

ADVANCING MORE BREAKTHROUGHS

# TOGETHER

---

**2025  
ANNUAL  
REPORT**

**GRASP**

GRASPCANCER.ORG

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

|                                       |                  |
|---------------------------------------|------------------|
| A Letter From Our Executive Director  | <b><u>03</u></b> |
| How GRASP Works                       | <b><u>04</u></b> |
| 2025 By the Numbers                   | <b><u>05</u></b> |
| Program Spotlight: Expanding Our Work | <b><u>07</u></b> |
| Impact Stories                        | <b><u>09</u></b> |
| Partners & Supporters                 | <b><u>12</u></b> |
| Looking Ahead                         | <b><u>13</u></b> |
| Be Part of What's Next                | <b><u>15</u></b> |

# A LETTER FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

---

*Dear Friend of GRASP,*

*In 2025, GRASP continued to grow not only in reach, but in clarity and conviction. This year marked an important moment for our organization internally. As our work has expanded, so has the need for more defined leadership. I stepped into the role of Executive Director, taking on the day-to-day leadership of GRASP, while continuing to work in close partnership with Julia, who remains deeply involved as our strategic advisor. This evolution reflects the way our organization is taking shape, building the structure needed to support what comes next while staying grounded in the collaborative spirit that has always defined our work.*

*At its core, our mission remains the same: to bring patient advocates and researchers together in meaningful ways that strengthen cancer research. In 2025, that work deepened and expanded in important ways.*

*One of the most significant developments this year was the growth of our training programs. We began training for both researchers and patient advocates, creating opportunities for each to better understand the other.*

*We also expanded beyond our historical focus in breast cancer to engage across a broader range of cancer types. This shift reflects both the demand for this work and our belief that this model should serve a wider community.*

*Our reach extended globally in 2025. From Rotterdam to Singapore to Brazil, GRASP facilitated trainings and conversations that brought together participants across healthcare systems, cultures, and research environments. The need for connection between researchers and patient advocates is not limited by geography, and neither is this work.*

*At the same time, 2025 was a difficult year for science and for the broader research community. Shifting federal priorities and political interference created real challenges for medical research, public health, and the institutions that support them. These changes disrupted timelines, strained partnerships, and forced organizations like ours to adapt quickly, including reworking a major national training initiative that had been long in development.*

*We are not neutral about this. The integrity of science and the future of medical research depend on the ability to ask questions, follow evidence, and include the voices of those most impacted. At a time when those foundations are under pressure, the need for informed, engaged patient advocates and thoughtful, collaborative researchers is more urgent than ever. That urgency is what drives GRASP forward.*



**Christine Hodgdon**  
Executive Director

*As we look to 2026, we are focused on building momentum. We are particularly excited to bring together 40 experienced GRASP advocates from across the country for a workshop with the FDA in March 2026. This moment reflects not only the growth of our training work, but the continued evolution of what it means for patient advocates to engage in the research process.*

*We believe that better conversations lead to better research, and ultimately, better outcomes for patients. That belief continues to guide everything we do.*

