Saving Sight is our Vision

2020 Annual Report

Choroideremia
RESEARCH FOUNDATION

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A Letter From Our President

Neal Bench
President

The families, friends, and communities within the Choroideremia Research Foundation have continued our progress towards treatments to stop the loss of vision due to CHM, and to restore lost vision. Our membership resides in over 30 countries, and we are currently funding research in 5 countries. The CRF reaches out to find fellow CHM patients as we think and communicate on a global basis, and continue to collaborate with medical institutions, clinical trial partners and other inherited retinal disease organizations.

Due to the pandemic, the CRF family missed a great opportunity to gather in Rochester, NY last June, allowing for personal camaraderie, informative presentations, and recognizing 20 years of progress driven by the Foundation. Some of those plans have been moved to our virtual platform with additional programs to add in 2021. With the hopes of a global return to some level of normalcy, our thoughts are to plan for an in-person conference in 2022.

Our staff and volunteers have been working to enhance our communications and open additional avenues into the research and support communities. I would like to thank our board and committee members for their time and input over the past year. It is also imperative to recognize those that support the Foundation financially. The CRF only moves forward with volunteer time and effort, continued financial support, and effective staff members. We are fortunate to have all three.

Good health and best wishes to everyone.

A Letter From Our Executive Director

Kathi Wagner
Executive Director

There has never been a more exciting time for research in choroideremia and related inherited retinal diseases (IRD's). Tremendous progress is accelerating our understanding of gene therapy, stem cell therapy, and RNA therapy. There is also incredible work underway in the areas of retinal prosthetics, eye transplantation, and wearable navigation devices that would have implications for all those with vision loss, regardless of the cause or diagnosis.

Towards this end, we have reached out internationally to over 75 biotech, pharmaceutical, adaptive technology, and assistive device companies to encourage them to consider adding CHM patients to future clinical trials. We have been offering grant funding and research resources such as data sets, cell lines, and animal models if needed. We can also provide patient perspectives and Science Advisory Board feedback on trial design, eligibility criteria, and endpoints as desired.

For new trials to succeed, we must have enough patients who are willing to participate in these trials. To help accomplish this, we reached out to over 50 researchers, clinicians, and allied nonprofits around the world to uncover CHM patients. We are also trying to find more patients through online marketing efforts, encouraging genetic testing to confirm a CHM diagnosis, and conducting outreach to international IRD patient support organizations, and stimulating multi-disciplinary collaboration across the research spectrum.

Together, we WILL find answers and put an end to vision loss and blindness caused by CHM.

A Report From Our Research Committee Chair

Jess Thompson, MD
Research Committee Chair

The Research Committee of the Choroideremia Research Foundation continues to play a very active role in discovering a cure, in exploring alternative therapies, and developing relationships with investigators. Over the past year the Research Committee has continued to refine our focus on these three main areas of interest.

The research committee continues to advance the science towards finding a cure for choroideremia. To that end we have been very busy this past year on a variety of fronts. Importantly, we have been collaborating with investigators on the development of mouse, porcine, and stem-cell models of choroideremia. Our belief is that these models will give investigators access to the tissues and anatomy they need to understand the basic pathophysiology of choroideremia. Further, these models will allow the study of possible cures and complementary therapies for choroideremia.

The Research Committee is supporting investigations on the female carriers of the aberrant choroideremia gene. Up until recently this particular subset of patients was largely ignored. As life expectancy has increased, however, it is clear that the female carriers of choroideremia can have even significant visual defects later in life. In the future, it is possible that this cohort will greatly benefit from therapies that have yet to be elucidated. Finally, the research committee, in collaboration with members of our scientific advisory board, has proposed a staging system for patients with choroideremia. The next step will be the validation of the staging system.

This past year the research committee has attempted to elevate the science as it relates to choroideremia. We have introduced

a more stringent grant application process. This new grant application requires the presentation of specific objectives, clearly defined endpoints, and a priori statistical calculations. Further, we have made interim reports mandatory. Finally, for those investigators we fund, we are objectively assessing their academic and clinical productivity as it relates to those funds. We are excited that in 2020 we funded the first annual Randy Wheelock award. It just so happens that the research grant that was selected for the Randy Wheelock award is actually investigating a line of research that Randy Wheelock himself first proposed.

