

# Milestones



## Meyer Cancer Center Inspires Generous Philanthropic Support

Dr. Jedd Wolchok and Dr. Dan Landau

ROGER TULLY

Established through philanthropic support nearly a decade ago, the Sandra and Edward Meyer Cancer Center at Weill Cornell Medicine is experiencing an era of promising and innovative growth under the leadership of Dr. Jedd Wolchok.

Appointed as the Meyer Director of the Meyer Cancer Center in September 2022, Dr. Wolchok is spearheading a vision to expand the pool of clinical trial participants and offer the latest approaches to cancer prevention and treatment to patients across the New York metropolitan area.

“Dr. Wolchok is a phenomenal oncologist – a doctor’s doctor who is incredibly visionary and focused on discoveries, therapies and cutting-edge clinical care,” says Board of Fellows Chair Jessica Bibliowicz.

Supported by a steady increase in funding from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the National Cancer Institute (NCI) – the center received nearly \$51 million in grants in fiscal year 2022-2023 – and an influx of generous gifts from donors, researchers are making discoveries that are changing the landscape of cancer care.

Two extraordinary gifts in support of cancer research at the Meyer Cancer Center will help fuel innovation and spur new treatments and therapies. Those gifts were made by Ms. Bibliowicz and her husband, Natan, and Mike and Maria Repole and the Nonna’s Garden Foundation.

Gifts from grateful patients and families – including the family of Stuart Weitzman (see story on page 5) – are also helping support the breakthrough work conducted by cancer researchers at Weill Cornell Medicine.

*Continued on page 4*

**We’re  
Changing  
Medicine.**

# From Our Dean



I am honored and excited to serve as the 15<sup>th</sup> dean of Weill Cornell Medicine. In this role, I serve alongside some of the brightest minds and most dedicated leaders on the forefront of patient care, scientific discovery and medical education.

At Weill Cornell Medicine, we have a special obligation to help raise the standards of medicine. This is a profound calling: It's what drives our professionalism and sets us apart as an institution. The excellence and dedication of our students, physicians, researchers, educators and staff have earned the deep trust and respect of our patients, donors and community. And as dean, I am grateful for the opportunity to steward this trust.

During my first few weeks on campus, I witnessed the incredible strength and character of our community. The special Weill Cornell Medicine culture influences everything we do. It reflects a desire to lead through action, collaboration and expertise; an unwavering commitment to provide essential patient care to the diverse communities that surround us; and a devotion to discover game-changing treatments and cures. And it's all driven by the extraordinary individuals who choose to engage daily as part of the Weill Cornell Medicine community.

When I look at the opportunities that lie ahead for this exceptional institution, we are in a remarkable position of strength. Through collaboration, commitment to diversity, inclusion and equity, and community partnerships – together with the ongoing support of so many of our donors and friends – we will continue to change medicine.

I feel proud to be at the helm of Weill Cornell Medicine and look forward to all that we will accomplish together.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "R. Harrington MD". The signature is written in a cursive, professional style.

**Robert A. Harrington, M.D.**

Stephen and Suzanne Weiss Dean, Weill Cornell Medicine  
Provost for Medical Affairs, Cornell University



# From Our Co-Chairs

"I am so proud of our student-focused efforts in the *We're Changing Medicine* campaign. Funded entirely through philanthropy, the debt-free initiative for students expands Weill Cornell Medicine's support by providing scholarships to all medical students with demonstrated financial need. In December 2022, we broke ground to build a state-of-the-art student residence that will greatly improve the already strong experience for our future physicians and scientists. Both of those initiatives are well on their way to success with continued support from our friends, alumni and donors."

**Jeffrey J. Feil**  
Campaign Co-Chair

"Over the past 25 years, Weill Cornell Medicine's research enterprise has grown exponentially. With your support, we have established a world-class institution of collaboration and scientific discovery, ensuring that patients receive the most innovative and evidence-based care. And yet, there is more we can accomplish. As technology advances and we become an even more globalized society, Weill Cornell Medicine remains dedicated to meeting the medical needs of our community. Join us as we usher in a new era of science and medicine through the *We're Changing Medicine* campaign."

