



EUGENE T. GRYGIELKO
CLASS OF 1991

Gene was born at Jersey Shore Medical Center in 1973. Shortly after his birth, his family moved from Belmar to Point Pleasant Borough where he resided for the entirety of his elementary and secondary education. As a youngster, he was involved in a variety of sports, but his passion for football became firmly established once he put on a uniform with the Point Pleasant Golden Elks. In high school, he was a three year varsity letter holder in wrestling and football and was a member of several district and divisional championship teams in both sports. Unfortunately, his sports career was cut short his senior year by a severe knee injury.

As stated in the lyrics from the song “Closing Time”, Gene also believes that “every new beginning comes from some other beginning's end”, and after graduating from Point in 1991, Gene redirected his passion for participating in sports to his studies at the College of Charleston in South Carolina, where he majored in biology, with an emphasis in molecular biology. In 1995, he graduated with a bachelors of science and returned to Point Pleasant for the summer to soak up some tourist money before embarking on a 3 month trip backpacking through Europe. Continuing with his travels, he spent the summer of 1997 touring many of the majestic U.S. and Canadian national parks in the west with two other fellow graduates from Point Pleasant. His U.S. travels ended in Portland, Oregon where he resided for the next two years. There he put his college studies to practice working for Dr. Virginia Brooks in the Physiology and Pharmacology Department in Oregon Health Science University. The focus of his research in Dr. Brook’s lab was on the effects of salt intake on blood pressure, which resulted in the publication of two authored scientific papers.

In the summer of 1999, he was recruited back to the East Coast by the pharmaceutical company SmithKline Beecham to work as a scientist in the renal pharmacology department in King of Prussia, Pennsylvania. The focus of his research was on the identification of novel drugs to prevent fibrosis in the kidney, a common long-term outcome found in the diabetic population. This work resulted in ten authored scientific papers, the most notable of which outline the identification of novel inhibitors of Transforming Growth Factor and the potential medical applications of this inhibition in reducing kidney fibrosis. During this period of time, he was accepted to the Biotechnology Program in the School of Engineering and Applied Sciences at University of Pennsylvania, where he completed his graduate degree in 2002.

In 2004, back at GlaxoSmithKline (SmithKline Beecham renamed after merging with Glaxo Wellcome), he was awarded a scientific excellence award for the development of robotic automation to help prosecute throughput screening of drug molecules. The following year, he left the renal failure field to pursue research in women's health with the goal to help identify a treatment for endometriosis, a common and debilitating condition in women. His team was successful in identifying a new treatment with the potential to suppress endometriosis by partially inhibiting the progesterone receptor. This drug made it over the difficult hurdle of bench science to clinic and is now entering clinical trials.

In 2008, he once again shifted his therapeutic area of research and moved into the heart failure field. At the same time, he also changed careers, moving from a scientific position to a management role overseeing strategy and operations for a group of 90 research scientists. This new role allowed him to leverage his drug discovery experience by utilizing state-of-the-art technology and the collaboration of scientists throughout the globe to potentially identify the next generation of treatments for heart failure in the near future. He continues in this pursuit today, surrounded by some of the best scientists and physicians in drug discovery.

Gene currently resides in Pennsylvania with his wife Amy and their three lovely daughters: Ella, Haiden and Gracie.