Over the past year the research committee has been attempting to increase the engagement of our scientific, industry, and academic thought leaders. As regards the Science Advisory Board, we are being more proactive about their engagement with the grant review process. We are in the process of providing more structure for the members of the Science Advisory Board, and have decided to limit the term of their service to a renewable period of three years. We have also instituted a series of quarterly meetings with the Science Advisory Board, which are used for brainstorming about the direction that the science of choroideremia is headed. Also, we attempt to identify thought leaders with whom the Choroideremia Research Foundation should be formulating a relationship.

In the past year we have funded 15 projects from 11 unique investigators. To extend the amount of projects we are able to fund, we have partnered with other organizations including: CHM Canada, France Choroideremie, the Million Dollar Bike Ride (associated with the Penn Orphan Disease Center), and Fight for Sight. We have funded investigators in the United States, Canada, Portugal, Germany, England, and France. In the United States we have funded investigators from the Universities of California Los Angeles, Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin.

The research projects we have chosen to fund generally involve one of three areas. The first is the cellular mechanisms of disease. We have funded investigations looking into the basic function of the REP1 enzyme. We have also funded studies aimed at understanding the photoreceptor structure and function as they relate to choroideremia. We have also funded projects that examine the downstream effects of a mutated REP1 enzyme, such as the regulation of cell death and organelle dysfunction. The second broad area that we have funded centers on gene therapy. Specifically we have looked at the follow-up after gene therapy, the biomarkers associated with gene therapy, and novel vectors that could make gene therapy more efficacious. Our third major area of research centers around the funding of novel projects. To date these projects have looked at the discordant phenotype and brothers that carried the CHM trait and neuroprotection of individuals with CHM.

2019-2020
Research Funding

Since the inception of the Choroideremia Research Foundation in 2000, the organization has provided approximately $4 million in research grants to find treatment options and a cure for CHM.

Recent grants have included:

$61,079 USD

Researcher: Katrina Stingl, MD, Ophthalmologist, Clinical Scientist
Institution: University Eye Hospital, Tübingen, Germany
Adaptive Optics Imaging in Follow-Ups of Choroideremia Patients after Gene Therapy co-funded with UPENN ODC MDBR
Co-funded with University of Pennsylvania Orphan Disease Center via the Million Dollar Bike Ride

€40,000

Researcher: Richard Harbottle, PhD, Group Leader, DNA Vector Group Leader
Institution: German Cancer Research Centre, DKFZ, Heidelberg, Germany
Autonomously Replicating DNA Nanovectors for Gene and Cell Therapy of Choroideremia

$61,079 USD

Researcher: David Williams, PhD, Professor in Residence, Ophthalmology
Institution: University of California, Los Angeles, CA
Understanding Mitrochondrial Defects in Choroideremia

$50,000 USD

Researcher: Kim Edwards, Graduate Student
Institution: University of Wisconsin, McPherson Eye Research Institute, Madison, WI
RANDY WHEELOCK RESEARCH AWARD WINNER: Identifying the Function of REP-1 Protein in Retina (RPE/Photoreceptors) and Non-Retina Tissues

$30,000 USD

Researcher: David Gamm, MD, PhD, Director, McPherson Eye Research Institute; Associate Professor, Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences
Institution: University of Wisconsin, McPherson Eye Research Institute, Madison, WI
Randy Wheelock Research Award Budget Supplement
This supplement grant provides for the strategic expansion of the CRF CHM Biobank by tripling the number of current cell lines (IPSCs - induced pluripotent stem cells) which are now crucial building blocks in current and future CHM research.

