

Mesothelioma Applied Research Foundation

the national non-profit working to eradicate mesothelioma as a life-ending disease

■ research ■ education ■ support ■ advocacy

Breath of Hope

Summer 2006

Memorial Day - Honor & Action

Christopher Hahn

Memorial Day just passed, a time we honor our nation's fallen war heroes. Here at the Meso Foundation, we know many of these heroes. Approximately one-third of U.S. citizens who die each year of meso were exposed to asbestos on U.S. Navy ships or shipyards. Service to country is costing U.S. veterans and shipyard workers their lives, just as if they had been lost on a battlefield.

From the late 1930's through the late 70's, asbestos was used heavily on Navy ships. It was used in engines, nuclear reactors, decking materials, pipe covering, hull insulation, valves, pumps, gaskets, boilers, distillers, evaporators, soot blowers, air conditioners, rope packing, and brakes and clutches on winches. In fact it was used all over Navy ships, even in living spaces where pipes were overhead and in kitchens where asbestos was used in ovens and in the wiring of appliances.

As a result, U.S. servicemen and shipyard workers were heavily exposed. A study of just one Navy shipyard, at Groton, Connecticut, found that over one hundred thousand workers had been exposed to asbestos there over the years. Following meso's ten to fifty year latency period, many of the millions of exposed servicemen and shipyard workers nation-wide are now developing the cancer.

These are the people who defended our country and built its fleet. They are heroes who served from below decks as enlisted men, to the very top of the Navy. Admiral Elmo Zumwalt, Jr., served as Commander of the U. S. Naval forces in Vietnam, and was promoted to Chief of Naval Operations and member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. This powerful leader of the Navy, renowned for his leadership in protecting the health of servicemen and veterans, died of mesothelioma in 2000, just three months after being diagnosed.



At age 18, Lewis Deets volunteered for the Navy. He willingly put his life on the line to serve his country in Vietnam, and was decorated for his valiance in combat operations. While Lewis was serving as a ship Boilerman aboard the USS Kitty Hawk in the Gulf of Tonkin, a fierce fire broke out. Two

sailors were killed and 29 were injured, including Lewis. After the fire, he helped rebuild the boilers, replacing the burned asbestos blocks. At age 55, Lewis Deets developed mesothelioma, and died four months later.

On May 24, a few days before Memorial Day, I was honored to share the tragic facts about Admiral Zumwalt, Sailor Deets, and thousands of other U.S. servicemen in testimony I gave before the U.S. Senate Defense

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Believe In A Cure

From the Executive Director

With this issue of Breath of Hope you will notice our new look and logo, and may wonder what's behind the change. As I wrote last issue, the Foundation's Board of Directors held an intense planning retreat early in the year, to set guideposts and goals for the future growth of the organization. Doing so required a look back at where we have come from and it was clear that the Foundation, which was formed in 1999 to promote research urgently needed to develop treatments for meso, had evolved into much more.

Soon after the birth of MARF, I was hired as the Executive Director and first staff member. During those initial years I worked to raise money and begin to fund research. But I spent an equal amount of time talking to patients and their families, who were reaching out due to the lack of other resources. The Foundation that was conceived as a mechanism to drive the research process was also quickly becoming a vital source of information and support for meso patients and their families. With the ever growing need, Rob Grayson was added to the Foundation's staff as Director of Development. The Foundation continued to grow. We moved from funding two hundred thousand dollars per year in grants to one million, and more and more patients and families were contacting the Foundation seeking support and information. An administrative position was added to manage the donation processing and then Jill Wayne, Community Liaison and Patient Advocacy Director, was hired to help directly meet the needs of the meso community.

In addition to a growing staff and research grant program, the Foundation continued to grow its services. In 2004 we began the annual International Symposium on Malignant Mesothelioma, which offers meso patients and their families a unique opportunity to interact with leading meso authorities and learn about the most advanced options in meso treatment, as well as to connect with others who have been touched by this terrible disease. The Foundation also began advocating in Washington, DC and around the country for the need to fund meso research at the Federal level.

Thus, by the Board Retreat it was clear that the Foundation was leading the charge in areas of meso research, education, support, and advocacy. It was time to make this a clear part of our mission going forward and to outwardly communicate this to the community.