**Sanford I. Weill**  
Campaign Co-Chair

## Meyer Cancer Center Inspires Generous Philanthropic Support *Continued from the cover*

Jessica and Natan Bibliowicz's gift of \$10 million will support the work of Dr. Wolchok and Dr. Dan Landau, an associate professor of medicine, and of physiology and biophysics, a leading researcher at the Meyer Cancer Center, and a core member of the New York Genome Center. The couple's gift will also establish the endowed Bibliowicz Family Professorship, which will be held by an outstanding faculty member in the cancer field. A \$10 million gift from Mike and Maria Repole and the Nonna's Garden Foundation will support research into new cell therapies and clinical trials in the area of melanoma immunotherapy, currently being conducted by Dr. Wolchok.

Both gifts represent a vital investment in the Meyer Cancer Center, where collaborations between basic scientists and physicians are accelerating the application of new discoveries into clinical care.

Dr. Wolchok is a pioneer in a cancer treatment approach for melanoma that harnesses immune cells to fight the disease. Dr. Landau's research includes innovative work in improving the liquid biopsy, a technique that allows for early detection and monitoring of cancer through the identification of tumor DNA in a patient's blood.



Jessica and Natan Bibliowicz

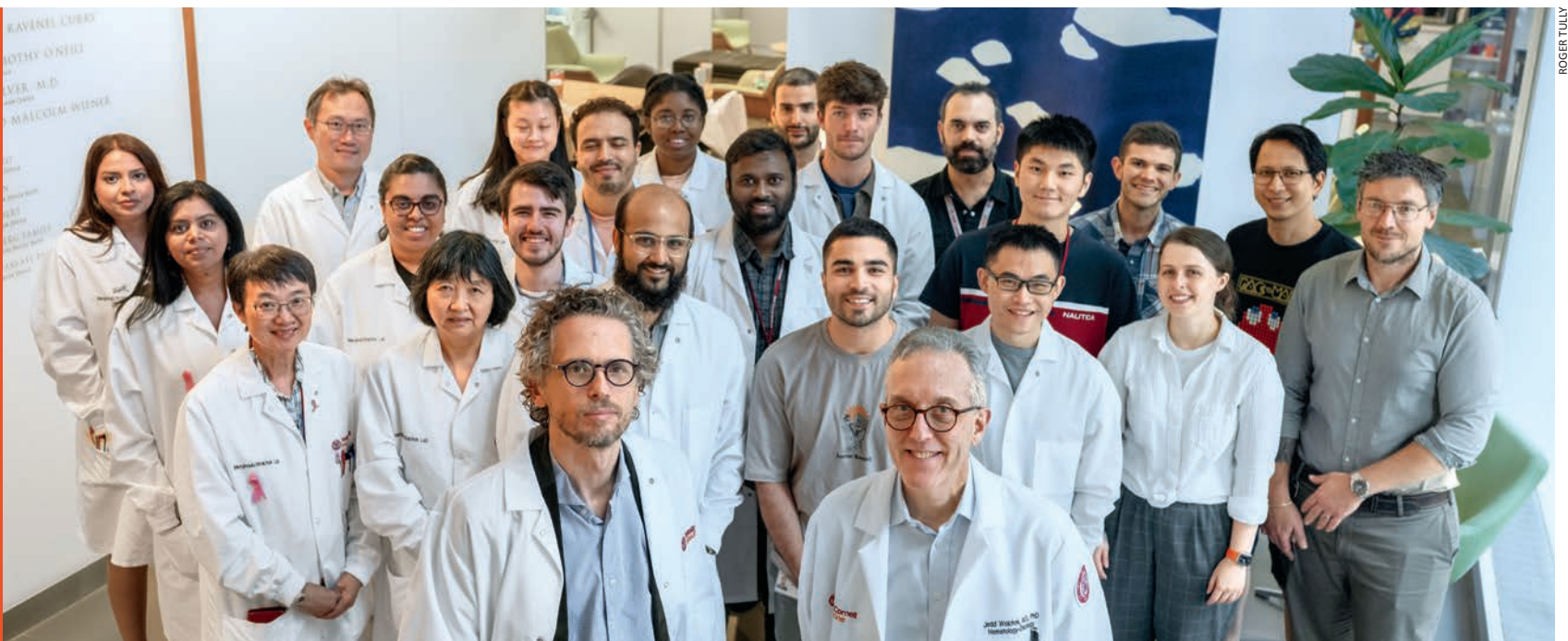
**"We are extremely grateful for the generosity of the Bibliowicz and Repole families, and all the donors who help support this lifesaving work."**

