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MCCRF Awards Arjun Gupta, M.D. the Sarah DeBord Memorial Grant to Improve Cancer Care

The Minnesota Colorectal Cancer Research Foundation has awarded Arjun Gupta, M.D., the Sarah DeBord Memorial Grant for 2023. Dr. Gupta will use the grant funds to study the time burdens of cancer care faced by people living with colorectal cancer. This award is given annually with support from the Colon Cancer Coalition.

“The Sarah DeBord grant will allow me to further my long-term goal of recognizing, understanding, and minimizing the time burdens of cancer care,” Dr. Gupta stated. “Patients with cancer spend a substantial amount of time on medical care. This includes time in clinics for scans, infusions, and seeing the clinical team, and time in waiting rooms and in parking lots, and in travel. Time is spent in ERs and hospitals, and on phone calls with insurance companies and with pharmacies to transfer prescriptions. We conceptualize these time demands as the ‘time toxicity’ of cancer care. Decreasing time toxicity is an important priority for patients, care partners, and oncology clinicians. I am excited to receive the Sarah DeBord Memorial Grant to improve the quality of life for persons with colorectal cancer.”

People with colorectal cancer are particularly vulnerable to ‘time toxicity’ issues, as chemotherapy treatment is often administered over multiple days, and patients can experience burdensome symptoms and complications. Dr. Gupta’s research may help impact best practices for oncology care in Minnesota, and give patients more time during treatment to spend as they wish, rather than in doctors offices and in hospitals.

Dr. Gupta and his team will use both qualitative and quantitative methods to first understand patterns of time toxicity. The data his team collects will help improve cancer care options for patients, influence clinical trials design, and promote innovation in care delivery.

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The **Minnesota Colorectal Cancer Research Foundation** is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit foundation which funds colon and rectal cancer research in Minnesota. The mission of the foundation is to build a community of colorectal cancer survivors, and their family and friends, who will work passionately to raise money to fund research that will improve the survival and quality of life of people with colon and rectal cancer. The Sarah DeBord Memorial Grant is given annually to promote research projects that support access to care

Arjun Gupta, M.D. is an Assistant Professor of Internal Medicine at the University of Minnesota. He is a gastrointestinal medical oncologist, a symptom management enthusiast, and a health services researcher. His research specifically examines cancer care access and delivery, the costs of cancer care, and the hidden burdens imposed on and faced by people with cancer and their caregivers while receiving this care. Dr. Gupta’s research is at the intersection of oncology, supportive care, and care delivery. His primary focus is identifying, understanding, and improving the “hidden toxicities” of receiving cancer care. Many of the burdens of a cancer diagnosis and treatment on a patient and caregivers extend beyond the physical effects of the cancer itself. These include financial toxicity and caregiver burdens. The ultimate goal of this work is to improve the quality of life for people with cancer and their loved ones.

The Colon Cancer Coalition is a **Program Partner** with the **Minnesota Colorectal Research Foundation**. They are based in Minneapolis, Minn., and are dedicated to encouraging screening and raising colon cancer awareness. Their signature Get Your Rear In Gear® and Tour de Tush® event series are volunteer-driven in communities throughout the United States. Each year they aim to grant more than \$1 million to local community programs that will raise screening rates, increase awareness, and educate the public about the signs and symptoms of this disease.

Sarah DeBord was diagnosed with colon cancer in November 2011. She was 34 with two very young boys. Her symptoms had been dismissed because, like most people diagnosed under the age of 50, she seemed to be “too young” for colon cancer. We lost Sarah to this terrible disease in July of 2020. Although her cancer and her treatment were physically and emotionally demanding Sarah lived her life with passion; traveling the world, working relentlessly to raise awareness about colorectal cancer, helping thousands of people diagnosed with the disease and raising her two beautiful boys. The grant in her memory is to fund research on access to care, palliative care and quality of life.