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THE GLYCOBIOLOGY RESEARCH & TRAINING CENTER RECEIVES \$300,000 GIFT FROM DRs. NISSI AND AJIT VARKI IN SUPPORT OF WOMEN'S HEALTH INITIATIVE

AUGUST 2023, San Diego, CA - Drs. Nissi and Ajit Varki have donated \$300,000 in support of the UCSD Glycobiology Research and Training Center (GRTC) and the vision of its new Co-Directors Dr. Amanda Lewis and Dr. Kamil Godula. The donation will help nucleate new initiatives, including the Glycoscience Of Women's Health (GLOW) initiative, more info at Glow.ucsd.edu

As envisioned by its founding leadership, the GRTC is an intellectual home for leading investigators discovering how glycans participate in normal physiology and disease. Many people recognize carbohydrates for their dietary and metabolic roles. A more comprehensive picture reveals complex chains of carbohydrates on the cell surfaces of all living things, where they participate in many aspects of cellular identity and function. Carbohydrates linked together as glycans also play fundamental roles in-between cells and organ compartments, regulating the behavior and function of the cells and organs they also physically support as a structural whole.

As a founding Director of the GRTC, Dr. Ajit Varki helped establish one of the top global academic centers advancing research, training, and education in glycosciences - the study of carbohydrates.

As the founding Director of the Histopathology Core at the GRTC, Dr. Nissi Varki brings a unique and unparalleled glyco-centric viewpoint to her research as a pathologist. As a scientific duo, Nissi and Ajit Varki have also made key contributions to the field of glycobiology, illuminating the first functional biochemical difference between humans and chimpanzees. This difference stems from a gene inactivation that distinguishes cell surfaces in humans by the lack of a specific monosaccharide found in abundance on the cell surfaces of their chimpanzee counterparts.

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This gift is part of a larger donation originally designated in 2020 to support the UC San Diego/Salk Center for Academic Research and Training in Anthropogeny (CARTA). Drs. Nissi and Ajit Varki donated more than \$1 million to CARTA, derived from start-up shares previously donated by couple.

“Nissi and Ajit Varki have made many foundational contributions to the scientific environment at the GRTC and the field of glycobiology. This generous gift will help nurture our vision to bring glycosciences to focus on important issues pertaining to women’s health and to support new initiatives in diversity and inclusion,” said Amanda Lewis, Co- Director of the GRTC at UC San Diego. “We thank Nissi and Ajit for their continued partnership in support of the new vision for the Glycobiology Research and Training Center at UCSD.”

About the CARTA donation from Drs. Nissi and Ajit Varki:

<https://today.ucsd.edu/story/professors-donate-more-than-1m-to-study-origins-of-humankind>



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