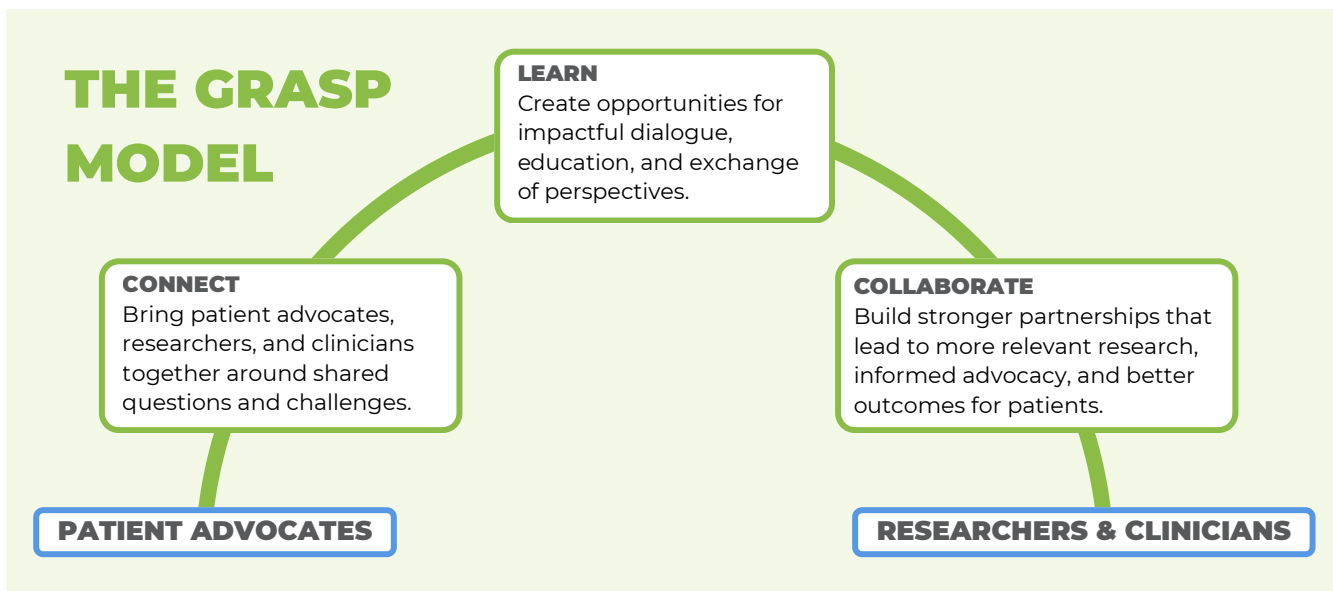
*Thank you for being part of this work.*

# HOW GRASP WORKS

## OUR MISSION: BRIDGING RESEARCH AND ADVOCACY

GRASP strengthens cancer research by connecting patient advocates, researchers, and clinicians in meaningful ways that foster collaboration, shared learning, and stronger research. Researchers and clinicians bring scientific and clinical expertise. Patient advocates bring lived experience, community insights, and a deep understanding of what matters most to people affected by cancer.

Too often, these groups work toward the same goals without enough opportunities to learn from one another. GRASP helps bridge that gap. By creating spaces for advocates, researchers and clinicians to connect, learn, and collaborate, GRASP helps ensure that research is informed by the people it is ultimately designed to serve.



## OUR PROGRAMS

At every stage, GRASP creates opportunities for people with different expertise and experiences to learn from one another and contribute to more patient-centered research.



### MEETUPS

In-person discussions held at scientific conferences, where patient advocates and researchers come together to explore emerging research and exchange perspectives.



### HUDDLES

Focused conversations that bring together advocates, researchers, and clinicians to explore specific topics in cancer research, treatment, and patient experience.



### POSTER WALKTHROUGHS

Virtual versions of the conference experience, making cutting-edge cancer research accessible to advocates around the world through presentations and discussions.



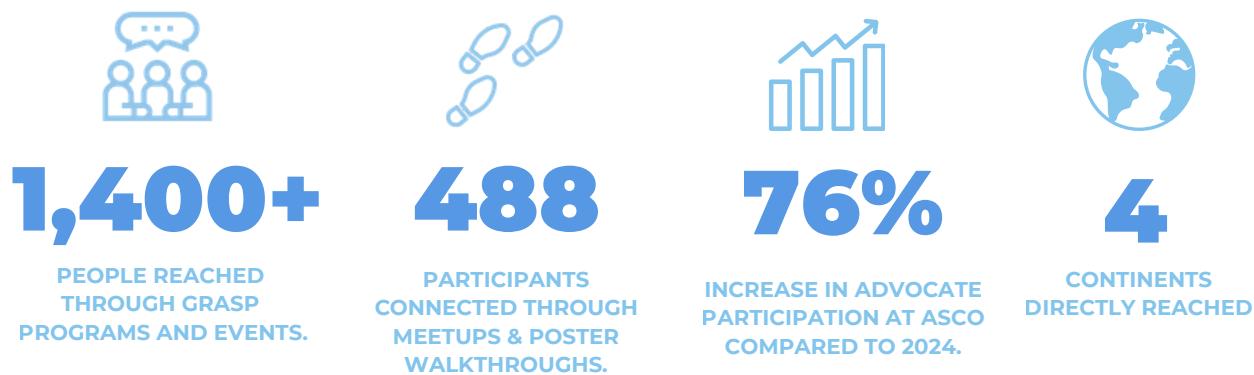
### TRAININGS

Educational programs designed to help patient advocates and cancer researchers build the knowledge, skills, and confidence needed to collaborate more effectively.