Part of this is to address the acronym MARF. While the word "MARF" has become closely associated with the Foundation, it does very little to actually communicate who we are or what we do. Our entire name, "the Mesothelioma Applied Research Foundation," does a much better job, but often it is an unwieldy mouthful. The solution... a new moniker, "the Meso Foundation." We are still the Mesothelioma Applied Research Foundation, but in place of the shorthand MARF we will identify ourselves as the Meso Foundation – this immediately communicates a message that MARF could not. Along with the new moniker is an updated logo. This new logo highlights the building blocks that make up the Foundation's work. So it is with fondness that we retire the MARF acronym and the flying dots logo. However, the name of the organization, our mission, and the services and support we provide will endure and grow. We are excited about this change and about continuing to work to meet the needs of the meso community.

Yours in the fight,

Chris



Meso Foundation Staff

Christopher Hahn
Executive Director
c-hahn@marf.org

Rob Grayson
Director of Development
r-grayson@marf.org

Jill Wayne
Community Liaison &
Patient Advocacy Director
j-wayne@marf.org

Maja Belamaric
Development Associate
m-belamaric@marf.org

Trish Cerin
Administrative Assistant
t-cerin@marf.org

Newsletter Production

Contributors
Christopher Hahn
Rob Grayson
Klaus Brauch
Jill Wayne

Design & Layout
Rob Grayson

Comments or Questions
Contact:
Meso Foundation
(877) End.Meso toll free
newsletter@marf.org

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Patient Profile

Carl Roca 5 Year Survivor

For 38 years, Carl Roca, who today is 64, was a pipefitter. Like millions of other tradespeople, shipyard workers, and servicemen, he was exposed to asbestos daily. In 1986, Carl's pipefitters union sent out information about the dangers of asbestos and advised workers to go for a "screening". During Carl's screening he was told that he had some scarring on his lungs from the asbestos exposure but nothing too serious. A year later the union suggested he go and see a pulmonologist they had a connection to in Baltimore. Carl went to see the pulmonologist just to be sure that he was ok, and was assured that his condition was stable.

Later, in 2001 Carl began experiencing shortness of breath and chest pains. He went back to the pulmonologist, who was aware of his past work as a pipefitter, and the scarring on his lungs from asbestos. Carl's pulmonologist performed three thorocenteses to drain fluid build-up on his lungs, and a bronchoscopy.

Despite his documented exposure to asbestos and history of pleural scarring, doctors had no clue what was causing his symptoms. Worse still, instead of just doing a biopsy the surgeon took it upon himself to remove the "scarring" that he saw in the pleural cavity. The procedure, called a partial decortication, severely limited Carl's later treatment options. Decortication makes further surgery impossible. But surgery aimed at maximal removal of all tumor, either through pleurectomy – removal of the pleura, or pneumonectomy – removal of the entire lung, seems to offer the best chance of long term survival when combined with other therapies like chemotherapy and radiation.

Carl's doctor didn't seem to know any of this, and even proudly announced after the surgery that Carl "doesn't have cancer. I know cancer and this isn't cancer!" Only while checking out of the hospital did Carl and his wife Evelyn see the word "mesothelioma" scrawled on a piece of paper. It was up to the family to learn what a dark and foreboding diagnosis this was.

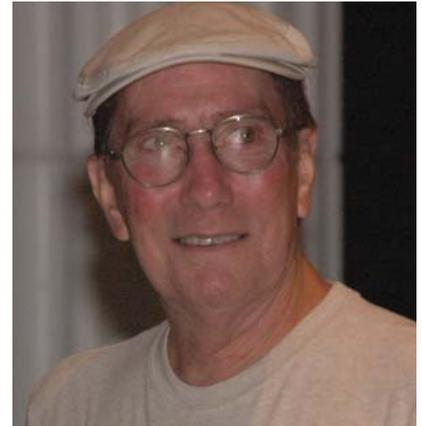
Carl and his family sought out the help of an oncologist in their hometown and talked about what to do next. The doctor told them that there were really no treatments available and that he would recommend doing nothing. "Unless," he continued, almost as an afterthought, "you would like to look into clinical trials." That was all Carl's daughter Sandy needed to hear. "It was hope

in a situation that seemed hopeless. It was a chance and that was more than we could ask for," she says. Sandy went home and hit the internet. She finally found the Meso Foundation and not only inspiration, but also a number of clinical trials for meso. She printed

out as much as she could and then went back to see the doctor with her father. This process helped Carl get into his first clinical trial. Iressa is an experimental drug thought to inhibit the epidermal growth factor that is overexpressed in meso tumor cells. Carl participated in this trial for nearly two years before his tumor showed any signs of growth. The family then sprang back into action looking for another trial. The next trial was Alimta and Cisplatin. Carl completed seven cycles, but wasn't able to tolerate this treatment as well and ended up with severe neuropathy. However, his tumor had stopped growing and remained stable for the next two years. Only recently did Carl's tumor show signs of growth – and once again the family is on the hunt for their next course of treatment.

