

## ***About Dr. Dennis Slamon***

By Adrienne Papp from Cited Material

Dr. Dennis Slamon is one of the miracle workers at the center of Stand Up To Cancer. His role in the development of Herceptin is widely known and celebrated in philanthropic circles, the cancer community, scientific journals, and what he refers to as “the lay press.” Robert Bazell’s book *HER-2: The Making of Herceptin, a Revolutionary Treatment for Breast Cancer*, details Slamon’s often times frustrated but ultimately triumphant journey through the maze of institutional biomedical science out onto the crest of a new wave of targeted exploration and therapy in translational cancer research.



*Dr. Dennis Slamon*

Picture credit: UCLA

Bazell’s book, “told like a good television script,” according to the New York Times Book Review, is the basis for an upcoming Lifetime movie, with Harry Connick, Jr. playing the leading man: Dennis Slamon. So even if you haven’t heard the story yet, get basic cable and you’ll be able to tune in at some point in the near future to get the scoop. The gist of the story of Herceptin, and in part, Dennis Slamon (POSSIBLE SPOILER ALERT), is this:

Dennis Slamon is from New Castle, PA, just West of Pittsburgh—a region known more for its propensity to produce hall-of-fame quarterbacks than world-class oncologists. But Dennis Slamon wasn't very good at football. And he drew what seemed to be the only biology teacher at his high school who wasn't a member of the football team's coaching staff.

Instead, he got a rookie. “This guy was just starting. He had a fire in his belly, was excited about the subject, and just turned me on to this whole idea of biology and biologic processes. And what it meant, and its sort of secrets and the questions of life itself.” By then Slamon already knew the power of medicine, learned as child when he watched as his parents' faces would flood with relief each time the doctor set foot in the Slamon home on a house call.

So it was probably a good thing that he turned out not to have a golden arm. Nothing against Dan Marino or Joe Montana, but Slamon ended up becoming a doctor and a researcher; his unwavering belief in the power of hard, objective data helped him to join the ranks of those who understood breast cancer not as one single disease but as having identifiable subtypes, various pathways. This in turn led him to help identify a genetic alteration that was part of the pathogenesis of one of the more aggressive forms of breast cancer. His belief in looking at results without pre-conceived notions led him toward the theory that antibodies might reverse or mitigate the effect of the fateful alteration and derail the disease.

It very nearly didn't happen. Skepticism ran deep, and Slamon and his closest colleagues worked hard to champion the power of the data that they produced. Eventually, relief came in the form of a cash grant from Revlon and the Entertainment Industry Foundation, with efforts spearheaded by Lilly Tartikoff and Lisa Paulsen.



#### INTERVIEW

### Dennis J Slamon, MD, PhD

Dr Slamon is Professor of Medicine, Chief of the Division of Hematology/Oncology and Director of Clinical/Translational Research at the Jonsson Comprehensive Cancer Center of the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA in Los Angeles, California.

Picture Credit: UCLA



The 16th Annual Entertainment Industry Foundation Revlon Run/walk For Women Times Square, NYC May 4, 2013  
 Photos by Sonia Moskowitz, Globe Photos Inc 2013 Alan Ennis, Lilly Tartikoff, Dr. Dennis Slamon, Lisa Paulsen [-](#)  
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**Dr. Dennis Slamon and Harry Connick Jr. discuss Herceptin during shooting the film: *“Living Proof”***

Picture Credit: UCLA

By 1998, Herceptin broke through clinical trials to become one of the first gene-based therapies for cancer. It targeted the HER-2 alteration and helped to change the landscape of cancer research and treatment, transforming one of the most lethal forms of breast cancer into one of the most manageable. Future generations of women can be grateful that Dennis Slamon was a lousy football player, or he might never have jack-hammered his way from New Castle to new science and triumphed over the calcified cognoscenti regulating research.

It's a good story, made even better by the fact that it's not fiction.