$59,459 CAN

Researcher: Abigail Fahim, MD, PhD, Clinical Assistant Professor, Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences
Institution: Kellogg Eye Center, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI
Investigating Choroideremia Pathophysiology using iPSC-derived Retinal Pigment Epithelium
Co-funded with CRF Canada

$61,079 CAN

Researcher: Stacey Hume, PhD, FCCMG, Associate Professor, Department of Medical Genetics
Institution: University of Alberta, Canada
BOREN FAMILY RESEARCH AWARD: Identifying the Cause of a Discordant Phenotype in Two Brothers with the Identical CHM Mutation
Co-funded with CRF Canada

$37,848 CAN

Researcher: Yi (Fay) Zhai, MD, PhD, Clinical Research Fellow, Department of Ophthalmology
Institution: University of Alberta, Canada
OSTER FAMILY RESEARCH AWARD: Measuring the En Face Ellipsoid Zone (EZ) Area as a Biomarker of Photoreceptor Structure/Function in Choroideremia
Co-funded with CRF Canada

£60,000

Researcher: Mariya Moosajee, MBBS, BsC (Hons), PhD, FRCOphth, Consultant Ophthalmic Surgeon and Clinical Academic Ophthalmologist
Institution: University College, London, UK
SALOIS FAMILY RESEARCH AWARD: Neuroprotection for Choroideremia
Co-funded with CRF Canada

€45,000

Researcher: Vasiliki Kalatzis, PhD, Human Genetics, HDR Life Sciences
Institution: Institute for Neurosciences of Montpellier, INSERM, France
GLEASON FAMILY RESEARCH AWARD: A Novel Approach to Unravelling the Pathophysiology of CHM using iPSC-derived RPE from Patients
Co-funded with CRF Canada

Click here to view a full list of research funded to date.

Clinical Trial Updates

As part of the approximately $4 million provided in research funding to date, CRF has supported crucial research that led us to where we are today with gene therapy.

In Fall 2019, the final patients in Biogen's Phase III STAR gene therapy clinical trial (formerly operated by Nightstar Therapeutics) were treated. These patients, like all those before them, will be followed for one year. At that point, the data will be compiled and brought before the FDA for review and potential approval in 2021. Biogen is also continuing the GEMINI Phase 2 study to determine the safety of bilateral sequential gene therapy for choroideremia.

Spark Therapeutics continues to follow and collect data from their Phase I/II Gene Therapy Clinical Trial participants.

4D Molecular Therapeutics concluded their Natural History Study in early 2019, and developed a novel viral vector for their gene therapy for Phase I Clinical Trials which began in 2020.

International Advocacy Efforts

During 2020, we participated in person and virtually to represent the choroideremia patient voice at numerous events:

Legislative

- US Congress
- Rare Disease Week on Capitol Hill
- Rare Disease Legislative Associates
- Haystack Project – conducting efforts to promote insurance coverage for gene therapy treatments

Regulatory

- Food and Drug Administration
- Center for Biologics Education and Research
- Center for Drug Evaluation and Research
- National Institutes of Health
- National Eye Institute
- National Center for Advancing Translational Studies

Industry Advocacy

- American Society of Gene and Cell Therapy
- International Society of Gene and Cell Therapy
- UK Eye Genetics Group
- US Ophthalmic Genetics Study Club
- International Society of Genetic Eye Diseases and Retinoblastoma

Rare Disease Advocacy

- Global Genes
- Everylife Foundation for Rare Diseases
- National Organization for Rare Disorders
- World Orphan Drug Congress

Inherited Retinal Disease Advocacy

- France Choroideremie
- Zizoz
- Fight for Sight/Tommy Salisbury Fund UK
- Pro-Retina Germany
- CRF Canada
- Retina International
- Foundation Fighting Blindness Genetic Testing

Special Initiatives Advocacy

- Consolidation of CHM Natural History Data: NORD/FDA's Rare Disease Cures Accelerator-Data and Analytics Platform

Programs

We now serve over 12,600 patients, family members, donors, and medical professionals from 68 countries.

