



## Bits and Pieces from the CLL Global Community

### Spring 2021

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#### Greetings!

The new year has brought with it hope as well as challenges. Throughout much of the world COVID vaccination efforts are ramping up after a slow start, and there is optimism that as more people are vaccinated we will get the pandemic under control. While this effort is ongoing, CLL Global is excited to partner with Dr. Chaitra Ujjani at the University of Washington to study how effective the COVID vaccine is in patients with CLL. There is also good news for patients who have failed one or more prior therapies. The third generation BTK inhibitor, pirtobrutinib, appears to be a safe and effective treatment including for those who have failed treatment with another BTK inhibitor. We start this issue by memorializing the life of a true giant of cancer research, Dr. Emil J Freireich.

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#### Remembering a Legend: Emil J Freireich, MD

Dr. Emil J Freireich, pictured below with his friend and protégé, Dr. Michael Keating, was a legend in the world of oncology and the founding father of modern clinical cancer research. His early work at the National Cancer Institute (NCI) on treating childhood leukemia, formerly a death sentence, with combination chemotherapy directly led to the current 5-year survival rate of 90% for children diagnosed with acute lymphocytic leukemia. Building upon his success in treating childhood leukemia, Dr. Freireich and his collaborator from the NCI, Dr. Emil Frei III, were recruited to MD Anderson Cancer Center where they created the Department of Developmental Therapeutics, launching a chemotherapy program which over the next 15 years became the single largest entity devoted to cancer treatment and research in the world. With his wit, wisdom, and passion, Dr. Freireich's impact on the field of cancer made him a giant of modern clinical research. Dr. Freireich passed away on February 1, 2021 at the age of 93. You can learn more about his remarkable life [here](#).



**"Although we mourn his death, we also celebrate the trailblazing scientist whose revolutionary work paved the way for modern cancer care and research."**

Hagop M. Kantarjian, M.D.  
Professor and Chair, Department of Leukemia,  
MD Anderson Cancer Center

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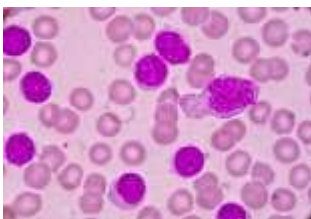
### How Effective Is the SARS-CoV-2 Vaccine in CLL Patients?

Patients with CLL have a suppressed immune system and as such are more susceptible to viral and bacterial infections than the general population. Because of this, the COVID-19 pandemic has been especially difficult for patients with CLL to navigate. Thankfully, we now have multiple, safe vaccine candidates available to help control the spread of the disease, and it is recommended that CLL patients get vaccinated. What is unknown at this time is how effective the SARS-CoV-2 vaccine is in patients with a suppressed immune system. CLL Global is actively partnering with Dr. Chaitra Ujjani (pictured right) at the University of Washington and her colleagues across the country in order to answer this very question. The study will analyze 500 CLL patients for their immune response to the vaccine. Results from this study will provide information that allows patients to make informed decisions on how to best protect themselves. You can click [here](#) to read more about Dr. Ujjani's project, and to find contact information for the participating institutions if you are interested in participating in the study.



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### Pirtobrutinib: Third Generation's a Charm?



In its first in human phase I/2 clinical trial, the third generation Bruton's tyrosine kinase (BTK) inhibitor, pirtobrutinib, produced durable responses in patients with relapsed / refractory (R/R) CLL. Unlike first and second generation BTK inhibitors such as ibrutinib and acalabrutinib, pirtobrutinib is a highly-selective, reversible BTK inhibitor. The drug showed a good safety profile and the objective response rate (ORR) in patients with R/R CLL was 63%, even in patients who had failed prior treatment with a BTK inhibitor. This is excellent news for patients who are intolerant of or progress on currently-available CLL treatments and will expand the number of safe, effective therapy options for high risk patients, if approved. For more details on the pirtobrutinib clinical trial click [here](#). CLL Global will be following this closely and keep you up to date as more information becomes available.

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## What's Next?

Trying to navigate the next steps now that you are vaccinated? Everyone's situation is different and each person has to consider the scientific evidence, as well as their own personal comfort level, to determine how to move about in a post-vaccinated world. [Here](#) and [here](#), Carol Preston, a 15 year CLL survivor, shares her perspective on the issue and how she's enjoying the chance to see friends and family in person again.



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## Thank You!



What a year it has been! Thanks to all of you, the amazing patients, caregivers, loved ones, and friends who have joined us on this journey, CLL Global has been able to meet the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic head on. We are funding a large, multicenter study to determine the effectiveness of the SARS-CoV-2 vaccine in CLL patients, the outcome of which will allow data driven decision making on what is safe for which patients as we move forward. It will also offer insight into the effectiveness of other vaccines such as flu, shingles, and pneumonia, in CLL patients. This is just one of the ways that your support is making a difference in the lives of CLL patients around the globe. Our commitment to fund cutting-edge research performed by the best and brightest CLL experts around the world is unwavering and we will not stop until we find a cure. On behalf of Dr. Michael Keating and all of us here at CLL Global, thank you.