### Practice Information:

Clinical Interest(s):

Breast

Ovarian Cancer

### Scientific Interest(s):

For 12 years, Dr. Dennis Slamon and his colleagues conducted clinical and laboratory research that led to the development of the breast cancer drug Herceptin. The drug targets a specific genetic alteration found in about 30 percent of breast cancer patients. In 1998, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved the use of the Herceptin monoclonal antibody for treatment of advanced breast cancer. Slamon's research proved a relationship between the gene HER-2/neu, which encodes a tyrosine kinase, and a particularly aggressive form of breast cancer. He continues to place research as one of his top priorities, and is currently investigating the effectiveness of Herceptin in newly diagnosed breast cancer patients. Slamon is also working to develop new treatments for women with breast and ovarian cancers.

### Selected Cancer-Related Publications:

Britten CD, Kabbinavar F, Randolph Hecht J, Bello CL, Li J, Baum C, Slamon D, Hecht JR. A phase I and pharmacokinetic study of sunitinib administered daily for 2 weeks, followed by a 1-week off period. *Cancer Chemother Pharmacol.* 2007.

Finn RS, Dering J, Ginther C, Wilson CA, Glaspy P, Tchekmedyian N, Slamon DJ. Dasatinib, an orally active small molecule inhibitor of both the src and abl kinases, selectively inhibits growth of basal-type/"triple-negative" breast cancer cell lines growing in vitro. *Breast Cancer Res Treat.* 2007.

Hinestrosa MC, Dickersin K, Klein P, Mayer M, Noss K, Slamon D, Sledge G, Visco FM. Shaping the future of biomarker research in breast cancer to

ensure clinical relevance. *Nat Rev Cancer*. 2007; 7(4): 309-15.

Jones LW, Haykowsky M, Peddle CJ, Joy AA, Pituskin EN, Tkachuk LM, Courneya KS, Slamon DJ, Mackey JR. Cardiovascular risk profile of patients with HER2/neu-positive breast cancer treated with anthracycline-taxane-containing adjuvant chemotherapy and/or trastuzumab. *Cancer Epidemiol Biomarkers Prev*. 2007; 16(5): 1026-31.

Munster PN, Britten CD, Mita M, Gelmon K, Minton SE, Moulder S, Slamon DJ, Guo F, Letrent SP, Denis L, Tolcher AW. First study of the safety, tolerability, and pharmacokinetics of CP-724,714 in patients with advanced malignant solid HER2-expressing tumors. *Clin Cancer Res*. 2007; 13(4): 1238-45.

### In the News:

[FDA Approves New Drug that has Shown Groundbreaking Results in Patients with Estrogen-Receptor Positive Advanced Breast Cancer](#)

[New Study Finds Promising Drug Doubled Positive Effect in Hormone-Receptor Positive Breast Cancer](#)

[May is National Cancer Research Month  
Promising Drug Doubled Positive Effect in Hormone-Receptor Positive Breast Cancer](#)

[VIDEO: UCLA Scientists Will Test Drug to Block Stem Cells Leading to Cancer  
UCLA Scientists Taking Stem Cell Research to Cancer Patients](#)

[UCLA Cancer Researcher Cited Among Possible Winners of 2013 Nobel Prize  
Breast Cancer Drug Receives Breakthrough Designation from FDA](#)

[VIDEO: High School Student Brings Chemo Bags to Cancer Patients  
May is National Cancer Research Month](#)

[VIDEO: Dr. Dennis Slamon Discusses the Importance of Participating in Clinical Trials](#)

[AUDIO: Dr. Dennis Slamon and the Story of Herceptin](#)

[VIDEO: Herceptin and Chemotherapy Treatment Combo Increases Survival Rates in Early Breast Cancer Patients](#)

[Survival Significantly Increased in Early Breast Cancer after Treatment with Herceptin and Chemotherapy](#)

[Medicine is in His DNA: A Conversation with Dennis Slamon](#)

VIDEO: Herceptin Gives Cancer Survivor Second Chance at Life

VIDEO: Dr. Dennis Slamon—Challenging "One Size Fits All" Cancer Therapies  
May is National Cancer Research Month

Cancer Researcher Receives Prestigious Scheele Award

UCLA Researchers Receive \$49.2 Million in Grants to Fund Research

VIDEO: Vons Donates \$700,000 to Support Cancer Research  
Dual Oral Combination Treatment Shows Promise for Metastatic Breast  
Cancer

NBC News: Breast Cancer Chemotherapy Risk  
Survival Increased in Early Stage Breast Cancer After Herceptin-  
Chemotherapy Treatment