12,600

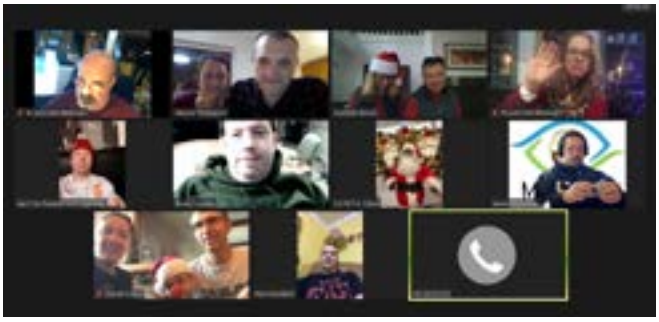
INDIVIDUALS

68

COUNTRIES

In addition to continuing to offer phone and email support for CHMers and their family members, we significantly expanded our digital footprint by conducting:

- "Meet A CHM Family Member" video interviews
- Launching a new home for CHM online support: MyCHM.net
- Developing a new Membership framework to create member engagement
- Hosting 40+ online events since April to create member engagement
  - » Webinars
  - » Informal Social Chats
  - » Support Groups
  - » Pre-recorded informational videos
  - » Registrants from US, India, Ireland, United Kingdom, Germany, Netherlands, Mexico, South Africa, Canada, Czech Republic, Turkey and more
  - » Over 110+ new CHMers and family have registered
- All webinars recorded and posted on our Facebook page
- Over 15,000 views to date of 80+ videos on our YouTube channel



