

# Planting the Seeds of Success

Early funding allows Dr. Eddie Garon to push forward a promising therapy



It has been nearly a decade since Dr. Eddie Garon received his Tower Career Development Grant. One of the first grants Dr. Garon received would set his career in motion and allow him to pursue his passion for research. Receiving a young investigator grant is not only monetary validation, but it also fast-tracks vital research and exploration of new and innovative approaches to defeating cancer. Dr. Garon credits the Tower grant with giving him the confidence to conduct important research. He also says that the funds allowed him time away from the clinic to focus on his passion for discovery.

Dr. Garon acknowledges the pressures of being a researcher in his early thirties—a time when people normally consider starting a family. The idea of devoting additional time to research and not generating clinical revenue can be very daunting.

There used to be a large chasm between the work at the bench (research) and at the bedside (clinical). Physician-scientists like Dr. Garon consider themselves translational researchers in that they can bring both sides of the equation into balance. As a result, we have seen the pace of discovery steadily increase.

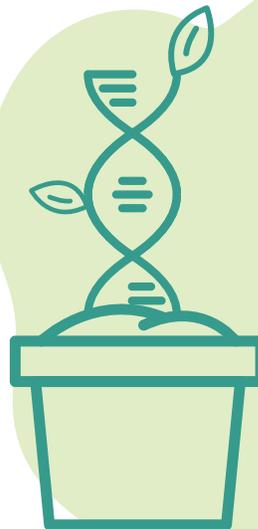
The other reason for the increasing pace of scientific breakthroughs is that researchers are continually building on earlier findings by other researchers. For example, now that it is no longer a question of whether immunotherapy can be used to combat cancer, researchers are working on refining the approach and looking for markers to determine the best candidates for the treatment.

When discussing career highlights with Dr. Garon, he mentions a K-Series grant through the National Institutes of Health (NIH), which he received shortly after the initial Tower grant. The NIH grant allowed Dr. Garon to buy more time out of the clinic to focus on his research and to get his master's degree. In 2012, Dr. Garon joined Dr. Toni Ribas at UCLA and enrolled the first cohort for an immunotherapy drug to treat lung cancer.

This drug, now known as Keytruda, has produced very promising and durable responses in very low

life-expectancy patients.

Dr. Garon is now focusing on finding biomarkers for immunotherapy. He recently received a large R01 grant from the National Cancer Institute (NCI) to continue this research. He is very appreciative of the early support he received from Tower. He feels it is important for people to understand that while seed grants are not likely to change the paradigm on cancer, they do make it possible to spend more time away from the clinic, in pursuit of research and discovery. Early funding provides opportunities to create data that can be leveraged for larger funding.



**“Seed money for young investigators not only allows them to pursue a singular idea, it provides a vital boost to set them on a lifetime of exploration.”**