Carl himself continues to spend most of his time talking to people about mesothelioma. He speaks to newly diagnosed patients who are not sure what to do next. His message is, whatever you choose to do – do something! He works to educate others by talking to various community groups and labor unions, including his old pipefitters union. In 2005 the Graham Cancer Center awarded Carl the "community excellence service award" for all that he does for other patients and the community.

Carl also is trying to raise awareness at the federal level. He writes regularly to government officials about the need to fund meso research. He has personally spoken to the senators from his home state of Delaware and writes to various newspapers and media outlets in the hopes that people will listen. Carl says, "It is time for the government to take responsibility and help us solve this problem by investing in the solution – research! It is research that made the clinical trials I participated in possible and I believe that is why I am still alive today."



Focus On Research

Given the tragic connection between meso and military service, it is appropriate that researchers affiliated with the Veterans Administration are on the forefront of exciting new meso research. Funded by a Meso Foundation grant, Dr. Richard Kornbluth and his team at the VA San Diego Healthcare System and the University of California have found a method for treating meso in mice that holds great promise for humans. Mice were injected with cells from an asbestos-caused meso tumor, and after several days tumors had formed. These tumors were then treated by injecting them every other day over ten days with new agents designed to stimulate the immune system.

The first agent studied is a new form of a molecule called 'CD40 ligand' or 'CD40L' which activates dendritic cells (DCs). The DCs in turn activate killer T cells to recognize and kill the tumor. Whereas CD40L injections were effective against other types of tumors in mice, they had no effect on meso, confirming meso's general resistance to immunotherapy. However, the researchers found that injecting the tumors with short segments of bacterial DNA called 'CpG', another DC stimulant, resulted in regression of the tumors in about 60% of mice. These cured mice lived more than 5 months without the tumor coming back. Prior studies in mice had suggested that CpG could slow the growth of meso, but these results show that at an increased frequency and dose, CpG can be much more effective than previously realized.

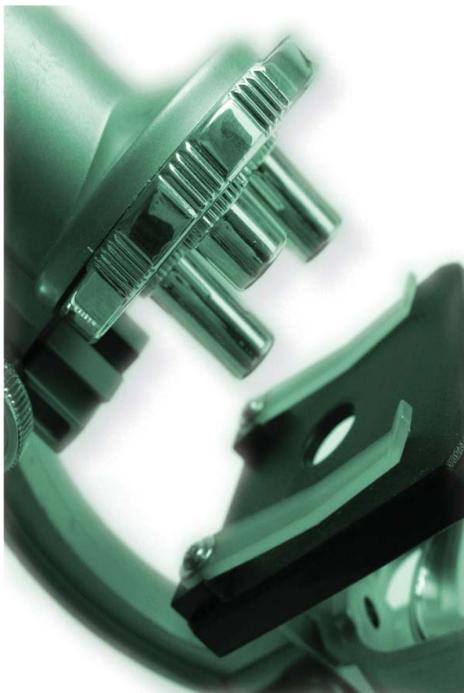
In addition, the investigators found that CpG and CD40L were synergistic and cleared the tumors faster than CpG alone. When the regressing tumors were examined under a microscope, killer T cells were seen infiltrating the tumors, and macrophages (which eat dead cell debris) were also very prominent. When the mice cured of meso were re-challenged with more meso tumor cells, they rejected these cells and never formed a recurrent tumor. While these results in mice cannot be directly extrapolated to widespread human meso tumors in the pleura and peritoneum, they point to a new strategy for treating meso that warrants testing in humans. Dr. Kornbluth's exciting data were selected for oral presentation at the prestigious annual meeting of the American Thoracic Society this past May, and

have been submitted for publication in a major journal. According to Dr. Kornbluth, "Without Meso Foundation funding, this promising research would never have been done."