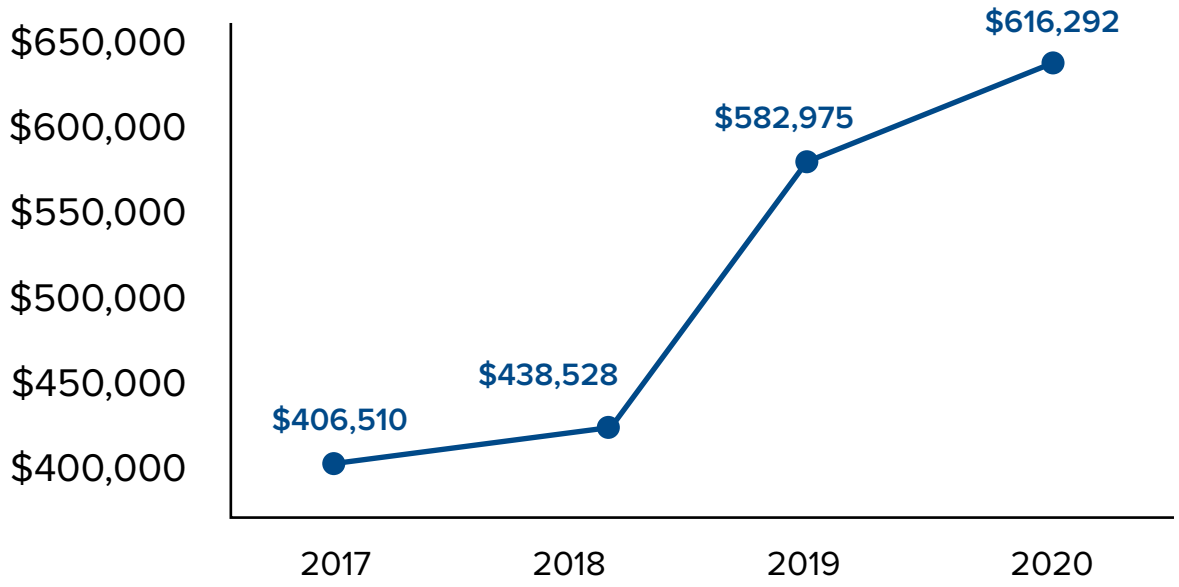
2020 virtual events

Other Accomplishments

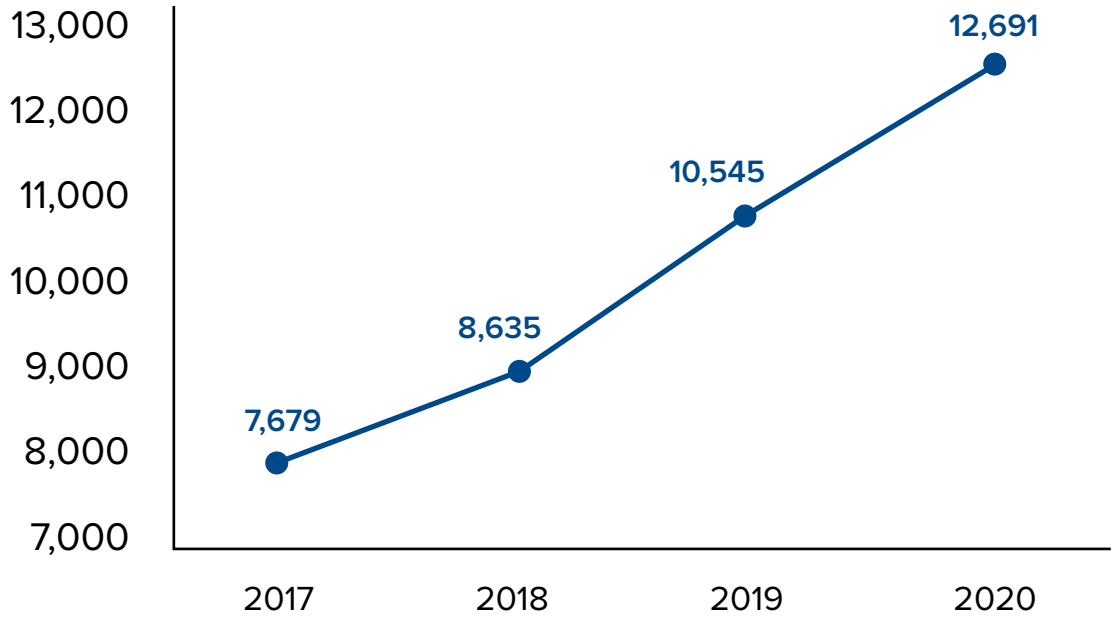
- Received Highest Platinum Rating from charity watchdog group Guidestar
- Great Non-Profits “Top Rated” Charity
- 100 of 100 score from Charity Navigator – “Give with Confidence”
- CRF recorded its first ever video Annual Report. Click here to view the “State of the CRF” webinar on YouTube.

Fundraising

2020 Calendar Year Giving



People Served - 2020



Testimonials

Stephanie Sims, MD

For a long time, Dad was told he had a retinal degenerative disease called retinitis pigmentosa.

For a long time, Dad was told he had a retinal degenerative disease called retinitis pigmentosa. However, in the 1980's he learned he had choroideremia (CHM). Based on our family tree, I knew from a young age that I was a "carrier" of the disorder causing my dad to go blind. I knew that I had a 50/50 chance of passing the affected CHM X chromosome to my future children.

In January 2009, our beautiful son was born! We took him to see ophthalmologists starting at a young age so that his retinas could be evaluated. When Sullivan was 4 years old, his ophthalmologist told us that his retinas were showing signs of CHM. At first, I was devastated and sad. I grappled with feelings of guilt in the face of the diagnosis.

However, with the help of the CRF, I learned much more about CHM and the various research trials being conducted, discovered a supportive community, and found rays of hope. I am now dedicated to helping the CRF raise funds to aggressively continue the pursuit of a cure.

Testimonials

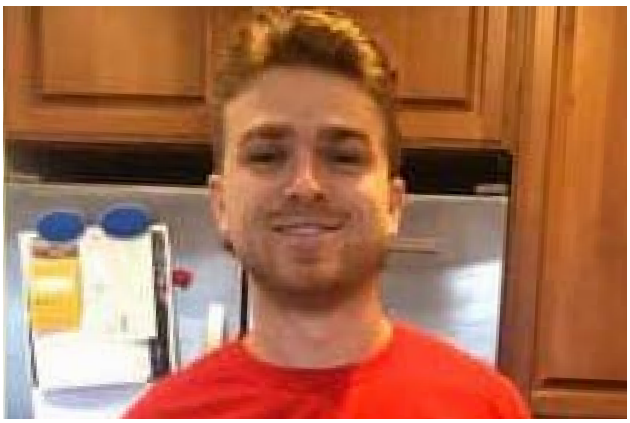
Bob Pettipaw

From the first conference that I attended in Denver in 2014, the CRF has been a welcoming community.

