

# MoRobinBarryStories

## BEE GEE BRIGADE #3–ALL GIBBS SUPPORTING DRI...AND HERE'S WHY

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Decades long Gibb friend and 43-year DRI worker Gary Kleiman with Ashley Gibb at Love and Hope Ball, February 14, 2015

So here is post #3, reporting about my visit to the Diabetes Research Institute, Barry and Linda Gibb's charity of choice. What's also important to note is that this charity is also supported by all the Gibb children and grandchildren and many of their friends as well. This particular post is especially dear to me, and I hope you all enjoy it.

There's nothing better in this world than a good looking Italian man with a great brain. I admittedly say this with prejudice, since my heritage is Italian; but even if it weren't, I'd still feel the same way because I had the good fortune of reconnecting (after 14 months) with two Italian scientists at the Diabetes Research Institute. Let's take Antonello Pileggi first.

Insanely busy, he greeted me as though I was the only person he wanted to share his thoughts with that day. Dark, soulful brown eyes focused on mine, he jumped right in to tell me what was happening in his world. I post a photo here of Antonello with Ric CURE di (play on the top man

in charge Dr. Ricordi's name, OK?), his little companion who he takes along with him on his travels. A great sense of humor, he seems just like a regular guy until he talks of his research, and I realize his mind is working on a different plane from mine, a plane I could only aspire to in my craziest imaginings.

A Research Professor at the Division of Cellular Transplantation of the DeWitt Daughtry Family Department of Surgery at the University of Miami, he is also Director of Preclinical Cell Processing and Translational Models Program at the Cell Transplant Center of the Diabetes Research Foundation. (Try saying any of what I just wrote three times fast. I dare you). What it comes down to is that he works on restoring that pesky beta cell function in insulin-requiring diabetes mellitus. He works on new ways of transplanting cells, trying to find a better way for this process to work. He is trying to work with anti-rejections drugs so the cells will be able to function. What are the clues to reshape the immune response? How do we reset the clock so that the immune system will not reject these cells? A goal is to prevent the loss of function of insulin-producing cells.



Dr. Antonello Pileggi and Ri CURE di, his companion bear

As usual, I am mesmerized by his energy, determination and overall brilliance. In addition to discussing his work, I ask him about another fantastic happening in his world, and this is the creation of the Miami Scientific Italian Community, an organization he heads up as President. This is a non-profit group that brings together a community of Italian scientists in Florida, along with university, private and public research institutions. Antonello is excited about this group because it brings a network of scientists together who would not normally be involved with one another. "This organization is beyond medicine. We bring our complementary expertise, and that is exciting." Knowing his advocacy for collaborative research, I am not surprised at all at this news. I think that only positive and successful results will come from a gathering of minds such as these. I could sit and listen to Dr. Pileggi explain his latest findings to me all day long. He is the kind of man one wishes to foster a friendship with, sincere, unfiltered and kind.

While talking with Antonello, Dr. Giacomo Lanzoni appears in the hall, ready to lead me to his inner sanctum. I regrettably have to say goodbye to Dr. Pileggi, but I am feeling enriched for having been allowed to sit in his office and listen to his ideas. Now let's move on to Dr. Lanzoni.

During our previous meeting last year, we had only chatted in the hall, but Dr. Lanzoni's first words to me were "Today I'm taking you to see my laboratory". Yes, I am pumped at this idea. He's still movie star handsome (I think he got better looking), shaggy-haired and energetic. Walking down a long, narrow corridor lined with refrigerators everywhere on both sides and passing several laboratory rooms, we finally arrive at his laboratory. It's good luck for me as I meet two of his colleagues, Dagmar Klein and Alessia Zoso. I observe Dagmar, in white coat and at her microscope, looking very focused indeed. These dedicated scientists work in stem cell research. Alessia mentions identifying strategies for inducing tolerance toward the transplanted islets. Again, the goal is to control the autoimmune response accountable for the progression of Type I Diabetes. The stem cell research includes adult stem cell identification with potential to become any type of cell. Make these cells sense glucose and secrete insulin! Yes, I am simplifying this, but you get the idea.