Dr. Cecilia Camacho-Hubner at William Harvey Research Institute, University of London, is pursuing a very original and promising line of investigation to kill meso cells. Cancer cells have a voracious appetite for glucose, and in fact are able to manufacture and secrete their own insulin for unlimited access to the fuel they require. They also have their own independent insulin-like growth factor (IGF) system which provides the cells with an unlimited stimulus for growth. With a Meso Foundation grant, Dr. Camacho-Hubner is studying ways to control these processes in mesothelioma.

Dr. Camacho-Hubner is evaluating the effects of various IGF binding proteins in regulating tumor cell growth and apoptosis (programmed cell death). The most important finding of her studies so far shows that one of these proteins, recombinant human IGF BP-3, increased meso apoptosis in vitro by as much as 60%. She and her team have also identified the cellular pathway by which this protein induces apoptosis. Furthermore, they have discovered that cells treated with this protein, plus a second one, TGF-beta1, show a marked decrease in colony formation, which is a vital process for tumor growth. With these discoveries, Dr. Camacho-Hubner is opening up

a whole new potential approach to treating meso. Her novel results were presented at the 4th International Symposium on Targeted Anticancer Therapies held last March in Amsterdam, and will be presented more fully at the Meso Foundation/IMIG Mesothelioma 2006 meeting in Chicago.



ATTENTION RESEARCHERS:

Meso Foundation now accepting applications for \$100,000 meso therapy research grants.

Deadline: August 15, 2006.

details at www.curemeso.org

Foundation Seed Money Yields \$1 Million NIH Grant

on Thoracic Computed Tomography Scans.” In Dr. Armato’s own words, “the Meso Foundation provided me with a tremendous opportunity to initiate a line of mesothelioma research that is unique, and moreover has been quite successful. So successful that the work has yielded five published peer-reviewed papers, four proceedings papers, a review article, a book chapter, eight published abstracts, 12 talks at international scientific meetings, and two US patents.” The work has also now yielded a \$1 million dollar grant from the NIH!

The impact for meso patients is significant. The development of new active agents for meso makes adequate measurement techniques to assess tumor response to therapies more important. No standard protocol exists for the radiologic measurement of meso, and actual tumor volume is not presently part of clinical evaluation. A recent study, however, has shown a correlation between tumor volume and median survival,

In 2002, the Meso Foundation funded Dr. Samuel Armato to begin a new project, “Computerized Analysis of Mesothelioma

suggesting the importance of tumor measurement in evaluating patient prognosis.

With the new NIH funding, Dr. Armato and his team will take the computerized techniques for measurement of meso which he developed under the Meso Foundation grant, and investigate making them automated. This will allow radiologists to procure many measurements of a patient’s tumor with minimal time commitment. The automated techniques will identify the lung boundary, chest wall and mediastinum borders, and provide measures of the distance between the two borders as an assessment of the pleural thickening associated with meso. This will greatly enhance the utility of CT scans for meso patients. It will also reduce the data-acquisition time in clinical trials. By making the radiologic assessment of meso more efficient, Dr. Armato’s work will help establish improved treatments.

The Foundation also congratulates Dr. Steven Albelda and Dr. Michele Carbone, both of whom have just received prestigious NIH program grants for their very important meso research. The field of meso science is gaining stature, years of advocacy are raising awareness, and the NIH is beginning to respond.

International Symposium 2006

After two very successful years, we have exciting new plans for this year’s International Symposium on Malignant Mesothelioma, October 20 - 21, as it continues to unite, educate, and encourage the meso community. First, we will be in a new city, Chicago, at the beautiful Sheraton Chicago Hotel and Towers, right on the lake. Second, the Symposium will be held in tandem with the International Mesothelioma Interest Group scientific meeting. (IMIG is a group of scientists who meet every two years, and every sixth year in the U.S.) This will provide interaction with even more of the international community of meso researchers. At the same time, it will allow us to focus our meeting to provide high level scientific and medical information in a way that is most relevant and useful to the patient and advocacy communities.

The Symposium begins with experts discussing the growing scope of the meso tragedy in the U.S., overseas, and even in the developing world. Then, the world’s leading experts in their respective meso subspecialties will provide a complete scientific overview of the disease. This will enable patients, families, the advocacy

community, and front-line physicians to understand the biology and pathology of meso; current and developing methods to detect, diagnose, and treat it; symptom, side effect, and pain management; future therapeutic targets; and the status of new research.

