

LIFE FEST2026 AGENDA



Friday, July 10th

2:30 - 4:00 PM

REGISTRATION & WELCOME

3:00 - 4:00 PM

GIST 101 - Symphony I - Elizabeth Davis, MD, Vanderbilt University Medical Center

SDH Deficient 101 - Blackbird Studio A/B - Andrew Blakely, MD, FACS NIH / National Cancer Institute

4:30 - 6:00 PM

MEET & GREET - Symphony Foyer

Hosted by The Life Raft Group - Appetizers provided

Saturday, July 11th

7:30 - 8:30 AM

REGISTRATION Symphony Foyer

BREAKFAST & ROUND TABLES

Symphony II

Newly Diagnosed & Membership

Tara Ruggiero, Simran Singh, Toni Pauwels, The Life Raft Group

A welcoming discussion for newly diagnosed patients to learn about resources, support, and community.

Caregiver Support

Holly Sablich, Jing Goldsmith, Chelsea Tindell, The Life Raft Group

Share experiences and strategies for navigating the caregiving journey.

Nutrition & Wellness

Alice Sulkowski, RD,CDE, Natalie Power, The Life Raft Group

Explore practical approaches to nutrition and healthy living during and after treatment.

Financial Assistance Resources

Jennifer Noonan, Accessia Health

Learn about programs and tools that can help manage the financial impact of care.

Symptom Management

Morgan Lambrecht, DNP, APRN, FNP-C
Vanderbilt University Medical Center

Discuss ways to recognize, track, and manage disease-related symptoms.

Be Your Own Advocate

Dr. John Abrams, The Life Raft Group

Gain confidence and skills to actively participate in your disease journey.

Symphony I

8:30 - 8:45 AM

Opening Remarks - The Life Raft Group

	General Session - Symphony I	SDH-Deficient GIST Session - Symphony III
8:45 - 9:45 AM	The Grand Ole Update: Latest from the GIST Stage Michael Heinrich, MD Oregon Health & Science University Neeta Somaiah, MD MD Anderson Cancer Center Jonathan Trent, MD, Ph.D. Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center	8:45 - 9:00 AM Opening Remarks Becky Owens, The Life Raft Group
		9:00 - 9:45 AM The Role of Surgery in SDH GIST: <i>An Expert Q&A</i> Andrew Blakely, MD, FACS NIH / National Cancer Institute John Mullinax, MD Moffitt Cancer Center Raphael E. Pollock, MD The Ohio State University Comprehensive Cancer Center Elizabeth Lilley, MD, MPH Brigham & Women's Hospital
9:45 - 10:15 AM	The Trial Journey: <i>A Conversation Between Nurse and Patient</i> Amanda Nolen, BSN, RN, Vanderbilt University Medical Center and Cynthia Lavo, GIST Advocate	SDH-Deficient GIST Patient Support Group Moderator: Becky Owens, The Life Raft Group
10:15 - 10:30 AM	BREAK	
10:30 - 11:30 AM	Open Mic with the Oncologists Jonathan Trent, MD, PhD Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center Breelyn Wilky, MD University of Colorado Cancer Center Anschutz Ciara Kelly, MD Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center Margaret von Mehren, MD Fox Chase Cancer Center Mauricio Ribeiro, MD Moffitt Cancer Center	Center Stage: SDH Research & Clinical Trials Andrew Blakely, MD, FACS NIH / National Cancer Institute Ramesh Bulusu, MD, MRCP, MSc, FRCR PAWS-GIST Clinic Michael Heinrich, MD Oregon Health & Science University Jason Sicklick, MD, FACS (recorded presentation) UC San Diego Moores Cancer Center

	Symphony I	Symphony III
11:30 - 12:30 PM	The Role of Surgery in GIST: An Expert Q&A John Mullinax, MD <i>Moffitt Cancer Center</i> Andrew Blakely, MD, FACS <i>NIH / National Cancer Institute</i> Raphael E. Pollock, MD <i>The Ohio State University Comprehensive Cancer Center</i> Elizabeth Lilley, MD, MPH <i>Brigham and Women's Hospital</i> Deepa Magge, MD, FACS <i>Vanderbilt University Medical Center</i>	SDH Panel - Open Mic with the Oncologists Jonathan Trent, MD, PhD <i>Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center</i> Ramesh Bulusu, MD MRCP, MSc, FRCR <i>PAWS-GIST Clinic</i> Vicki Keedy, MD <i>Vanderbilt University Medical Center</i> Margaret von Mehren, MD <i>Fox Chase Cancer Center</i> Ciara Kelly, MD <i>Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center</i> Neeta Somaiah, MD <i>MD Anderson Cancer Center</i> Michael Heinrich, MD <i>Oregon Health & Science University</i>
12:30 - 12:45 PM	GROUP PHOTO - LOCATION TBD	
	Symphony II	
12:45 - 2:15 PM	LUNCH & AWARDS CEREMONY	
2:15 - 2:30 PM	BREAK	
	Symphony I	Symphony III
2:30 - 3:15 PM	Side Effect Management Morgan Lambrecht, DNP, APRN, FNP-C <i>Vanderbilt University Medical Center</i>	Interventional Radiology Meaghan Dendy Case, MD, MA <i>Vanderbilt University Medical Center</i>

