# 22nd Annual Fanconi Anemia Research Fund Scientific Symposium Overview

Approximately 200 FA researchers, clinicians, board and family members attended the 22nd Annual Scientific Symposium in Minneapolis, Minn., Oct. 21 - Oct. 24, 2010.

The Fund hosts this annual meeting to bring together many of the world's top FA researchers to assess the current state of FA research and plan next steps. Forty oral abstracts were presented on topics including:

- new FA genes
- gene repair
- stem cells, germ cells and signaling
- molecular diagnostics
- nuclear crosslink metabolism
- transplantation, and
- cancer.

Four special sessions, featuring talks about radiation mitigation, gene therapy and homologous recombination, dyskeratosis congenita, and induced pluripotent stem cells and RNA interference were spaced throughout the four-day conference. A panel of transplant physicians from FA transplant centers in the U.S., Brazil and Europe rounded out the agenda.

Of particular interest were discussions about the role of HPV in FA patients and the questions about vaccinations. Family Meeting attendees heard from several physician presenters at Camp Sunshine that they should consider vaccinating boys and girls as early as 6 years of age. Discussions at the symposium suggest more data are needed.

Also of note were presentations about the potential value of iPS cells for FA research and treatment. Although FA cells are generally resistant to reprogramming and much work remains, the rapidly evolving technology for the production of clinically useful, patient-specific cells is promising.

The symposium was preceded by an exciting first meeting of researchers from Harvard, the University of Oregon and Oregon Health & Science University. This consortium received a $10.7 million grant from the National Institutes of Health to test thousands of new and existing drugs that could potentially prevent complications associated with FA.

Finally, a highlight of the symposium was the dinner program at which Dave and Lynn Frohnmayer, co-founders of, and the driving force behind, the Fanconi Anemia Research Fund, received the Sui Generis Award. Sui Generis is Latin for "in a class of its own," and from the prolonged standing ovation and heartfelt words of congratulations and renewed commitments to FA research, it was evident that this one-time-only award was well deserved. Also recognized was Ralf Dietrich, the Executive Director of the German Family Support Group. Ralf received the Fund's Distinguished Service Award for his tireless devotion to and advocacy for FA patients. The Fund's Discovery Award was given to Detlev Schindler, MD, Christopher Mathew, PhD, and Helmut Hanenberg, MD, and their respective lab partners for their collective work to identify the 14th Fanconi anemia gene, RAD51C.