

Yale CANCER
CENTER

answers

WNPR Connecticut Public Radio



Hosts

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Row for Hope

**Guest Expert:
Paul Ridley**

Yale Cancer Center Answers

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Welcome to Yale Cancer Center Answers with Dr. Ed Chu and Dr. Ken Miller. I am Bruce Barber. Dr. Chu is Deputy Director and Chief of Medical Oncology at Yale Cancer Center, and he is an internationally recognized expert on colorectal cancer. Dr. Miller is the Director of the Connecticut Challenge Survivorship Program and he is also the author of "Choices in Breast Cancer Treatment." If you would like to join the discussion, you can contact the doctors directly at canceranswers@yale.edu or 1-888-234-4YCC. This evening, Dr. Ken Miller welcomes Paul Ridley. Paul is a cancer advocate and fundraiser and he is also the founder of Row for Hope.

- Miller Before we talk about what your project is, which is pretty amazing, what got you interested in supporting cancer research?
- Ridley My family history is like a lot of people, one where I did not really have a choice in a lot of ways. When I was 17 years old and a senior in high school, my mom was diagnosed with malignant melanoma and she passed away in early 2001. Later that year, my dad was diagnosed with prostate cancer, was successfully treated, and is now perfectly healthy. What that gave me and my family is two very different outcomes of what can happen when you are diagnosed with cancer. That really made me think that I should be doing something in my life to help families like mine have more positive outcomes like my dad's, and fewer outcomes like my mom's.
- Miller I think you are right, so many of us have had an experience like this when we were kids and it sounds like it has sent you on a mission. A more personal question, how have those experiences affected you as a person?
- Ridley Well for one thing, skin cancer, unlike some cancers, is one that I feel like I can prevent. That means I have become very conscious of being out in the sun and what my sun exposure is and it takes a lot of different forms. One of them is that I do mountain lake vacations, not beach vacations, things like that. My mom's experience, and the experiences in my family, has really affected my everyday life.
- Miller And it sounds like you also spread the word too, which you are doing here.
- Ridley Right, absolutely.
- Miller What is Row for Hope?
- Ridley Row for Hope is a 501(c)(3), non-profit organization that I founded along with my sister, Joy, to raise money for cancer research. There are a lot of organizations like that, but this one is a bit unique in that it revolves around my upcoming transatlantic solo and unsupported rowing expedition.

3:14 into mp3 file http://www.yalecancercenter.org/podcast/Answers_Nov-23-08.mp3

Miller I have seen a picture of you in the boat. Tell us where you are going to row from and to, and tell us about this boat that you are using.

Ridley I am rowing from east to west, from the Canary Islands right off Morocco in Northwestern Africa. It is about 3000 miles, 2950 to be exact, across the Atlantic Ocean to Antigua in the Caribbean.

Miller Which sounds absolutely amazing, how did you pick that route?

Ridley That is actually a relatively common ocean crossing route, and the same route that Christopher Columbus took, I think, on his third voyage. This happens to be a route where at that time of year the trade winds are as much in my favor as they can be. They may not be helping me along the whole way, but the idea is they at least would not be blowing me backwards.

Miller How do you train for something like that?

Ridley Lots of the rowing, as I am sure you can imagine. I am almost three years into a very ocean-rowing specific training program. That means an awful lot of time on the rowing machine, a lot of time by myself on the water in a boat, but the rowing is also supplemented with some other things to sort of mix it up. This includes yoga, some weight lifting, and some cross-training.

Miller Absolutely, it sounds very exciting. Did you do crew in college?

Ridley Oh, yeah, I was a big rower. To row across the ocean you absolutely have to love every stroke, that is kind of a prerequisite I think.

Miller How old are you?

Ridley I am 25.

Miller Because you have been doing it for a while, does it keep getting better, or do you ever get tired of it?

Ridley I guess the fact that I have not really thought about getting tired of it means the answer is no.

Miller Okay.

Ridley There happens to be something about rowing that is absolutely therapeutic, and I think a lot of rowers will tell you that when you are on the water, that is when you do your best thinking. It is not just about rowing, it is about everything else too.