Dr. Lanzoni and Dr. Zoso in the laboratory



Dr. Dagmar Klein—she's a little scary she's so smart

These three researchers obviously have a strong bond and work well together. It's apparent with every comment and response to my questions. They are in sync and focused and extremely professional. I comment on this to Giacomo as we leave and walk upstairs to my next meeting.

He replies that he is “truly walking on the shoulders of giants.” I ask him who he was quoting, not remembering the philosopher’s name, and he quickly pulls out his phone to check it out. We find that it was Bernard of Chartres a 12th Century French Botanist. Ironically, at that moment, Dr. Ricordi the CEO of the DRI, walks by on his way out and says hello, greeting us with a big smile. “THE SHOULDERS OF GIANTS”. INDEED!

I marvel at how interacting with these scientists reminds me that the DRI not only has the greatest scientific minds at work, determined to find a cure for Type I diabetes, but they also have good human beings, whose hearts are open and generous. Thank God for them all.

## **BEE GEE BRIGADE #4–BARRY AND LINDA–STARING DOWN DIABETES**

Posted on [February 25, 2015](#) by [morobinbarrystories](#)



Barry and the boys supporting the DRIF at the Haute Tea this past September

February 25, 2015

Part 4 of this report includes info for fans affected by diabetes and a look at another special scientist who is working to eradicate this terrible disease.

Most of us have heard the phrase “Knowledge is power”. Well, I certainly believe this is true. Although a cliché, it’s not only true; it takes away the fear one possesses when faced with a challenge such as dealing with diabetes. If you or someone in your world of family and friends suffers from diabetes, please go to this site:

<https://www.diabetesresearch.org/Register?tab=1>

Here you can register to get the latest research, learn about events and read the news about DRIF. Remember that **information is liberating!** You can make a difference by knowing as much as possible about the DRIF and its work and learning what you can personally do to help.

Now let’s meet another super scientist at the DRI!



Dr. Luca Inverardi with Aimee Siegel Harris, Manager of Donor Relations

I was again blessed to meet another valuable member of the research team at the DRI when I encountered Dr. Luca Inverardi. Very tall, looking like a long distance runner ready for the race, he appeared outside of Gary Kleiman's office to say hello. Complimenting my cookies (I brought some Italian specialties for a treat), he impressed me with his broad smile and strong presence. Maybe it was his height (height does demand authority for sure) or maybe it was his laid back demeanor, but I was immediately at ease with this outgoing and interesting man.

Dr. Inverardi is an area leader for DRI Cell Production, Regeneration, and Stem Cell Research Program. He is also Director of Immunobiology of Islet Transplantation (remember those islets?) and is a Research Professor of Medicine, Microbiology and Immunology at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine. Yes, that's quite an intimidating list of titles, but this man was not intimidating at all. So what does he do?

Dr. Inverardi works on cell therapy. Put simply, he is working with different cell types to restore natural insulin production. With the stem cells, the scientists obtain a few from different sources and grow them into large quantities. Remember, stem cells have the capacity to become any tissue or organ of the body and have potential to create an unlimited supply of tissue for transplantation. Cord stem cells, for example, are multipotent, which means they may transfer toward most tissues and organs, including PANCREATIC BETA CELLS! Jackpot!

The DRI is working on improved methods of cell harvesting, cell culture and cell preservation, and Dr. Inverardi's division is comprised of multi-disciplinary scientists working in molecular biology, immunology, pancreatic stem cell development, pathology and immunogenetics. Let's just say he does it all, and I was grateful to get the chance to meet a scientist of this stature.

So I hope that fans everywhere will get on their computers and join the DRI as Insiders and educate themselves about every aspect of the research and what they can do to help. Take the knowledge they have to offer and fight against diabetes. You can do it!