

November 8, 2010

Dear Friends:

I am so grateful for your support of Miles for Myeloma 2010: Ride for Research. Thank you for joining with my team as we work to unravel the mysteries of this terrible cancer. As I reflect on this year's journey, several encounters make me proud of those surrounding me and provide confidence in our ability to overcome this challenge.

This year, on the 6th annual Miles for Myeloma trek, we rode our bicycles for over 245 miles in two days across Northern and Central Indiana. The 20 other cyclists and I faced the wind, the heat and the hills with rare tenacity. It was a difficult two days, but it generated new friendships and many smiles. I am so proud to be part of a cycling group that gave up two days of their normal lives for two days full of pain to heighten awareness of this nasty disease, multiple myeloma.

The cyclists were not the only ones to show this rare tenacity. The volunteers, current patients and their families as well as family members of those who are no longer with us did a spectacular job organizing every minute of this event. They spent hours finding the safest route. They knocked on the door of each and every police and sheriff's office in the towns we rode through to secure us safe escorts through dangerous areas. This event could not have gone better, thanks to the minute details handled by our volunteers. They made the journey safe and almost pleasant – after all, we were riding for hours and hours!. The RV, generously donated by Family RV in Whiteland and driven by our pilot Myron, was a welcome sight on the route as it indicated a moment of nourishment for the body and the soul. Caring volunteers filled our bottles with fluids and provided us with essential food to help us pedal forward. More importantly, they encouraged us, hugged us and never stopped appreciating our efforts. I cannot thank those people enough for their camaraderie. Linda, Arlene, Joyce, Carolyn and many others made up the wonderful supporting cast who made this trek such a success.

The event also solidified my confidence in our younger generation and gives me confidence that America is in good hands. Two examples of selfless young volunteers come to mind. Nicole, an intern who worked on last year's Miles for Myeloma campaign, is an undergraduate student at Indiana University. She wrote a generous personal check to support our fundraising this year. As the parent of students, I can tell you that every penny counts when you are a student. The fact that Nicole believed in the cause and did not hesitate to give this year means so much to all of us. The second example is from a young married couple. Michael lost his father to multiple myeloma over a year ago. As a member of the planning committee for Miles for Myeloma, he and his wife Jessie made his father's famous baked ziti for 35 people and delivered it to us for dinner after the first day of riding. Michael and his wife's generosity extended beyond that. At their August wedding, they notified their guests that, in lieu of wedding favors, they had chosen to make a donation to myeloma research at the IU Simon Cancer Center. I was moved to see two young people being so generous at a time when many would have been focused on their own wedding and honeymoon. The sacrifices of our young supporters make their gifts so very special. Their altruism is phenomenal and makes me believe that America is indeed in good hands. A very special thank you to our young supporters, Nicole, Michael and Jessie.



**MILES FOR MYELOMA** | SUPPORTING  
MYELOMA RESEARCH  
AT INDIANA UNIVERSITY  
CANCER.IU.EDU/M4M

This ugly disease continues to frustrate me. Each time I begin to think that I understand it and know how to distinguish between mild and aggressive forms of the disease, I get a rude reminder of myeloma's very complicated nature. Five years ago, I met a 42-year-old woman with early-stage multiple myeloma. Based on our current information, I believed her myeloma would be treatable for a long time. When she asked me if she would be around to see her triplet sons graduate from high school, I confidently answered yes. I gained more confidence after we attained a complete remission of her disease after only two months of treatment. Unfortunately, the past 18 months have been a painful journey for her, her family and me. Her disease transformed into a monster with a very rocky course, and she left us a month ago. I will never get over her struggle. I know that her three boys will do well because of her wonderful family, but she will not be around to see them graduate from high school. Our current understanding of multiple myeloma failed her, and as such, I feel that I failed her, too. I, along with the rest of the myeloma community, need to do much better. We need to understand myeloma better and develop customized treatments for each patient based on the specifics of their disease. Research directed toward understanding the mechanisms of the disease and conducting clinical trials that yield benefit quickly make this a possibility. It is greatly needed. Our patients do not have time to wait years for new treatments that are urgently needed. Due to the efforts of Miles for Myeloma, our myeloma program is now much closer to achieving our goals, compared to six years ago. But the journey is far from over: fundraising is important and continuing to investigate myeloma is our mission. Myeloma patients deserve answers, and more importantly they deserve a cure.

Together, we will reach this goal. Our patients never say they are tired of trying to live their lives. They never lose hope. They never surrender to this nasty disease. Their strength, their hope and their drive will be with me until we find the cure.

To those who are no longer with us, we love you and we wish your family peace. For those who are living with myeloma, be confident that we are not going to rest until we find the cure.

Peace and happiness,



Rafat Abonour, M.D.  
*Associate Dean for Clinical Research*  
*Director of Multiple Myeloma Program*  
*Professor of Medicine*  
*Professor of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine*

PS – If you would like to view photos from our event or stay updated about our ongoing research, please visit our website at [www.cancer.iu.edu/m4m](http://www.cancer.iu.edu/m4m) or join us on Facebook.