Dr. Jedd Wolchok

"Dr. Landau is the kind of scientist who can really change medicine," says Ms. Bibliowicz. She and Mr. Repole believe that Dr. Wolchok and his team – which includes Meyer Cancer Center Deputy Director Dr. Taha Merghoub – represent the very best in academic medicine: physician-scientists who are dedicated to pushing the boundaries in cancer research. Dr. Merghoub is the Margaret and Herman Sokol Professor in Oncology Research, a professor of research in pharmacology and a professor of immunology research in medicine.

"These remarkable gifts will support and enhance our efforts to develop breakthrough approaches to treating cancer," says Dr. Wolchok. "We are extremely grateful for the generosity of the Bibliowicz and Repole families, and all the donors who help support this lifesaving work."

"Philanthropy is critical to our mission as cancer researchers and physicians," says Dr. Landau. "This visionary support for research will help us focus on advancing the discoveries that will improve patients' lives."



Foreground, from left, Dr. Dan Landau and Dr. Jedd Wolchok, with scientists from their laboratories.

## Helping to advance new personalized treatments for patients

Mr. Repole established the Nonna's Garden Foundation after his beloved grandmother was diagnosed with an aggressive form of T-cell lymphoma – and a clinical trial extended her life for another 15 years. “You don't really understand cancer until you or someone you love is touched by it,” adds Mr. Repole, who credits Dr. Wolchok with saving the life of another close family member with a rare cancer. “He's an incredible leader with a beautiful mind – the Einstein of immunotherapy and melanoma.”

“Cancer affects the whole family, not just the patient,” says Ms. Bibliowicz. “We need to be proactive and to help patients get the most innovative treatments as quickly as possible.”

In the world of cancer research, it's important to invest not only in today's innovations, but also in the treatments and therapies that will arise in the years to come, says Mr. Repole.



Mike Repole

“Whether it's through immunotherapy or early drug development or cell therapy, I want to pay it forward,” he says. “We need to support the great researchers at Weill Cornell Medicine who will save future lives.”

Ms. Bibliowicz agrees. “As the campaign sharpens its focus on our medical research priorities, my hope is that our gift motivates others to consider investing in our talented physician-scientists,” she says. “It's the best investment we've made.”

With a first-time gift to Weill Cornell Medicine, Jane and Stuart Weitzman and family are helping to advance new personalized treatments for patients with T-cell non-Hodgkin lymphoma. The family's gift supports research led by Dr. Jia Ruan (M.D. '99), a professor of clinical medicine, and a member of the Sandra and Edward Meyer Cancer Center at Weill Cornell Medicine.

“We made this gift in honor of Dr. Ruan, who was able to help me when every treatment tried by others failed,” says Mr. Weitzman, a shoe designer, who was diagnosed with cancer in 2021. “Someone as brilliant, perceptive and compassionate as Dr. Ruan should be given every opportunity to use her talent and ability to help those with T-cell lymphoma at Weill Cornell Medicine and hopefully – with her research – around the world.”



Jane and Stuart Weitzman

A renowned clinical investigator, Dr. Ruan specializes in treating patients with lymphoma. The generous philanthropy from the Weitzman family provides vital support to develop an innovative patient care and research program for patients with T-cell non-Hodgkin lymphoma.

When Mr. Weitzman was under her care, Dr. Ruan and her team focused on treating his cancer while restoring his quality of life. “The patient-relations staff, the nurses on the oncology ward and the occupational and physical therapists at the medical center were all outstanding,” says Mr. Weitzman. “They and Dr. Ruan helped me return to playing sports and engaging in all of the other activities that had become – and thankfully are once again – part of my life.”

Support from the Weitzman family has already played a critical role in advancing the work of Dr. Ruan and her collaborators. Earlier this year, a study published in the journal *Blood* demonstrated the use of a novel treatment that made chemotherapy more effective for patients with a certain type of T-cell lymphoma. The study, led by Dr. Ruan, was a collaboration involving multiple investigators at Weill Cornell Medicine and other colleagues nationwide.