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- Miller What is your personal goal during the journey, and what is your fundraising goal?
- Ridley The first goal that I am focused on with this expedition is to have a safe crossing. As one can imagine, there are some risks involved with any ocean crossing, like with a lot of things. Number one goal is to have a safe crossing. After that, unlike some other expeditions, I am not focused on setting a record or getting anywhere close to the fastest crossing on this route or anything like that. Although, given the way that the expedition is setup, and my age, and the boat that I am using, I have every reason to believe that I could be fast and could set a record, but what we are really focused on is the cancer research fundraising aspect. Our goal there is equally aggressive as rowing across the Atlantic, as we would like to raise more than \$500,000 for cancer research at Yale Cancer Center.
- Miller We here at Yale would love for you to do that too because it is all going for a really good cause. When did you decide to create Row for Hope and start this project?
- Ridley I first found out about ocean rowing a little over three years ago, and even though I have been a rower I did not immediately make the connection and realize that this would be how I would do my part in support of cancer research. I started talking to some of the other people that have rowed oceans, and believe it or not, there is a small community that has done it and they are mostly based in Britain, but what I learned was that people have been able to raise impressive amounts of money for causes that they really care about through ocean rowing. I knew I had the rowing background and I knew that the idea of rowing for 60 to 80 days across the Atlantic did not scare me, and I eventually made the connection. What came from that was, of course, the legal structure and founding a Connecticut non-profit corporation called Row for Hope. That is sort of where this all came from, and none of it would have been possible without the help of my sister, Joy, who is also a rower.
- Miller Which is terrific. What are the logistics of this, the setting up of the corporation, was that difficult?
- Ridley Of course, you know, one of the real benefits of a project like this is that I get to learn an awful lot about things that I really did not expect. When I first started this whole project I thought I was signing up for a long rowing trip, and I have been at it for three years and I have not taken a single stroke across the Atlantic yet. So, the logistics of it are huge, but I have enjoyed it. You have to decide that you are going to enjoy every minute of it. I have learned a lot, but I think it is all moving us in the right direction.

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- Miller I have to tell you, at the cancer center all of us are very excited about your project. Where do you see the funds going once they reach Yale Cancer Center? What kind of programs would you like to see supported?
- Ridley After learning a lot about Yale Cancer Center and speaking with an awful lot of people here, we ended up partnering closely with Dr. Mario Sznol who is taking part in leading really impressive research specifically in the area of melanoma, which of course is important to me because I lost my mom to melanoma.
- Miller You are absolutely right, there are some wonderful projects going on that are hopefully going to create, and are already creating, new hope, and they can hopefully find cures for that disease. How can supporters help you raise money for this project?
- Ridley The best way to do it, and the easiest way, is to lead people, friends, family and coworkers to the expedition's website which is www.rowforhope.com. On the website, when I am out on the Atlantic starting in early December, I will be writing daily updates to my blog and people will be able to track the progress of me in my boat on a map of the World. You can see how much rowing I am doing everyday and really get in touch with me and the project that way.
- Miller For the web address, is that Row for Hope without any dashes in between?
- Ridley It is all one word and all spelled out.
- Miller Terrific, we are going to take a short break for a medical minute. Please come back and join us with Paul Ridley who is going to be rowing across the Atlantic, which is really exciting.
- The American Cancer Society estimates that in 2008 there will be over 62,000 new cases of melanoma in this country and about 2400 patients are diagnosed annually here in Connecticut alone. While melanoma accounts for only about 4% of skin cancer cases, it causes the most skin cancer deaths, but when detected early, melanoma is easily treated and highly curable. Clinical trials are currently underway at Federally Designated Comprehensive Cancer Centers such as the one at Yale to test innovative new treatments for melanoma. Patients enrolled in these trials are given access to newly available medicines, which have not yet been approved by the Food and Drug Administration. This has been a medical minute and you will find more information at www.yalecancercenter.org. You are listening to the WNPR Health Forum from Connecticut Public Radio.*
- Miller Welcome back to Yale Cancer Center Answers. This is Dr. Ken Miller and I am joined today by Paul Ridley from an organization called Row for Hope.

11:43 into mp3 file http://www.yalecancercenter.org/podcast/Answers_Nov-23-08.mp3

Paul, how many mile is it you're traveling east to west?

Ridley East to west in a straight line, it is 2950 miles. My actual course will take me probably 300 to 400 miles southwest into what is a band of trade winds in the Atlantic, and at that point, when I really get in the sweet spot there, I will head due west. I expect that my actual course will be more like 3300 to may 3400 miles.

Miller I feel better. I will tell you why, because you said 2950, and I was going to say what about the other 50 miles, but it sounds like you have got that covered. Let's get to the stuff I think people really want to know about, tell about this boat?

Ridley The boat is one that is very different from what most people have in mind when you talk about a row boat. This boat is custom-designed, custom-built, to my specifications. That includes my height and my weight and it really fits me and fits this expedition. It is 19 feet 4 inches long, 5 feet 4 inches wide at the widest point, and is designed for the open ocean. That means it is able to withstand 30 plus foot seas and able to protect me even in the worst of storms.

Miller How do you do that? I am trying to picture small boats with very tough seas, how did you design a boat with that in mind?

Ridley One of the most important characteristics of this boat, that is extremely important in open ocean, is that there are enclosed cabins forward and aft. The aft cabin is the living space and that is where I will be spending all of my time when I am not rowing; where I'll be sleeping, eating, navigating, everything happens in this aft cabin which is airtight and watertight. That is where a lot of the safety comes in, and the cabins, forward and aft, make the boat such that it will roll if it needs to. The fear of capsizes is negated somewhat by the fact that the boat will pop back up if a wave were to come that would capsizes it.

Miller How much does this boat weigh?