# 2025 BY THE NUMBERS

## EXPANDING REACH. DEEPENING IMPACT.

In 2025, GRASP continued to expand its reach and deepen its impact. Through poster walkthroughs, educational programs and community engagement, GRASP brought together researchers, clinicians, and patient advocates across disciplines, disease areas, and continents. As the organization grew, so did opportunities for productive engagement between those conducting research and those living with its outcomes. Below are just some of the highlights.



## GLOBAL REACH

In 2025, GRASP's work extended far beyond traditional conference settings to engage advocates, researchers, and clinicians all over the United States, Europe, South America, and Australia. This global footprint reinforced a core truth at the heart of our mission: the need for collaboration between researchers and patient advocates transcends geography, healthcare systems, and cultural boundaries.



## 2025 MILESTONE: EXPANDING INTO TRAINING

While Poster Meetups and Huddles remain foundational to GRASP's work, 2025 marked an important evolution for the organization with the expansion of formal training opportunities for both researchers and clinicians, as well as patient advocates.

### TRAINING INITIATIVES INCLUDED:

#### 15 PATIENT ADVOCATES

Engaged through the PEER program in Brazil.

#### 18 DOCTORAL RESEARCHERS

Engaged through Mac4Me in the Netherlands.

#### EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING

Delivered across three continents.



*Christine speaking at Mac4Me in Rotterdam, Netherlands*



*Julia leading PEER Training Program in São Paulo, Brazil*

These efforts laid the foundation for a growing area of work that will continue to expand in 2026, including GRASP's largest advocate training initiative to date.

By helping researchers better understand patient experiences and helping advocates better understand research, GRASP is building stronger partnerships that lead to stronger conversations, and ultimately, improved outcomes for people affected by cancer.

# PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT

## EXPANDING GRASP'S IMPACT THROUGH TRAINING

For years, GRASP has created opportunities for patient advocates, researchers, and clinicians to learn directly from one another through Poster Meetups, Walkthroughs, and Huddles. In 2025, GRASP expanded that model with a growing area of work: training people on both sides of those conversations to engage more effectively.

Scientific expertise and lived experience are both essential to better cancer research, but the people who hold that expertise often enter the conversation with very different knowledge, language, and experiences. Some researchers have never spoken directly with a patient about their work. Many patients have never been given the tools or opportunity to participate in research advocacy.

GRASP's trainings are designed to change that. In 2025, two international programs demonstrated what this work can look like, from introducing patients in Brazil to research advocacy for the first time to helping early-career scientists in Europe understand how and why to engage patients in their research.

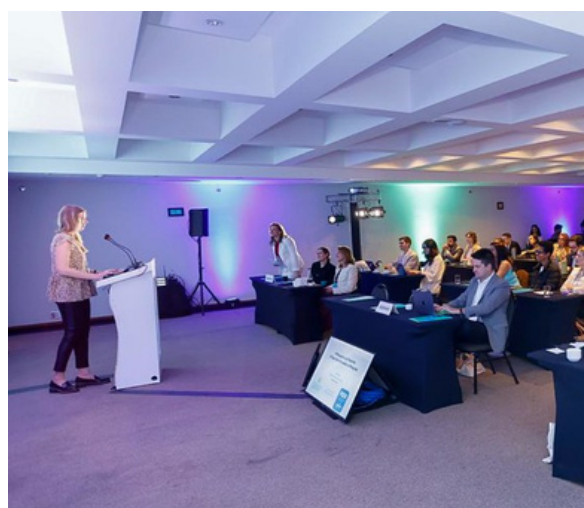
## TRAINING PATIENT ADVOCATES: BUILDING A FOUNDATION IN BRAZIL

In March, Julia traveled to São Paulo, Brazil, for the inaugural PEER (Patients Empowered & Engaged in Research) training, developed in partnership between the Brazilian Breast Cancer Research Group (GBECAM) and GRASP.

For many participants, including patients from rural communities, this was their first introduction to patient advocacy. The comprehensive training offered a foundation in cancer science and clinical research, introduced participants to experienced advocates, and explored how patients can use their lived experience to contribute to research conversations.

The opportunity was particularly significant in a country where formal research advocacy remains relatively uncommon. There is no direct Portuguese equivalent for the term "patient advocate," and patients have historically had limited opportunities to participate in the forums where clinical research is discussed.