“I am deeply grateful for the Weitzmans' generous philanthropy and thrilled for this extraordinary opportunity to work with talented multidisciplinary teams at Weill Cornell Medicine and beyond to translate cancer research discoveries to promising treatments for patients,” says Dr. Ruan.

# Deborah and David Roberts' Gift to Support Students and Endowed Faculty

With their extraordinary \$10 million bequest, donors David and Deborah Roberts are continuing an honored family tradition of generous giving to advance Weill Cornell Medicine's mission. Mr. Roberts, son of the late Weill Cornell Medicine benefactor Jill Roberts, and his wife, Deborah, have designated their estate gift for student scholarships and endowed faculty positions that will advance the institution's culture of excellence for years to come.

"My mother was a passionate supporter of Weill Cornell Medicine, having funded the Jill Roberts Institute for Research in Inflammatory Bowel Disease," says Mr. Roberts. "And we want to continue her legacy of generosity to one of the finest academic medical centers."

Mr. Roberts first made a gift to Weill Cornell Medicine's educational programs in 2019, when he and his mother launched the Roberts Diversity Scholar Awards, which provide vital support for students who choose to pursue careers aimed at better serving the health needs of a diverse population. The scholarship came about after Mr. Roberts conferred with Dr. Yoon Kang, senior associate dean for education, about the need to improve health-care disparities in the communities the institution serves.

The scholarship program currently provides \$50,000 per year, per student, for up to three years. There have been five recipients so far, an accomplishment that fills Mr. and Mrs. Roberts with joy. One exciting project examined how various cancer treatments can have different side effects based on a patient's skin color.

When the couple made their recent bequest, they knew they wanted it to help future students, but they didn't want to restrict it to any particular need. In 20 years or so, Mrs. Roberts adds, Weill Cornell Medicine might need more stipends to help students afford a medical education or perhaps the institution will need more star faculty to teach new physician-scientists. The gift will be there to help.

As an added benefit, the Roberts' generous gift qualified for the institution's Legacy Match Challenge, generating \$125,000 in immediate cash for the new student residence under construction at the corner of 74<sup>th</sup> Street and York Avenue in Manhattan. Student-focused initiatives, like the residence, are key priorities of the current *We're Changing Medicine* campaign.

"When you give to Weill Cornell Medicine, you are investing in a best-in-class institution that helps people in so many ways," says Mr. Roberts. "My mother understood that, and that is why we want to honor her memory with a planned gift that will touch lives for many years to come."

**"When you give to Weill Cornell Medicine, you are investing in a best-in-class institution that helps people in so many ways."**



David and Deborah Roberts



# Q&A: What Inspires Giving?

In June of this year, Dr. Robert A. Harrington was named the Stephen and Suzanne Weiss Dean of Weill Cornell Medicine and Cornell University's provost for medical affairs. Dean Harrington, the former chair of Stanford University's Department of Medicine, is a cardiologist and past president of the American Heart Association. Previously, he served as the Richard Sean Stack, M.D. Distinguished Professor and director of the Duke Clinical Research Institute at Duke University. Originally from Massachusetts, Dean Harrington and his wife, Rhonda Larsen, have four adult daughters and six grandchildren.

He recently sat down with Lucille M. Ferraro, assistant vice provost for development, to speak about his vision for leadership at Weill Cornell Medicine and the impact of philanthropy on academic medicine.

**LF: What attracted you to the position of dean at Weill Cornell Medicine?**

**RH:** I wasn't looking for a job, but when you hear Weill Cornell Medicine, you listen. This is a great place that wants to be even greater. And as I talked to more people and came for a visit, I knew it offered the opportunity for a leadership role that would help guide this top academic medical center through the next stage in its journey. I was also excited about the chance to think globally, because there are parts of Weill Cornell Medicine that are truly global. The major diseases of the United States are also the major diseases worldwide, and we ought to be looking at how we can solve problems from a global perspective. Academic medical centers in the United States have a social responsibility and that includes a global social responsibility.

JOHN ABBOTT



**LF: How would you describe yourself?**

**RH:** If you asked people, “Give me one word to describe Bob Harrington,” I’m going to guess that ‘collaborator’ would be in the top three. That’s one of the hallmarks of my leadership.