From the first conference that I attended in Denver in 2014, the CRF has been a welcoming community. Its taught me more about CHM from the information on the website, conferences, and online activities. I learn about all the research CRF supports and the exciting clinical trials happening around the world. I am in awe of the progress made by scientists and believe these people are a gift from God. What has probably made the most difference in my life is meeting fellow CHMers. It's kind of hard to put into words what it means to be able to talk with people – after so many years – who know first-hand what it's like to live with CHM. Blessed? Grateful? Relieved? Yes! Blessed to have made so many friends. Grateful for the researchers who choose this particular disease to find a cure for. And relieved by the belief that my children and grandchildren will never go blind.

Testimonials

Rob Driscoll



CRF has given me so much as a CHMer. The CRF community is something I am forever grateful for.

The CRF has given me so much as a CHMer. First and foremost, the CRF community is something I am forever grateful for. Through the biannual conference, I have found my extended family. While we may have only met a few times, I feel so connected with them. Second, I was selected to be part of a phase 2 trial with Spark Therapeutics. Without the work that the CRF has done, this opportunity would not have been possible. The fundraising efforts, awareness spread and persistence of the CRF to push researchers closer to a cure is amazing.

I am very optimistic for the future in gene therapy and choroideremia. The CHM community has found themselves in an extremely lucky and favorable position in terms of research. As the science continues to improve, we as CHMers already have our foot in the door and are striding alongside the researchers due to the trials across the globe involving CHMers.

Testimonials

Sam Looney

I learned at a very early age that you need to adapt to adversity, never give up and find a way forward. Being a CHMer has taught me these lessons, and the CRF has shown me that anything is possible.

My life forever changed at five years old when I learned the inevitable truth that I had CHM. I say 'inevitable' because it's been a big part of my family for generations – my grandfather had CHM and my mom and sister are carriers. I was prepared to chart this uncertain course in life with the knowledge that my vision would worsen and there would be no hope for treatment, let alone a cure.

The CRF, however, changed everything for scientific advancements, the CHMer community and me. Today, I'm in a gene replacement clinical trial that I 100% believe is due to the vision, tenacity and constant support of the CRF. Twenty years ago, a few CHMers said the current research landscape wasn't good enough, so this small but mighty group took action. The CRF has funded approximately $4 million in the pursuit of treatment and eventually, a cure. It has also given me a wonderful network of CHMers to lean-on and learn from; they're some of the toughest and most resilient people on earth.

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Shannon Boye, PhD
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Nijmegen, Netherlands

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Medical Director, NaviHealth
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Yavapai Cardiac Surgery
Prescott, Arizona

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Cory MacDonald
Engagement Director

Kathi Wagner
Executive Director

Financial Summary

Fiscal Year Financials	2020	2019
Revenue		
Donations	$538,010	$409,797
Investment Income	$16,228	$48,562
Other Income	0	$1,195
Total	**$554,238**	**$459,554**
Expenses		
Program	$162,909	$111,050
Research	$363,991	$179,775
Fundraising	$60,937	$60,572
Management	$53,092	$47,597
Total	**$640,929**	**$398,994**
Change in Net Assets	**-$86,691**	**$60,560**
Net Assets, beginning of year	**$894,174**	**$833,614**
Net Assets, end of year	**$807,483**	**$894,174**

(July 1 - June 30)

Donors

$10,000+

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Daniel and Sharyl Boren
Mr. Jason Folie
Genentech
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Ms. Mary Porter
Spark Therapeutics, Inc.
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Mr. Yamil Rosete-Rodriguez
Earl and Ellen Russell
Edward and Marion Scott
David Stateman and Sondra G. Hoffman
Ms. Suzanne Sullivan
Dr. Jess Thompson and Mrs. Sarah Thompson
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$500-999

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Mr. Chris R. Ullrich
Mr. Peter Vars

Mr. Kevin Walker
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$250-$499

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