Continuing one of the most popular elements of the past years, patients, caregivers, and those coping with loss of a loved one will have extended breakout sessions, fostering discussion of shared concerns, problem-solving, and friendship. A final session will be devoted to advocacy and activism. The formal agenda will conclude with the annual tribute ceremony. This is a special time to honor and remember those we have lost to the disease. As always, the Symposium will include many opportunities for socializing, celebrating the meso community’s successes, and making and renewing friendships. We look forward to seeing you!

For the program, lodging details and registration form, go to the Meso Foundation website:

www.curemeso.org

Volunteer News

5K Walk for Hope

Not pouring rain, nor hail nor ripping wind could keep family, friends, and members of the meso community from joining Janice Malkotsis and Erica Iacono at Eisenhower Park for the 5K Walk for Hope. The registration form said “rain or shine” and the 100 or so people who gathered on April 23rd at the Long Island, NY park to help raise \$19,582 for meso research didn't let the elements “rain on their parade.” After a successful raffle led by Janice's son, Billy, and her daughter, Sophia, participants took off with umbrellas, wind breakers and an unshakeable resolve to complete the walk.

Having both lost their fathers, Janice and Erica had decided they wanted to have an event to promote understanding, create awareness, and generate funds for research in memory of their dads and all those that have been lost to this disease. Everyone who was present on that cold Sunday morning was determined to make their event a success and help them fulfill their goals. Thank you Janice, Erica, and everyone who supported the event for your generosity and the amazing job you did; we look forward to next year's “sunny” 5K Walk for Hope.

Rockin' for a Cure

Meaghan Pagano wanted to do something to honor her Mother, Stephanie, who is fighting a courageous battle against meso since being diagnosed in December 2003. With the help of her dear friend, Teresa Schaberg, they hosted the Rockin' For A Cure dinner dance in St. Louis on May 20th. Over 100 people were “jumpin' and jivin'” to the sound of the Rufkar/Jackson Band. One of the highlights of the evening was the live auction emceed by Stephanie's dear friend, Maryellen Harvard. Guests were eager to support the Meso Foundation's research program after listening to Dr. Jeffrey Bradley and Dr. Ramaswany Govindan of Washington University School of Medicine speak about the important research the Foundation is funding. Maryellen skillfully auctioned off 21 items. Fellow meso patient Craig Kozicki was thrilled to have the highest bid on an authentic NFL game ball signed by Tory Holt and two tickets for an upcoming

Ram's game. We thank Meaghan, Teresa and all those that attended this event for raising over \$11,000 toward critical research.

Climb for a Cure

Some volunteers have dinner dances, some golf tournaments, others bowling events, but for Bob Linden, his son Bret, and good family friend Jim Meier, that would be too tame. They joined an expedition and after five days on safari they began the 19,563 foot climb to the top of the highest mountain in Africa, Mt. Kilimanjaro. “A Climb for a Cure” was the event they undertook to honor Bob's wife Sandy, a meso patient, and to raise funds for meso research for the sake of Sandy and all other meso patients.



The trek took five days and took the trio through three ecosystems; rainforest, desert, and glacier. It was a grueling and exhausting process made more difficult because the whole group had become sick. At 17,000 feet, Bob was too weak to continue and though Bret was not doing well either Bob encouraged him, “make it to the top, I really want you to do it.” Determined to continue for his mom and all

those suffering with meso, Bret finally reached the top of the mountain after 12 long hours. With pride he and the other climbers stood by the sign they had hauled up the steep incline declaring they had been victorious in their climb “to combat mesothelioma cancer.” The \$4,300 raised to date will help the Meso Foundation achieve that goal.

“A Breath of Hope” Benefit Dinner Dance

Sara Biddle lost her grandfather, Robert Kline, to meso in 2003. Most young people would have mourned their loss in private and gotten on with their lives. Not Sara, she wanted to “make a difference.” Sara competed and won the title of Miss Salem County using as her platform “Breath of Hope: Asbestos Exposure Awareness with a Focus on Mesothelioma.” In the last year Sara has had the opportunity to speak at many service group meetings, churches, and other organizations educating people on the disease and the need to fund research, and in April hosted the “Breath of Hope” Benefit Dinner Dance, raising \$5,100.

First Ever Federal Appropriation for Meso Research!