**LF: What is important to you as dean of a leading academic medical center like Weill Cornell Medicine?**

**RH:** Academic health systems have an obligation to give back and to try to make society better, and I take that obligation very seriously. Diversity, inclusion and excellence are all important to me, as well as being an innovator – being out in front. It’s about diversity of ideas, diversity of background and diversity of experiences. Every aspect of that contributes to richer science, better health care and better education.

**LF: Can you elaborate on that?**

**RH:** No matter what we do, diversity makes us better. If you’re seeking excellence, you must be diverse and inclusive. There’s just no alternative. There’s also the moral aspect of including people in conversations who have previously been excluded, and that means communities that may not have been offered the same opportunities. For me, bringing together what’s right with what we know works is an important component of how I think about diversity.

**LF: You’ve served as a mentor through much of your career. What does mentorship mean to you?**

**RH:** Mentorship is the foundation for academic success and maybe even academic well-being. I’ve been fortunate to have a team of mentors over the years on whom I still rely. Mentors can provide guidance and advice, and that’s an important part of one’s professional development. I spent a lot of time in my past leadership roles helping to establish mentorship programs, and I hope to do the same at Weill Cornell Medicine.

**LF: Our ambitious \$1.5 billion *We’re Changing Medicine* campaign has galvanized our donors and alumni, raising more than \$1.2 billion in just a few short years. What does a call to “change medicine” mean to you?**

**RH:** I love the campaign name, *We’re Changing Medicine*, because that’s what a place like Weill Cornell Medicine should be doing. We need to push the boundaries across our mission areas – in research and in medical education – and change health-care delivery systems to provide equitable care to the communities we serve. Donors can help us push those boundaries.

**LF: Weill Cornell Medicine is fortunate to have a dedicated donor and volunteer community, with several families connected to us over multiple generations. In your experience, what inspires donors to build such a strong bond with an institution?**

**RH:** It’s about human connections, and I think that’s very special. What I always love – and I love this in my social circle as well as my professional circle – is learning why people are passionate about something. Because it’s in that storytelling that you start to understand an organization or an institution. I want to understand what’s important to donors so I can think about it in my own leadership. I’ll incorporate those stories into how I view my role, which is the steward of an institution.

**“We need to push the boundaries across our mission areas – in research and in medical education – and change health-care delivery systems to provide equitable care to the communities we serve.”**

Dean Robert A. Harrington

**LF: Why is philanthropy such a vital part of academic medicine?**

**RH:** We want to do groundbreaking research, we want to have innovative education, and we can’t do it without the help of philanthropy. I love the fundraising part of medicine because it gives you an opportunity to work with people who want to help you do the things you otherwise couldn’t do.

**LF: What are your thoughts about the doctor-patient relationship and how it relates to philanthropy?**

**RH:** Leading gifts often come from grateful patients who ask their doctors how they can help. Some faculty members and clinicians don’t feel comfortable with that conversation, but I’ve found that donors really want to learn about the research. What we’re talking about is asking for the right thing. How could anyone think it’s not a good idea to support cures for cancer, for example?

**LF: What do you think inspires giving?**

**RH:** Opportunity. Change. Innovation. Advancement. Cures. We have a tremendous opportunity to grow science here and to make the sorts of discoveries that will inspire people to give willfully, thoughtfully and generously, and change medicine in a meaningful way. Our donors can help us realize what is possible.

# Events

## Alumni Award of Distinction

Two outstanding Weill Cornell Medicine alumni were recognized with the Alumni Award of Distinction at a dinner held on May 17 at the Griffis Faculty Club. Dr. Cheryl Dreyfus (Ph.D. '76), a distinguished professor and chair of the Department of Neuroscience and Cell Biology at Rutgers-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, was awarded the 2023 Weill Cornell Graduate School Alumni Award of Distinction; Dr. Margaret "Peggy" Bia (M.D. '72), professor emeritus of internal medicine at Yale School of Medicine, was awarded the Weill Cornell Medical College Alumni Association Award of Distinction.



