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Supporting Kidney Disease Research

UC Santa Barbara molecular biologist Thomas Weimbs, left, recently welcomed Glenn Frommer, right, to the campus as the latter whizzed through Santa Barbara on a 5,300 mile Ride for PKD. The Weimbs Lab was one of the stops on this ambitious bicycle odyssey to raise awareness and research funding to find a treatment for polycystic kidney disease, which affects 600,000 Americans and more than 12.4 million people globally.

“I wanted to get to as many of the universities conducting PKD research, and chapters of the PKD Foundation as I could,” said Frommer, who was diagnosed with the as yet incurable disease in 2013 and has since dedicated his time to supporting the effort to find a cure.

Active members in the PKD research community, Weimbs and his team of researchers have made strides in the understanding and treatment of the disease in recent years. Their research has resulted in a better understanding of how these cysts form, and the development of a medical food designed to mimic the fasting response, which has been associated with the stabilization and even reversal of the growth of the apparently glucose-dependent cysts.

After a breakfast visit with students and researchers, Weimbs and Frommer rode out to the Hilton Santa Barbara, to attend a scientific conference, the 2022 Metabolic Health Summit, to get the latest science on ketosis and metabolic health. For Frommer, the visit was a chance to raise awareness and build community to advance PKD research. For the Weimbs Lab, it was an important lesson in why they

do the research they do.

“I think it is extremely motivating for the researchers and students in my lab to have the opportunity to meet with people affected by polycystic kidney disease,” Weimbs said. “Our researchers are already working hard to investigate the molecular mechanisms underlying this disease and come up with treatments. Talking with a patient reminds everyone why we are doing all this. Lab research can be very abstract but spending a morning with someone like Glenn suddenly makes it all real again.”

About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.