



Press Release | UC SAN DIEGO GRTC NEWS

# Glycobiology Research & Training Center Receives \$300,000 Gift from Drs. Nissi and Ajit Varki in Support of Women's Health Initiative

August 26, 2023 | By: Jonathan Vega, Chief Operating Officer

Drs. Nissi and Ajit Varki have donated \$300,000 in support of the Glycobiology Research and Training Center (GRTC) and the vision of its new Co-Directors Dr. Amanda Lewis and Dr. Kamil Godula at UC San Diego. The donation will help nucleate new initiatives, including the [GLycoscience Of Women's health \(GLOW\)](http://Glycoscience.Of.Women's.health) initiative. [Glow.ucsd.edu](http://Glow.ucsd.edu)



*Pictured above are Drs. Nissi and Ajit Varki whose gift to GLOW supports ground-breaking collaborations to advance areas of women's health research in the glycosciences.*



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## Founders' Vision for GRTC.

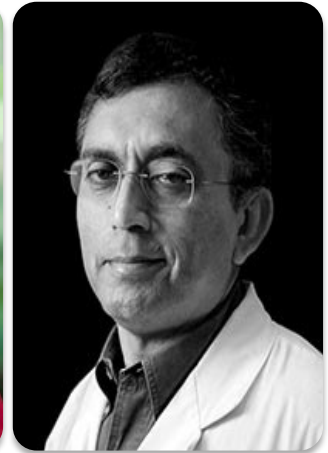
As envisioned by its founding leadership, GRTC is an intellectual home for leading investigators discovering how glycans participate in normal physiology and disease. Many people recognize carbohydrates for their dietary and metabolic roles. A more comprehensive picture reveals complex chains of carbohydrates on the cell surfaces of all living things, where they participate in many aspects of cellular identity and function. Carbohydrates linked together as glycans also play fundamental roles in-between cells and organ compartments, regulating the behavior and function of the cells and organs they also physically support as a structural whole.

As a founding Director of the GRTC, Dr. Ajit Varki helped establish one of the top global academic centers advancing research, training, and education in glycosciences – the study of carbohydrates.

As founding Director of the Histopathology Core at GRTC, Dr. Nissi Varki brings a unique and unparalleled glycol-centric viewpoint to her research as a pathologist. As a scientific duo, Nissi and Ajit Varki have also made key contributions to the field of glycobiology, illuminating the first functional biochemical difference between humans and chimpanzees. This difference stems from a gene inactivation that distinguishes cell surfaces in humans by the lack of a specific monosaccharide found in abundance on the cell surfaces of their chimpanzee counterparts.



Dr. Nissi Varki



Dr. Ajit Varki

## \$1M CARTA Donation.

The gift is part of a larger donation originally designated in 2020 to support the UC San Diego/Salk Center for Academic Research and Training in Anthropogeny (CARTA). Drs. Nissi and Ajit Varki donated more than \$1 million to CARTA, derived from start-up shares previously donated by the couple. Read full story in *UC San Diego Today* about the CARTA donation from Drs. Nissi and Ajit Varki:

[UC San Diego Professors Donate More than \\$1M to Transdisciplinary Study of the Origins of Humankind](#)

*"Nissi and Ajit Varki have made many foundational contributions to the scientific environment at the GRTC and the field of glycobiology. This generous gift will help nurture our vision to bring glycosciences to focus on important issues pertaining to women's health and to support new initiatives in diversity and inclusion," said Amanda Lewis, Co-Director of the GRTC at UC San Diego. "We thank Nissi and Ajit for their continued partnership in support of the new vision for the Glycobiology Research and Training Center at UCSD."*

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