

GIVING PLEDGE

One of the most memorable moments in my life was at a charity dinner I was attending for a breast cancer cause. A woman approached me and said, "I just wanted to say thank you—because of you my sister is alive." I happened to be standing next to the man who was really responsible for that wonderful news—Dr. Dennis Slamon.

I first learned of Dr. Slamon's research about 20 years ago when we were introduced by a mutual friend, Lily Tartikoff. He told me he had found abnormally large quantities of a gene called HER2 in about 30% of breast-cancer tumors. But he hadn't yet proven that the gene played a pivotal role in the disease. He wanted to begin testing antibodies that might slow some of the more aggressive forms of cancer. The trouble was the research wasn't developed enough for drug-company backing, and funding it with government grants would add years to the study. The idea of funding this immediately appealed to me. I have always been interested in giving to projects that may not get done otherwise. If the research wasn't productive, I would have spent money to no avail, but, if the idea worked, the potential was enormous—it was a risk I was willing to take. I asked Dr. Slamon what he needed and then told him to get to work.

The result of that research was Herceptin, the only drug known to cure certain types of breast cancer. And it started helping women, like that woman's sister whom I will probably never meet, a full 10 years earlier than if Dr. Slamon had not received my gift.

I can think of no greater example as to why giving now and seeing the benefits first hand can be the single most rewarding thing any of us can do. I support this pledge to designate half my assets for the benefit of charitable purposes during my lifetime and through my foundation.

Ronald O. Perelman