A new cancer research prize has been established with funding from an unlikely source. Two hedge fund managers, Joel Greenblatt and Robert Goldstein of private investment firm Gotham Capital, together with Gary Curhan of Harvard Medical School, have created the Gotham Prize for Cancer Research. One million dollars will be awarded annually to an individual with the most innovative idea in cancer research, with an additional $250,000 prize for the best idea in pediatric oncology, sponsored by the Ira Sohn Conference Foundation.

The prize was launched in May at the 12th annual Ira Sohn Investment Research Conference, a charity cancer event named for a financial trader who died of cancer at age 29 in 1993. Greenblatt and Goldstein conceived of the prize to parallel a successful investment firm Gotham Capital, together with Robert Goldstein of private investment firm Gotham Capital, together with Robert Goldstein of private

Members of the Web site first post a short synopsis of their idea about the diagnosis, prevention, treatment, or etiology of cancer, and other members are then encouraged to discuss the ideas on the Web site. While the official deadline for submitting a proposal for consideration for this year’s prize is December 31, Curhan says that “the quality of the online discussion will be one of the factors considered in selecting the winner so the sooner an idea is submitted the better.” Applications for the 2007 prize will be evaluated in January 2008 and the winner announced the following month; Curhan notes that the idea is to continue awarding the Gotham Prize and the Ira Sohn pediatric prize in perpetuity.

The organizers hope that the Gotham Prize will help to fill some of the gaps and lead to accelerated progress in the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of cancer. “We will only make significant progress in cancer research by learning from each other’s successes and mistakes and by building on each other’s knowledge.”

Ushma S. Neill

Cancer researchers try to curry favor with Curhan.

The Gotham Prize: a beacon for cancer researchers