PEER began to create a pathway where one had been largely absent, giving patients the knowledge, language, and tools to begin seeing themselves not only as recipients of care, but as contributors to the research process.



*Training Advocates → PEER Program, São Paulo, March 2025*

# PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT

---

## TRAINING CANCER RESEARCHERS: INTRODUCING PATIENT PARTNERSHIP

Christine traveled to Rotterdam, Netherlands, in June to work with Mac4Me, a European doctoral network training 18 early-career researchers from across Europe to study cancer metastasis. For some participants, the training marked the first time they had ever spoken directly with a patient about research.



*Training Researchers → Mac4Me Consortium in Rotterdam, Netherlands, June 2025*

Christine introduced the group to patient involvement and advocacy from the patient perspective, creating space for researchers to ask foundational questions about how to connect with patients, communicate their work, and involve patient partners in research. The session also gave participants an opportunity to hear directly how research decisions can look from the other side of the table.

That Mac4Me Consortium has already opened the door to deeper engagement. GRASP has since helped Mac4Me researchers connect directly with experienced patient advocates for their work, extending an introductory training into ongoing collaboration.

Together, PEER and Mac4Me demonstrate the distinct roles GRASP can play on both sides of the research relationship: helping patients understand how they can contribute to science and helping scientists understand how to engage patients as partners.

# IMPACT STORIES

GRASP's programs do more than bring people together—they create relationships that change the way people think, work, and lead. These stories reflect the lasting impact of connecting patient advocates, researchers, and clinicians to learn from one another.

## RESEARCH THROUGH A DIFFERENT LENS

**Dr. Anh M. Tran-Huynh** first connected with GRASP in 2022 while pursuing her Ph.D. at Baylor College of Medicine. Through GRASP programming, she had the opportunity to share her research with patient advocates and engage in conversations that would ultimately shape the way she approached her work.

One connection proved especially meaningful. Through GRASP, Anh was introduced to metastatic breast cancer patient and advocate Gwen Manchion. They collaborated on blog posts and discussed research ideas together. Anh was deeply saddened to hear of Gwen's passing in 2024, and Gwen's legacy continues to offer insights that help Anh better understand the patient perspective behind the questions she is studying.

As a researcher focused on why some patients with triple-negative breast cancer do not respond to chemotherapy, Anh was accustomed to thinking about scientific challenges through data and potential treatments. Working with patient advocates helped her approach those same questions through a more clinical and patient-centered lens.



Dr. Anh M. Tran-Huynh



*GRASP helped me become a better scientist by helping me become a better listener. Working with patient advocates challenged me to think beyond biology and focus on the concerns patients face every day, for example, chemotherapy side effects. It changed how I communicate my research and how I think about the questions I'm trying to answer to find better, more effective treatment strategies for patients."*

- Dr. Anh M. Tran-Huynh, PhD,  
Baylor College of Medicine

## RECOGNIZING THE EXPERT PATIENT

**Simon Gramvik** first connected with GRASP through the Mac4Me doctoral network, where Christine led a training session during a consortium meeting in Rotterdam. As a Ph.D. researcher studying patient involvement in cancer research, he was interested in questions of participation and representation. Through GRASP, he gained a deeper understanding of what productive engagement looks like in practice.

With support from GRASP, Simon connected with patient advocates with a diverse set of experiences and background for his interview-based research. Those conversations challenged him to think differently about the role advocates play in research.



*Simon Gramvik, Mac4Me Trainee*



*Before meeting the GRASP community, I mainly thought about patient involvement in terms of lived experience. What struck me was how much expertise many patient advocates develop over time. That has influenced how I think about collaboration between researchers and patients."*

**- Simon Gramvik, Ph.D. Candidate, Erasmus School of Philosophy**

The experience helped Simon recognize the value of the "expert patient"—someone who combines lived experience with a deep understanding of research, healthcare systems, and advocacy. That insight has become an important theme in his research and reinforces the importance of treating patient advocates as true partners in the research process.



*Mac4Me Consortium in Rotterdam, Netherlands, June 2025*

## FROM PATIENT TO ADVOCATE

**Silvia Ferrite** is a Brazilian metastatic breast cancer patient, public health researcher, and patient advocate. As a volunteer with Oncoguia, one of Brazil's leading patient advocacy organizations, she works to strengthen quality of life, clinical research, and shared decision-making by bringing together both lived and professional experience.

