert medical care and comprehensive rehabilitation, his life is now set on a new path.

Gary's injury interrupted his studies at Loyola College in Maryland, where he was a senior majoring in finance. His injury was severe, necessitating multiple skull and facial surgeries and many months of rehabilitation.



Gary Valinoti and Karen Nolan, PhD

Through Kessler Institute for Rehabilitation, Gary learned about opportunities to volunteer for research studies at Kessler Foundation. He has participated in three studies of robotic exoskeletons. In the latest, funded by the Reitman Foundation, he walks in the EksoGT, made by Ekso Bionics.

Gary's progress in rehabilitation translates to progress in other areas of his life. He's finishing his degree online, with his mother's help, and keeping up with old friends. Reflecting on his experience, he says he's learned gratitude. "I'm grateful for where I am today, and I've met some wonderful people."

Gary's message for other survivors: "Persevere," he advises, "and with rehab, things will get better." His rehabilitation has inspired him to change his career path from finance to medicine. His goal is to become a doctor specializing in rehabilitation. "I want to help people recover from serious illness and injury, so they can find their new paths," Gary said.

YOUR SUPPORT HELPS BREAST CANCER SURVIVORS RECLAIM THEIR LIVES



Guang Yue, PhD

Despite advances in the early detection and treatment of breast cancer, many women live with physical and cognitive symptoms long after their treatment is complete. Kessler Foundation researchers are seeking new ways to help breast cancer survivors combat these lasting symptoms through rehabilitation.

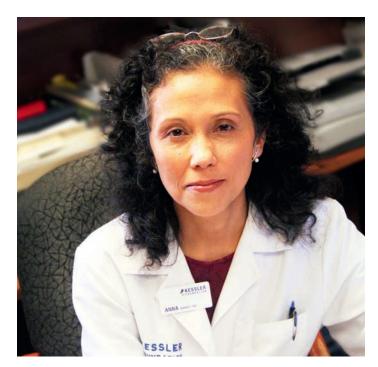
"The effects of breast cancer are complicated by the side effects of treatment," according to Guang Yue, PhD, director of Human Performance and Engineering Research at Kessler Foundation. Chemotherapy and radiation take their toll, causing weakness and fatigue that prolongs recovery. "Here at Kessler Foundation, we are looking at ways to counteract these treatment-related side effects," said Dr. Yue.

Angela Smith, a study participant, and a research coordinator at Kessler Foundation, advised breast cancer survivors not to ignore persistent symptoms of weakness and fatigue. "It's been almost 10 years since my own breast cancer diagnosis. But, even so, I still feel the effects of treatment on my energy levels." This research seeks to help breast cancer survivors restore their active lives.



Angela Smith

YOUR SUPPORT HELPS STROKE SURVIVORS REBUILD THEIR LIVES



AM Barrett, MD

Stroke can affect a person in many ways. To help stroke survivors achieve the fullest possible recovery, Kessler Foundation scientists challenge themselves to view rehabilitation holistically. For example, Kessler researchers and clinicians came together to present "Life after Stroke," an event showcasing their collective expertise for community leaders. That meeting led to a unique pilot studyfunded by Louise and Robert Herz, Liz and David Lowenstein, and other benefactors.

The study explores the connections between deficits in cognition and mobility experienced by many stroke survivors.

Exploring New Connections to Improve Stroke Recovery

Researchers are comparing outcomes of stroke survivors with and without gait training in the EksoGT, a robotic exoskeleton. Collaborating on this study are AM Barrett, MD, who is director of Stroke Rehabilitation Research and an expert in recovery after right-brain stroke, and Karen Nolan, PhD, senior research scientist, who specializes in applying robotics in rehabilitation research.

Can individuals with spatial neglect safely use EksoGT? Does gait training have a beneficial effect on recovery of their spatial function? Can recovery be detected using brain imaging?

Answering these questions will further our understanding of stroke and lead to new avenues of collaborative research.

Integrating Research-Proven Treatments into Clinical Care Across the Nation

To improve the lives of stroke survivors, developing new and effective treatments is just the first step. Integrating treatments into clinical care is where the real challenge lies.

Helped by a grant from The Wallerstein Foundation for Geriatric Life Improvement, methods developed by the Stroke Rehabilitation Research team at Kessler Foundation are being used to diagnose and treat spatial neglect, a common complication of right-brain stroke, at rehabilitation facilities in New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Missouri, Florida, Pennsylvania, and Maryland.

"More patients are getting the care they need as therapists learn to use the Kessler Foundation Neglect Assessment Process, (KF-NAP[™]) and the Kessler Foundation

With this nationwide expansion, stroke survivors will and the workplace.