	Symphony I	Symphony III
3:15 - 4:00 PM	Women Treating Women Panel Vicki Keedy, MD Vanderbilt University Medical Center Ciara Kelly, MD Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center Morgan Lambrecht DNP, APRN, FNP-C Vanderbilt University Medical Center Margaret von Mehren, MD Fox Chase Cancer Center Erica Pimenta, MD Dana-Farber Cancer Institute Elizabeth Lilley, MD, MPH Brigham and Women's Hospital Breelyn Wilky, MD University of Colorado Cancer Center Anschutz Deepa Magge, MD, FACS Vanderbilt University Medical Center	Patient Voices: Living with GIST <i>Stories of strength, insight, and the journey beyond diagnosis.</i> Robbie Cannon Karen Dalal Martha Smart
4:00 - 4:45 PM	Ask the Specialists: Nephrology - Hunter Huston, MD, FASN Vanderbilt University Medical Center Cardiology - Jonathan Heimlich, MD, PhD Vanderbilt University Medical Center	Caring for the Whole You: Wellness & Integrative Health Sarah Murawski, PA Vanderbilt University Medical Center Loretta Mostofi Liposarcoma Advocate
	Sunday, July 12th	
	Meet in Symphony Foyer	
7:00 - 7:30 AM	Walk for Hope Registration	
7:30 - 8:00 AM	Walk for Hope Vanderbilt University Courtyard	
	Symphony II	
8:00 - 9:00 AM	Breakfast	

	Symphony I
9:00 - 9:30 AM	The Power of Music Jess Knoble, MT-BC
	Interactive Workshops Symphony III
9:30 - 10:45 AM	Shape What Comes Next: Enrolling in the Patient Registry to Empower Research Ian Hill, Simran Singh, Toni Pauwels, The Life Raft Group <i>Discover how participation in the Patient Registry advances research while providing valuable insights into how your disease experience and treatment journey compare with others in the community.</i> Advocating for Your Care: Navigating Insurance, Access, and Your Rights Jennifer Noonan, Accessia Health <i>Learn how to overcome barriers to care and effectively advocate for your needs.</i> Emotional & Mental Health Dr. Tamargo, Vanderbilt University Medical Center <i>Discuss strategies and resources for maintaining emotional well-being during the cancer journey.</i> Knowing How to Research Jim Hughes, The Life Raft Group <i>Build skills for finding, evaluating, and understanding reliable medical information.</i> Nutrition TBD <i>Learn practical nutrition strategies to support your health throughout the cancer journey.</i> GIST Mentor Program Kay Stolzer, Lisa Fues, MaKayla Evans, The Life Raft Group <i>Learn how peer mentorship connects patients and caregivers with experienced community members and enhances your overall well-being.</i> Supportive & Palliative Care Drs. Agarwal & Martin, Vanderbilt University Medical Center <i>Personalized and supportive care, including symptom and toxicity management, aligned with patient and family member goals and values throughout the cancer journey.</i> Therapeutic Drug Monitoring Jon Treder, The Life Raft Group and Dr. Denninghoff, University of Arizona College of Medicine <i>Explore how drug-level monitoring may help optimize imatinib treatment effectiveness and safety for GIST patients.</i> Resource Navigation Lindsey Grisanti, LCSW, OSW-C Vanderbilt University Medical Center <i>Own your path by learning how to find the right resources and confidently advocate for what you need.</i> Learning More About SDH-Deficient GIST Becky Owens, The Life Raft Group, Jayne Bressington, PAWS-GIST, Dr. Bulusu, PAWS-GIST <i>Dive deeper into the science, treatment, and lived experience of SDH-deficient GIST.</i>

	Symphony I
10:45 - 11:15 AM	Managing Your Care Using Artificial Intelligence Nizar Allibhoy <i>Founder & CEO, Kerry Care</i>
11:15 - 11:45 AM	Introducing the New LRG Patient Registry Denisse Evans, MS <i>The Life Raft Group</i>
11:45 - 12:00 PM	Closing Remarks Sara Rothschild, MPH, Executive Director - The Life Raft Group

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