After hearing GRASP co-founders Christine and Julia discuss the organization's mission on the Our MBC Life podcast, Silvia knew she wanted to get involved. She eventually joined one of GRASP's Poster Walkthroughs before becoming part of the inaugural class of PEER (Patients Empowered & Engaged in Research), a collaboration between GRASP and the Brazilian Breast Cancer Research Group (GBECAM).



Silvia, Patient Advocate

Through those experiences, Silvia saw firsthand the power of bringing patient advocates and researchers together. At a time when patient participation in clinical research discussions remains limited in Brazil, GRASP showed what meaningful collaboration could look like and helped prepare her to take on new leadership opportunities.

Silvia currently serves on an international advisory board representing Brazil and continues working to strengthen patient engagement in cancer research. Fittingly, Julia is Brazilian herself, making her a natural bridge between the well-established patient advocacy field in the United States and Brazil's growing one.



*Advocacy makes me feel alive. GRASP has given legitimacy to my journey and my purpose. Moving from patient to advocate is different for each of us, but organizations like GRASP make that journey easier by serving as a guide, an example, and an inspiration."*

**- Silvia Ferrite, Public Health Researcher, Patient Advocate, and PEER Participant**



PEER Training Program in Brazil

# PARTNERS & SUPPORTERS

---

## ADVANCING RESEARCH TOGETHER

GRASP's work is made possible through the support of funders, partners, researchers, advocates, and organizations that share our commitment to improving cancer research. Together, we are creating opportunities for impactful collaboration, expanding access to education and training, and ensuring that patient voices help shape the future of cancer research.

## WITH THANKS TO OUR FUNDERS



## AND OUR PARTNERS

*These organizations have collaborated with GRASP to advance education, engagement, and research opportunities for patient advocates and researchers around the world.*

ABC Global Alliance  
Advancing Cancer Research for Latinos & All Populations  
Alamo Breast Cancer Foundation  
American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO®)  
Asia-Pacific Breast Cancer Summit  
BIG Against Breast Cancer  
BreastCancer.org  
BreastCancerTrials.org  
Cancer Nation  
Chan Lab  
Cholangiocarcinoma Foundation  
Chrysalis Initiative  
COR2ED  
Count Me In  
European Society of Medical Oncology (ESMO)  
For the Breast of Us  
FORCE Consortium  
Friends of Cancer  
GBECAM  
Great Lakes Breast Cancer Symposium  
Hope for OTHERS Tissue Donation Program  
International Invasive Lobular Breast Cancer (ILC) Symposium  
Johns Hopkins Medicine

Lee/Oesterreich Laboratory  
Light Collective  
Living Beyond Breast Cancer  
Lobular Breast Cancer Alliance  
LUNGeivity  
Mac4Me  
MBCBrainMets.org  
Metastatic Research Society (MRS)  
Metastatic Breast Cancer Alliance  
Metastatic Breast Cancer Trial Search  
Metavivor  
My Style Matters  
Our MBC Life  
Patient-Centered Dosing Initiative  
PeerView  
Project Life  
Rising Tide® Foundation for Clinical Cancer Research  
San Antonio Breast Cancer Symposium (SABCS)  
Theresa's Research Foundation  
Tigerlily Foundation  
U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)  
Weill-Cornell Medicine