Prism Adaptation Treatment (KF-PAT[™])," said Dr. Barrett. "By continuing to collect data, we will document the impact on longterm recovery and the cost of care."

The Wallerstein Foundation is supporting a national practice-based network to increase the detection of spatial neglect and provide prism adaptation treatment to many more people. "As the only clinical rehabilitation program of its kind," said Dr. Barrett, "we are seeing an increase in referrals of patients seeking this state-of-the-art care."

The potential for KF-NAP and KF-PAT to improve care and recovery time while containing costs has prompted interest from a dozen rehabilitation facilities around the nation. "With this nationwide expansion, stroke survivors will recover more quickly, achieve greater independence, and successfully return to their homes, their communities, and the workplace," Dr. Barrett predicted.

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-Dr. AM Barrett

Overcoming Obstacles to Recovery

Mike Davis was mid-way through the swim portion of a triathlon when the unexpected happened. A hemorrhagic stroke left him paralyzed on the left side, and unable to speak clearly. While recovering at Kessler Institute for Rehabilitation, he learned about stroke research at Kessler Foundation.

Recovering from stroke is a long process, often requiring extensive therapy to restore a range of functions essential to



Mike Davis

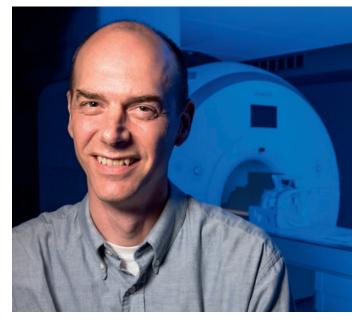
daily life—from standing and walking to communicating, thinking, and remembering. To address the many needs of stroke survivors like Mike, our researchers define deficits in mobility and cognition, and develop new strategies to improve rehabilitative care for faster, more successful outcomes.

Mike trained in Indego, one of several robotic exoskeletons being tested at Kessler Foundation. He described his experience standing and walking in Indego as more than just physical. "It was empowering," he recalled. "I felt confident again." He also volunteered for a study on reading difficulties, an often-overlooked complication that can limit recovery.

By working hard with the clinicians and researchers at Kessler, Mike has made a remarkable recovery. He's back at work, plans to compete in an upcoming triathlon, and has joined Kessler Foundation's Board of Trustees.

"I've learned how important research is," Mike said. "The research at Kessler Foundation is critical to understanding the many effects of stroke and developing new treatments for people like me."

YOUR SUPPORT FUELS RESEARCH ADVANCES



Glenn Wylie, PhD

Aided by state-of-the-art neuroimaging techniques, Kessler Foundation scientists are learning how injury and disease affect brain function. Understanding underlying mechanisms is fundamental to devising successful treatments for people dealing with the effects of traumatic brain injury, stroke, multiple sclerosis, Gulf War Illness, cancer, and spinal cord injury.

The Rocco Ortenzio Neuroimaging Center, established with the generosity of the Rocco and Nancy Ortenzio Foundation and Select Medical, has greatly enhanced the impact of Kessler Foundation's rehabilitation research.

"Our neuroimaging capabilities allow us to look at underlying mechanisms and propose ways to treat disabling conditions," said Dr. Glenn Wylie, Ortenzio Center director. "Because we're well equipped to quickly test those theories, our research rapidly translates into improved care."

Our neuroimaging capabilities allow us to look at underlying mechanisms and propose ways to treat disabling conditions.

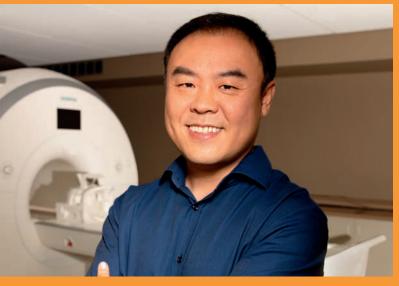
—Dr. Glenn Wylie

Finding New Ways to Overcome Disabling Fatigue

Are there ways to treat the fatigue—physical and mental—that hinders progress during rehabilitation? This is a question our scientists are answering using the unique capabilities of the Ortenzio Center. our work. By studying the brain activity patterns associated with fatigue, we've discovered a common fatigue network in individuals with multiple sclerosis, traumatic brain injury, and Gulf War Illness. Further research may yield a common strategy for counteracting disabling fatigue."

