Susan G. Komen’s Sustained Commitment to Young Investigators Worldwide

As with all biomedical research, successful research for breast cancer relies on the talent and dedication of the scientific workforce, as well as a continued supply of highly trained researchers who can bring new insights to our understanding of breast cancer biology and advance the translation of these insights into improved health. Supporting opportunities for these young investigators has long been a key component of Susan G. Komen’s research investment.

Susan G. Komen is the leading non-profit funder of breast cancer research, worldwide. Essential to their global mission of ending breast cancer forever, Komen has awarded over 30 international young investigators with Post-Doctoral Fellowship, Dissertation Research and Career Catalyst Awards. These awards help researchers gain a foothold in the profession and help fortify their paths to independence in breast cancer research. In fact, preliminary results from a recent survey reveal that 88% of Komen Post Doctoral Fellowship award recipients (both international and national) have stayed in the field of breast cancer.

Awardees have studied with distinguished mentors such as Dr. Ramon Colomer, Head of the Medical Oncology Division at the Hospital Universitario La Princesa in Madrid, Spain and Dr. Nancy Hynes of the Freidrich Miescher Institute for Biomedical Research in Switzerland. Dr. Albana Gatelli received a Komen Post Doctoral Fellowship award in 2010 under the mentorship of Dr. Hynes to study the Role of Ret Receptor in endocrine resistant breast cancer. Based on the findings generated during the period of her fellowship, Dr. Gatelli plans to continue this research as an independent investigator in her own country of Argentina.

In 2013, Susan G. Komen awarded two Career Catalyst grants to Spanish investigators Dr. Aleix Prat, of Vall d’Hebron Institute of Oncology and Dr. Eva Gonzalez Suarez, of the Bellvitge Institute for Biomedical Research.

Susan G. Komen also provides conference support, enabling young investigators to travel to scientific conferences to present their work, interact with some of the most influential breast cancer researchers in the world, meet with peers and develop their enthusiasm for breast cancer research. Since 2009, Komen has funded the American Association for Cancer Research’s (AACR) Scholar in Training Awards to enhance the education and training of early career scientists by providing financial support for their attendance at AACR conferences and meetings. To date, over 35 young investigators from a dozen European countries have received these awards. Komen has also provided funding in multiple years for the European Society for Medical Oncology’s IMPAKT Breast Cancer Conference in Brussels, Belgium, awarding over 65 travel scholarships including many awards to young scientists from European countries including Austria, Italy, Poland, Romania and the United Kingdom.

Essential to their global mission of ending breast cancer forever, Susan G. Komen has designated 2014 as the Year of The Young Investigator and redoubled its commitment to supporting young investigators worldwide. Research funding opportunities are released in late spring and applications are awarded, based on merit, across the globe.