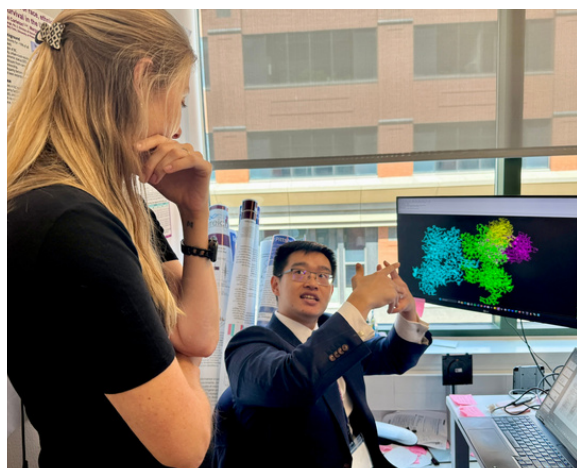
# LOOKING AHEAD TO 2026

## AS GRASP PROGRESSES, WE REMAIN FOCUSED ON...

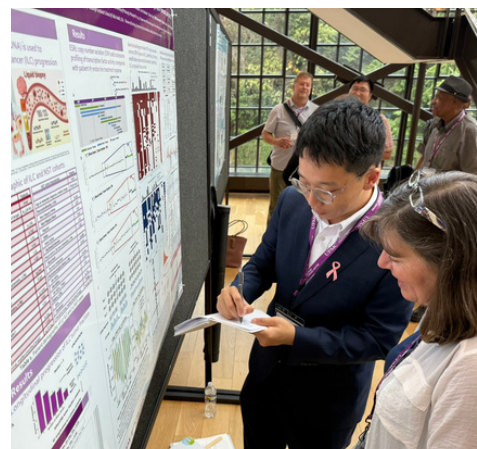
Strengthening connections between patient advocates and researchers while expanding opportunities for collaboration across the cancer research ecosystem.

A major milestone on the horizon is GRASP's workshop with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in March 2026. The workshop will bring 40 experienced patient advocates from across the country to Washington, D.C., for an immersive learning experience focused on the regulatory process and the role advocates play in shaping the future of research and treatment development.

This opportunity reflects a growing recognition across the scientific and regulatory community that patient advocates are essential contributors to the research process. Their perspectives help shape better questions, better trials, and ultimately better outcomes for patients. By providing advocates with a deeper understanding of how regulatory decisions are made, GRASP is helping equip them to participate in these conversations with greater confidence and impact.



*Julia and Christine spending time at the Lee-Oesterreich Lab during the Great Lakes Breast Cancer Symposium (GLBCS)*



*Great Lakes Breast Cancer Symposium (GLBCS) Poster Meetup*

GRASP will also continue expanding beyond its historical focus in breast cancer. In October 2026, the organization will launch its first poster walkthrough at the European Society for Medical Oncology (ESMO) Congress in Madrid, Spain. The program will bring together patient advocates and researchers from around the world, including participants from Europe, Australia, Asia, and North America, reflecting GRASP's growing international reach and commitment to serving a broader cancer community.

These initiatives build on the momentum of 2025 and reflect GRASP's continued evolution as a trusted partner for patient advocates, researchers, and institutions alike. By expanding access to opportunities for shared learning, GRASP is helping build a future where patient voices are not only heard, but recognized as essential.

We are excited for what lies ahead and grateful to the advocates, researchers, partners, and supporters who continue to make this work possible.



# BE PART OF WHAT'S NEXT

---

The future of cancer research depends on more than scientific discovery. It depends on bringing together the people most affected by cancer with the researchers and clinicians working to improve outcomes. Every story featured in this report reflects GRASP's belief that patient advocates are not observers in the research process; they are essential partners.

As opportunities for engagement continue to grow, so does the need for advocates, researchers, institutions, and supporters who are committed to building a more connected and patient-centered research community.



## GET INVOLVED

Join a GRASP program, training, or event and become part of a growing community dedicated to improving cancer research through collaboration.



## PARTNER WITH US

Work alongside GRASP to create opportunities for patient advocates, researchers, and clinicians to learn from one another and strengthen the research process.



## SUPPORT THE WORK

Your support helps advocates engage confidently in research, regulatory, and policy conversations that impact patients' lives. Together, we can expand access to training, foster new collaborations, and ensure patient voices shape the future of cancer research.



## SCAN TO JOIN OUR NETWORK

Not a GRASP member yet? Join us in the effort to break silos between the different groups involved in cancer research. By becoming part of our network, you'll gain access to upcoming events and opportunities to connect with researchers, advocates, and partner organizations in your areas of interest.



## SCAN TO DONATE & SUPPORT OUR MISSION

We rely on the generosity of our community and partners to continue providing valuable programs, fostering meaningful discussions, and supporting patient-centric research. Your donation helps us expand our reach and make a bigger impact. Every contribution counts in our shared mission to accelerate cancer breakthroughs.

## STAY CONNECTED

Follow GRASP for program updates, educational opportunities, and ways to engage throughout the year.



[graspcancer.org](https://graspcancer.org)



[grasp@graspcancer.org](mailto:grasp@graspcancer.org)



[822 Guilford Avenue #2011](#)  
[Baltimore, MD 21202](#)