

Doctor–Coach Duo to Race 860 Miles on Bike, Spreading Awareness for Rare Disease

JUNE 2015 – When pulmonary hypertension specialists with a passion for endurance sports join forces with athletes pumped to race for a cause, Team PHeNomenal Hope is born. This month, two teammates – a pulmonologist and an endurance sports coach – will participate in the Race Across the West (RAW).

Their mission: To raise awareness of pulmonary hypertension along the 860-mile trek from Oceanside, Calif. to Durango, Colo.

“This disease affects many people, yet has largely flown under the radar as far as awareness goes,” said Patricia George, MD – Team PHeNomenal Hope co-founder and a pulmonologist at University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC). “People across the world living with PH are in their own race every day. Team PH athletes realize how lucky we are to be in a state of health that allows us to race to an extreme degree to bring awareness for the patients who can’t.”

Founded in 2011, Team PHeNomenal Hope uses ultra-endurance sporting events like marathons, bicycle races and triathlons as platforms for team members to spread the word about pulmonary hypertension (PH). By partnering with the Pulmonary Hypertension Association (PHA), UPMC, Bayer Healthcare and numerous other sponsors, the team’s efforts are expanding into a grassroots movement nationwide.

A four-woman squad represented Team PHeNomenal Hope last June, completing what is widely recognized as the world’s toughest endurance bicycle race – the 3,000-mile journey dubbed Race Across America (RAAM). George, along with quality engineer and endurance sports coach Anne-Marie Alderson, will put their personal RAAM experience to use when they push off the RAW starting line on June 16.

“Being a part of Team PHeNomenal Hope and doing Race Across America in 2014 is by far my most memorable race,” said Alderson, owner of Alderson Endurance and Wellness, which provides coaching services to triathletes, runners, and cyclists of all abilities. “I feel incredibly lucky to have the opportunity to participate in RAW this year.”

“Since we started our team, the PH community has been extremely supportive and encouraging, and knowing they are behind us makes the experience even more meaningful. Having completed RAAM last year helps me to know what to expect at RAW. There will be challenging parts, like dealing with the desert heat and sleep deprivation. But, I know I have what it takes to succeed and that every pedal stroke puts us closer to the finish line in Durango.”

Many nonprofits participate in RAAM and RAW each year, but unlike some others, Team PHeNomenal Hope directly involves its beneficiaries – PH patients. This year, like 2014, patients plan to be present for all Team PHeNomenal Hope RAW festivities, including the press conference post-event on June 15 and the nonprofit’s starting line celebration slated for the morning of race day.

In fact, George said she is most excited about reconnecting with California-area patients she hasn’t seen since last year at RAAM.

"To give you a context, it will feel like a reunion. I can't wait to see old 'PHriends'," George said. "What is remarkable about the pulmonary hypertension community is that it is such a strong and tightly knit community. These patients epitomize strength and endurance everyday as they live with this disease."

"The people we've met along the way, from the very beginning at the PHA Conference in 2012 to now, are not people we race *for* as much as people we race *with*. Having the community's presence at the start and finish lines, seeing their smiles, reminds us of what we're really doing *together* – racing closer to the cure with each event."

About Team PHenomenal Hope

Team PHenomenal Hope was created with the knowledge that finding a cure for pulmonary hypertension begins with increasing awareness about the disease. They support using ultra-endurance sports as a platform to educate people about PH and the need for a cure. Through the Race of our Lives campaign, in partnership with the Pulmonary Hypertension Association, Team PH was able to raise more than \$130,000 for their cause. Throughout 2015, Team PHenomenal Hope has racers participating in events across the globe each month. For more information, including a schedule of events, visit <http://www.teamphenomenalhope.org/>.