

## **Pittsburgh to Paris: Nonprofit Goes Global, Cycling for Awareness of Rare Disease Doctor to represent Team PHenomenal Hope in famous long-distance randonnée**

Twelve hundred kilometers stand between Team PHenomenal Hope and two major finish lines – one physical, one metaphorical. The Pittsburgh-based nonprofit will participate in Paris-Brest-Paris (PBP), the most famous long-distance randonnée in the world. Doing so will expand its international effort to spread awareness for a little-known disease.

On August 17, Dr. Patricia George, MD, will begin the longest ride of her life on behalf of Team PHenomenal Hope. The reason for pushing herself to the physical limit, according to George, is to shine light on the debilitating disease her patients battle every day – pulmonary hypertension (PH).

“This illness affects millions worldwide, yet a very small percentage of people have heard of it,” said George, Team PH co-founder and a pulmonary hypertension specialist at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC).

“The disease is marked by high blood pressure in the lungs, which is often misdiagnosed and can be life-threatening. As one can imagine, people across the world living with PH are in their own tough race every single day. We created Team PHenomenal Hope in order to spread awareness of this through a platform our team really enjoys – ultra-endurance events – and PBP is world-renowned in this regard.”

Team PHenomenal Hope, made up of professionals in medical and endurance communities, participates in athletic events across the nation each month. In March of 2015, Team athlete Amanda Gabarda participated in an Ironman Triathlon in the Philippines – the nonprofit’s first and only international appearance to date.

With George’s upcoming solo cycling trek, the organization is set to make its European debut. The 764-mile route begins in Paris, extends to the city of Brest, then backtracks to Paris, and must be covered in 90 hours or less.

“PBP is a really huge deal to me. It’s a little intimidating, to be honest,” George said. “It’s a really, really long ride – twice as far as I’ve ever ridden before. But this is huge, and sometimes you have to push your limits to make huge steps forward.”

Team PHenomenal Hope, who has partnered with major sponsors like Bayer Healthcare, UPMC and Pulmonary Hypertension Association (PHA), is on a mission to not only spread word of the cause, but to raise funds to help find a cure. The nonprofit does so by directly involving supporters in events, from printing donor names on race t-shirts to dedicating route checkpoints to loved ones battling the disease. All proceeds go to the PHA to support research and patient services.

“Of course a cure is waiting at our ultimate finish line, but we realize finding a cure begins with making people aware of pulmonary hypertension,” George said. “With the invaluable support of

our sponsors and donors, we've been able to really start spreading the word. And that's what this comes down to – raising global awareness about a global disease, and racing to make a difference in the lives of people with pulmonary hypertension.”

***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, including the well-known Race Across the West and Paris-Brest-Paris. For more information, including a schedule of events, visit <http://www.teamphenomenalhope.org/>. To learn more about their participation in PBP, visit <http://www.teamphenomenalhope.org/paris-brest-paris/>.*