FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
BOSTON, MA (November 2025)—

New Medical Advisory Board Unites Top Scleroderma Experts Across U.S. and Europe

The Scleroderma Foundation of California (SFCA), the Scleroderma Foundation of Greater Chicago (SFGC) and Friends of World Scleroderma Foundation (FWSF) have formed a joint Medical Advisory Board (MAB) uniting national and international experts to expand clinician education, increase early-diagnosis awareness and advance research in scleroderma.

Scleroderma (systemic sclerosis) is a rare autoimmune disease affecting an estimated 200,000 to 300,000 people in the United States. Although treatments can manage symptoms, no cure exists and diagnosis is often delayed. The new MAB brings together leading experts and specialists to strengthen understanding of early warning signs, encourage interdisciplinary collaboration and improve access to accurate information for patients and clinicians nationwide.

“As we deepen collaboration across these organizations, we’re creating new pathways to improve care and accelerate discovery,” said Dr. Dan Furst, MAB Chair and Professor of Medicine at UCLA. “Working together strengthens education, accelerates research and ensures patients benefit from the best possible care informed by the latest science and clinical insights.”

“As a pharmacist and someone who has lived with scleroderma for more than 30 years, I know firsthand how important it is for patients to have access to the right information at the right time,” said Dr. JoAnna Harper, MAB and FWSF board member. “This collaboration gives me hope that more patients will feel supported and more providers will recognize scleroderma sooner.”

Dr. Dan Furst (MAB chair) and Dr. JoAnna Harper (MAB member and scleroderma patient) are available for interviews to discuss early diagnosis and the MAB’s collaborative impact.

Medical Advisory Board

The MAB guides collaborative efforts across the three partner organizations by enhancing education for clinicians and patients, strengthening early-diagnosis awareness, offering expert insight on research proposals and supporting the development of new patient-focused resources. Members represent leading institutions across the U.S. and international partners in Europe.

Medical Advisory Board Includes the Following Experts:

Francesco Boin, MD
Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, Los Angeles, CA

Phillip J. Clements, MD
UCLA David Geffen School of Medicine, Los Angeles

David Fiorentino, MD, PhD
Stanford University School of Medicine, Stanford, CA

Dan E. Furst, MD (Chair)
UCLA David Geffen School of Medicine, Los Angeles

JoAnna Harper, PharmD, RPh
Pain Partners, LLC, Minnetonka, MN

Suzanne Kafaja, MD
UCLA David Geffen School of Medicine, Los Angeles

Dinesh Khanna, MD, MSc
University of Michigan Medical School, Ann Arbor, MI

David Leader, MPH, DMD
Tufts Univ. School of Dental Medicine, Boston, MA

Michael Macklin, MD, PharmD
University of Chicago Medicine, Chicago, IL

Marco Matucci-Cerinic, MD, PhD
Vita-Salute San Raffaele University, Milan, Italy

Carrie L. Richardson, MD
Northwestern Medicine, Chicago, IL

Lesley A. Saketkoo, MD
LCMC Health, New Orleans, LA

About the Scleroderma Foundation of California (SFCA – myscleroderma.org)

The Scleroderma Foundation of California empowers the scleroderma community through programs focused on support, education, research and advocacy. Founded in 1989 as a regional effort, it now reaches across California, Arizona, Hawaii and Nevada to ensure timely diagnosis, access to care and connection to a strong community of support. SFCA's 26 support groups, professional guidance services and education programs help people understand their condition and navigate life with scleroderma. Through partnerships across the U.S. and abroad, SFCA advances patient-centered research and awareness—remaining steadfast in its vision that everyone with scleroderma receives the care, understanding and hope they deserve until a cure is found.

About the Scleroderma Foundation of Greater Chicago (SFGC – stopscleroderma.org)

The Scleroderma Foundation of Greater Chicago has improved lives for more than 40 years by supporting people living with scleroderma and their families, advancing research and building a strong national community of hope. What began as a grassroots effort around one family's dining table has grown into a respected leader in patient support, education, advocacy and research funding—reaching individuals and families nationwide. Through educational programs, annual patient conferences and partnerships with medical experts, SFGC helps people better understand their diagnosis, connect with others on the same journey and stay informed about advances in care. The organization remains committed to helping people live well today while working toward better treatments and ultimately a cure.

About Friends of World Scleroderma Foundation (FWSF – FriendsWSF.org)

Friends of World Scleroderma Foundation is a Massachusetts-based nonprofit established in 2015 by leading rheumatologists to advance the mission of the World Scleroderma Foundation (WSF) in North America. Headquartered in Switzerland, WSF brings together clinicians and researchers across Europe to deepen scientific understanding and improve care for people with scleroderma. FWSF extends that mission by focusing on medical education and research that support earlier diagnosis, strengthen international collaboration and improve outcomes for those living with the disease. Through its work with global collaborators, FWSF advances patient-centered research, interdisciplinary education and initiatives that unite the worldwide scleroderma community in the search for better treatments and meaningful improvements in patients' lives.

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