"Now we're using neuroimaging to study the two different types of fatigue-mental and physical—and how they interact," Dr. Wylie continued. We're looking at things that affect fatigue—exercise, for example, and motivation," he added. "We're finding that with the prospect of a reward, people can overcome fatigue. By measuring brain activity associated with reward and effort in individuals with fatigue, we are on the path to developing promising new treatments."

Using Neuroimaging to Understand Disease Progression in MS



Brian Yao, PhD

The deep structures of the brain called the basal ganglia may provide a clue to the cognitive symptoms that affect so many with MS. With a generous grant from the National MS Society, Brian Yao, PhD, medical physicist and manager of the Ortenzio Center, is conducting one of the first studies of abnormal iron concentrations in the basal ganglia in individuals with multiple sclerosis (MS).

"Although we suspect that the basal ganglia are involved in cognitive fatigue, their role in MS has not been explored," explained Dr. Yao. "In MS, we see abnormal deposits of iron in these deep brain structures, which may correlate with cognitive fatigue. Exploring these deposits using the resources of the Ortenzio Center will help us understand disease progression in MS. Our goal is to develop interventions to reduce fatigue."

YOUR SUPPORT CREATES AN INCLUSIVE WORKFORCE

For an individual with disabilities. reaching independence means more than restoring function; it means engaging in community, school, and the workplace. With your support, Kessler Foundation funds innovative programs that bridge the gap between individuals with disabilities and meaningful employment or education. Together, we have connected individuals with disabilities to employment in highgrowth sectors: retail, food service, and information technology.

A Pathway to Employment

Kessler Foundation has provided seed funding to help Hudson Community Enterprises (HCE) launch three social enterprise businesses in the digital content management sector. Today, these ventures are self-sustaining, and their success inspired a unique training program in graphic arts and digital production printing—Digital Career Pathways.

To ensure trainees successfully transition to the workplace, a job placement team

develops industry relationships and sources job opportunities. Plus, each trainee receives "wraparound" support-medical, legal, financial, and counseling services.

"Kessler Foundation has provided valuable funding to create a platform for training and coordinating internships and job placements in a vital and growing industry," remarked Joe Brown, HCE president.

Thanks to you, Kessler Foundation can champion innovative employment solutions and raise awareness of the often untapped, but powerful, talent pool that is people with disabilities.

Kessler Foundation has provided valuable funding to create a platform for training and coordinating internships and job placements in a vital and growing industry.

-Joe Brown

A Clear Path to Independence

Lakisha Richardson, who lives with a seizure disorder, overcame numerous challenges to enter the workforce and gain independence. In 2007, when Lakisha was first introduced to Hudson Community Enterprises, she lacked confidence, skills, and experience.

With counseling, wraparound support, and her own determination, Lakisha built the skills and experience to succeed. Over the years, she worked various jobs within HCE's social enterprise businesses—funded by Kessler Foundation and donors like you—to gain increased responsibility each step of the way.

In 2017, Lakisha enrolled in Digital Career Pathways and graduated as valedictorian, well prepared to compete for positions in the field. With her new resume and increased confidence, she landed a full-time job at Staples, a critical step toward independence. Because of your generosity, Kessler Foundation provides funding to organizations helping individuals with disabilities like Lakisha, on the path to employment.



KESSLER SOCIETY Giving that Changes Lives

Leadership gifts from Kessler Society members provide Kessler Foundation with a base of financial support that provides our scientists and grant makers with critical resources. These funds propel new research discoveries and fund innovative employment initiatives that help people with disabilities reimagine what's possible and realize the extraordinary. Year after year, these generous friends demonstrate a belief in our mission and a commitment to solidifying our role as a global leader in rehabilitation research and disability employment.

Membership in the Kessler Society is extended to friends who make annual gifts to Kessler Foundation totaling \$500 or more. Members change the lives of people with disabilitieshelping people take their first steps, improve their memory, communicate, and overcome obstacles to employment.

Kessler Society members honor Henry H. Kessler, MD, who founded Kessler Institute for Rehabilitation after serving in World War II. His vision was

"...to treat the whole individual...to help him or her successfully regain physical, mental, social, vocational and economic usefulness to the fullest possible degree."

Today, Dr. Kessler's vision is reflected in the institutions that bear his name—Kessler Foundation and Kessler Institute, which consistently ranks as one of the best rehabilitation hospitals in the nation. Our donors help fulfill his legacy.

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Stroll 'N Roll Reaches New Heights

In September, our 16th Annual Kessler Foundation Stroll 'N Roll attracted the largest number of people ever. More than 600 people of all ages and abilities gathered in Verona Park for this important community event, which raised more than \$154,000 to further our research and employment funding.



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