From left: Dr. Barbara Hempstead, dean of Weill Cornell Graduate School of Medical Sciences; Dr. Cheryl Dreyfus (Ph.D. '76); Dr. Margaret "Peggy" Bia (M.D. '72); former Interim Dean Francis Lee; and Dr. Yoon Kang, senior associate dean for education

## Weill Exemplary Achievement Award



From left: Former Interim Dean Francis Lee, Dean Emeritus Antonio M. Gotto, Dr. Julianne Imperato-McGinley, Joan Weill and Board of Fellows Chair Jessica M. Bibliowicz

Dr. Julianne Imperato-McGinley, director of the Clinical and Translational Science Center and associate dean for translational research and educational training at Weill Cornell Medicine, was honored with the 2023 Joan and Sanford I. Weill Exemplary Achievement Award at a gala on June 8. A distinguished clinician and researcher, Dr. Imperato-McGinley is perhaps best known for her earliest work studying the biology of human sexual differentiation and development. The Weill Award was established in 2018 to coincide with and celebrate the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Weill Cornell Medicine's renaming in honor of the institution's foremost benefactors, Joan and Sanford I. Weill. Speakers at the event, which was held at the JW Marriott Essex House, included former Interim Dean Francis Lee, Dean Emeritus Antonio M. Gotto and Jessica M. Bibliowicz, chair of the Board of Fellows.

# Children's Health Council All-Member Meeting



From left: Erika Feil-Lincoln, CHC vice chair of programming; Dr. Serena Lucotti; Dr. Jihye Kim; Dr. Andrea Heras; Ali Bernstein, CHC vice chair of membership; Casey Weiss, CHC chair; and Danielle Rayman, CHC vice chair of marketing

Members of Weill Cornell Medicine's Children's Health Council (CHC) gathered at the Griffis Faculty Club on May 10 for their annual All-Member Meeting and Reception, which featured presentations by recipients of the Children's Health Investigators Fund. The fund provides three early-career Weill Cornell Medicine investigators with resources to establish preliminary research results and to qualify for grants from the National Institutes of Health. The 2022-2023 awardees are: Dr. Andrea Heras, assistant professor of clinical pediatrics; Dr. Jihye Kim, instructor in psychiatry; and Dr. Serena Lucotti, postdoctoral associate in pediatrics.

# Dean's Council 2023 Spring Meeting

More than 74 Dean's Council members and other guests attended the Dean's Council spring 2023 meeting and reception at the Belfer Research Building on April 4. It was one of the largest in-person gatherings of the group since the height of the pandemic two years ago and featured an informative presentation by **Dr. Jedd Wolchok**, Meyer Director of the Sandra and Edward Meyer Cancer Center at Weill Cornell Medicine. Dr. Wolchok provided a fascinating overview of immunotherapy, which is his specialty. In immunotherapy, scientists are able to enhance the body's immune cells to better target and destroy cancer tumors.



From left: Former Interim Dean Francis Lee; Dean's Council Co-Chair Sanford Ehrenkranz; Dr. Jedd Wolchok, Meyer Director, Sandra and Edward Meyer Cancer Center; and Dean's Council Co-Chair Leonard Harlan

# Greenberg Award Dinner

The 40th Maurice R. Greenberg Distinguished Service Award Dinner, held at The Plaza on April 27, honored Dr. Philip Stieg, chair of the Department of Neurological Surgery, neurosurgeon-in-chief at NewYork-Presbyterian/Weill Cornell Medical Center and the Margaret and Robert J. Hariri, M.D. '87 Professor of Neurological Surgery at Weill Cornell Medicine. The award, endowed in 1981 by Board of Fellows member and NewYork-Presbyterian trustee Maurice R. Greenberg, is presented to senior members of the medical staff for outstanding service. The event was chaired by Bernadette Castro.



Greenberg Dinner honoree Dr. Philip Stieg (standing, fifth from left) is joined by Dr. Francis Lee, former interim dean (far left); Dr. Steven Corwin, president and CEO of NewYork-Presbyterian (standing, far right); and past Greenberg Dinner awardees



From left: Dr. Steven Corwin, president and CEO of NewYork-Presbyterian; Greenberg Dinner honoree Dr. Philip Stieg; and Dr. Francis Lee, former interim dean of Weill Cornell Medicine

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*November 2023*

*Milestones is a publication of the Office of External Affairs at Weill Cornell Medicine.*

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