Of all the voices in Washington, D.C., the Meso Foundation is unique in emphasizing medical research funding as the most urgent and humane solution to the "asbestos problem". We have proposed the National Mesothelioma Research and Treatment Program (NMRTP), a comprehensive plan to stimulate meso research and development of new treatments, and we have been pursuing it through every federal avenue available. Last year, while much of the Senate was focused on the asbestos trust fund bill, we were urging Senators to address the tragic human impact of the disease itself.

As a result of these efforts, Congress has appropriated \$1 million to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), for a small but key component of the NMRTP, a national mesothelioma registry and tissue bank!

This appropriation is very significant for three reasons: (1) It is the first federal appropriation **ever** in U.S. history specifically for meso. It signals finally a willingness by Congress to acknowledge and address the problem, and so opens the door to further funding. (2) This new appropriation was made in a year of extreme cuts to other discretionary and entitlement spending, and thus is a huge success for the meso community. (3) The meso

registry and tissue bank which will be started under this appropriation will be an invaluable resource to meso researchers and clinicians developing and evaluating new treatments, and will encourage vital collaborations among them. Most European countries and Australia already have national registries. The U.S. registry will help reveal the incidence and patterns of the disease in the country. Its clinical data will help patients and their doctors determine the effectiveness of all the different procedures used at the various centers. The tissue bank will stimulate gene profiling and other meso basic science projects by making it more easy for the many interested, qualified scientists across the country to obtain sufficient samples for their research.

In April, NIOSH accepted applications from interested groups for a \$1 million grant to administer the registry and tissue bank. Based on our experience having piloted the National Mesothelioma Data/Tissue Bank in 2001, and the expertise of our Science Advisors, the Meso Foundation submitted an application. The Foundation was able to unite 17 of the country's major meso centers to collaborate on the proposal. NIOSH is expected to award the grant in late September. Whether the grant is to the Foundation or another group, this new funding for a national registry and tissue bank will benefit all meso patients, and it will be essential that all patients participate. We will have more details once the award is made.



Volunteer Event Calendar

Event	Date	Location	Contact
Zionsville Art Fair	June 23, 2006	Zionsville, IN	Molly Risk - Mccr425@msn.com
Raise to the Great Goshen Grill Out	August 12, 2006	Goshen, IN	Charles Rupley - crupley@aol.com
Sigma Chi Fraternity Dinner	September 16, 2006	Saint Louis, MO	James Cosentino - jrc1@cec.wustl.edu
Bio Care Golf Tournament	September 2006	Parker, CO	Sherry Fox - sfox@biocaresystems.com
Strike Out Meso Bowling Tournament	September 9, 2006	Sinking Spring, PA	Tina Hogue - calltina2travel@comcast.com
Fred Mirante & Rudy Barber Memorial Golf Tournament	September 2006	Tukwila, WA	Charles Barber - barbercv@hotmail.com
MacDaddy Golf Tournament	November 2006	Sunset Beach, NC	Ann Arnold - annearnold@atmc.net
Mesothelioma Monster Bowl	November 2006	Deluth, MN	Jodi Helmer - jodi.helmer@goodinco.com



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Mesothelioma Applied
Research Foundation
PO Box 91840
Santa Barbara, CA 93190-1840
(877) End.Meso toll free
(805) 563.8400 voice
(805) 563.8411 fax
www.curemeso.org

Memorial Day

continued

for the Department of Defense's Congressionally Directed Medical Research Program. Since 1992, the DOD has spent \$3.75 billion in biomedical research on various cancers and other diseases. But it has not yet invested anything in meso research, despite the military-service connection.

I urged the DOD to take a small step toward addressing the meso tragedy by including meso in the DOD's Peer Reviewed Medical Research Program. This modest request would not add even a dollar to the federal budget. It would merely allow meso researchers to compete alongside other researchers for grants from an already

Appropriations Subcommittee. This subcommittee, and its counterpart in the House, control the funding



established \$50 million fund, while providing urgently needed resources to develop new treatments. Through this request, we are asking the Senate Defense Appropriations Subcommittee to provide leadership and hope to our veterans who develop meso after serving our nation.

If you or your loved one were exposed through military service, please let us know. You can help us contact the VFW and other veterans' groups to support our efforts to increase federal funding for meso research. Also, in the next few weeks we will be emailing an Action Alert to all friends of

the Foundation, with more details on how you can help advocate in support of our DOD request. Stay tuned.



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