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Mr. Andrew B. Abramson
President and Chief Executive Officer
The Value Group, Inc.
1122 Clifton Avenue
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Dear Andy:

I am writing to again express my deep appreciation to you and the Cure Breast Cancer Foundation for your support of our self-seeding concept, one of the most exciting projects in which I have ever been involved. Presented below in some greater detail is the research I described to you, Lisa, Carly, and the other representatives of the CBCF when we met here at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in October. As we discussed then, this project demonstrates, and takes advantage of, MSKCC's special strengths in our close connections between clinical and laboratory researchers. We are also able to rapidly translate research advances into improved patient care, both within our Center and throughout the world via our academic programs and international affiliations. Hence, your support could and should have an extraordinarily broad impact.

For well over a century, the dominant concept of cancer has been that it is a disease of abnormal cell division. This is quite logical on its surface in that the major feature of cancer is the formation of a mass—an abnormally large collection of cells, which occurs when the normal process of cell division (mitosis) goes out of control. Almost all therapies for cancer are based on this concept. These include the removal of the mass by surgery, the killing of the cancer cells with radiation, and especially the use of drugs that interfere with cell division: chemotherapy and hormonal therapy. We have seen major advances in the management of cancer in general and breast cancer in particular by the application of such treatments. Breast cancer mortality rates have been dropping in all countries that apply modern therapy in the setting of early diagnosis by mammography. However, breast cancer is still a leading cause of cancer mortality, the second such cause in American women (after lung cancer, which is largely due to smoking).

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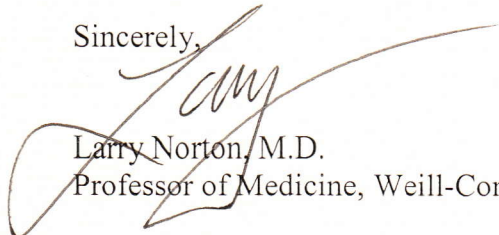
Recently, we have made a significant discovery that has the potential to move the field rapidly in a new and exciting direction. Indeed, this discovery has already received wide attention in scientific and medical circles. The observation is that one of the key problems with breast cancer cells—perhaps the most important problem—is their ability to move and start new cancers growing, not only in distant organs like the bones and liver (called *metastases*), but within the breast itself. We term this behavior “self-seeding,” recalling the way weeds take over a garden: not by the massive increase in size of an individual weed plant, but rather by the continuous propagation of new weeds both within the bed and at its periphery. By this concept, a breast cancer is not one mass but a collection of contiguous smaller masses. This is illustrated in Figure 1 in the attached reprint.

We have shown that this method of growth is indeed true in certain experimental models and are in the process of proving that it happens in people as well. It explains many aspects of cancer: rapid growth, disorganization, the formation of new blood vessels, the need to irradiate a breast after lumpectomy for cancer, and the association of all of the above with distant metastases. It gives us new targets for the development of drugs to treat and prevent cancer, increasing the chances for a successful outcome by directing therapies against “seeding” in addition to abnormal cell division. And, since self-seeding is by its nature an abnormal process—as opposed to the normal process of mitosis—such drugs may not only be more effective, but less toxic as well. Hence, the concept of self-seeding is not only interesting from the point of view of biology, but possibly very important in the design of better approaches to cancer management, prevention, and cure.

Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center is in a special position to fully develop such ideas. We not only have the capability of studying cancer biology in the laboratory but in bringing new ideas to the clinic. Our comprehensive program provides the flexibility to follow promising leads in unexpected directions, adding the power of creativity to our efforts. We intend to explore self seeding in all of its aspects, and with the help of your funding focus on the most rapid progress possible toward the ultimate goal of total victory over breast cancer.

It is my sincere hope you and the CBCF will be involved as the primary funder of this exciting project over the next several years. With your help we will progress along the path from laboratory research to clinical studies and even therapeutic clinical trials. As always, we at MSKCC are deeply grateful for your ongoing encouragement and hard work in support of our mission.

Sincerely,



Larry Norton, M.D.
Professor of Medicine, Weill-Cornell

Enclosure

cc: Anne M. McSweeney