Ridley It is 450 pounds bare, fully loaded for the expedition, I expect it coming in around 1200 or 1300 pounds. For a little perspective, I have spent most of my time rowing in flat water racing shells, and a single skull weighs about 32 pounds.

Miller Wow, so it is a huge difference.

Ridley Yeah.

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Miller So you are going to have, I am just doing a little math there, about 800 pounds of gear. What does that consist of?

Ridley Mostly food, I have an incentive to eat as much as I can in the first few days so I don't have to carry it across the ocean.

Miller Right.

Ridley Lots of food, lots of safety equipment, lots of technology on the boat that will help me stay in touch with my land-based support team, and also help me give updates to everyone that is able to follow me through www.rowforhope.com. I will write updates to the blog and send pictures back in and even make phone calls back to do radio, TV and newspaper interviews, that sort of thing.

Miller I will ask in advance, will we be able to do an interview from the boat?

Ridley Of course.

Miller That would be awesome to have you out there and sharing the story. What kind of food are you going to have, and how many calories do you think you will be eating a day?

Ridley Most of the food is dehydrated food, which is the same type of thing that you would have if you are going on a long camping trip. What that means is that you add two cups of water and wait for 10 minutes and what you end up with is a different tasting bag of mush, depending on what is being served that day. You do not do it for the food, and unfortunately, I am expecting to eat 8000 to 10,000 calories a day of this food. I wish I could bring a pizza everyday and eat that instead, but it has to come from mostly dehydrated food, which actually has some fairly good nutrition. It will give me all of the vitamins and calories that I need to support 10 to 12 hours of rowing a day.

Miller How many calories do you think that you will burn?

Ridley Probably more than I will be able to consume. Getting 8000 calories into your body on any given day is a challenge given what is available to me. Based on the research I have done in speaking with people that have done this before, most people tend to lose 20 to 30 pounds. Right now I am very much in the process of trying to put on some weight before I leave, so I have a little bit of money in the bank.

Miller How do you calculate the amount of water that you will need and how many pounds is that?

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Ridley I am expecting a liter an hour when I am rowing, so it is 10 to 12 liters a day, plus about 5 liters every night for recovery. That gets me just under 6 gallons, and fortunately, in my case and for this boat, I do not have to carry my own water. I have the luxury of a water desalinator that is electric and powered through the boat solar electrical system. This electric desalinator will produce 6.3 gallons an hour, which is an awful lot of water.

Miller I see. Thankfully you really do not have to carry that weight in terms of water.

Ridley I do have some backup fresh water reserves, but for the most part I am making my own fresh water everyday.

Miller In terms of technology, you have already given us a little bit of an idea, but share with us what is on the boat.

Ridley This boat is loaded with technology. Technology in recent years has made a crossing like this much more comfortable, and I really have a lot of luxuries when it comes to technology. This boat, for example, in addition to the satellite phone that we mentioned, has VHF radios, and a handful of backup GPS systems. I am also able to navigate by the stars, celestially with a sextant, but even though it is a sort of a novelty to be able to do that, hopefully I do not have to use it. Lots of GPS, navigation equipment, lots of safety equipment, and all sorts of technology; this boat is bristling with antennas and solar panels and everything.

Miller If people want to see the boat, should they also go to the website?

Ridley Absolutely, there are lots of pictures of me rowing the boat and a lot more information on Row for Hope and the cause. Even the logistics of the expedition are on the website.

Miller What will a typical day be like while you are at sea?

Ridley Every day is really structured around getting 10 to 12 hours behind the oars, and that will come in 2-hour shifts. Each shift will be buffered by eating, as you can imagine. I will wake up probably about 5 a.m., have a little snack, and get in 2 hours before breakfast, eat breakfast, another 2 hours mid morning, and another 2 hours before lunch. At that point, around noon and towards the heat of the day, I will be taking some time off and sleeping in the cabin and staying out of the sun for a few hours until mid afternoon when I am back on the oars. At that point I should get in hopefully three more 2-hour rowing shifts before it is time to go to bed for the night.

Miller How many miles a day?

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- Ridley 50 to 60 miles a day would be ideal, but that will probably not exactly be consistent when there are storms, which of course there are going to be. It may be negative mileage, or no mileage at all, and when things are really going well, some ocean row boats have made as much as 80 to 90 miles a day.
- Miller I am picturing rowing in college, oftentimes that's a team sport, and I can picture you as someone who is actively involved in a team, and this is a solo activity, this is several months out at sea by yourself. Do you picture that being lonely? How do you look at that part of things?
- Ridley You are absolutely right about rowing. It is thought to be, in a lot of ways, the ultimate team sport, whereas this is a very individual expedition. What I have found is that not only am I going to be very much alone for the three months I am out there, but my training for the last three years has all been alone as well. One of the things I am really looking forward to is getting back in an 8-men boat when I get back, but as far as the solitude when I am out there, I absolutely will be the only person there, and in a lot of ways that could be lonely, but at the same time, putting this in perspective, it is something that I will do once and I know there are a lot of people following me back home and I am able to receive messages from them, and a lot of times some of the best motivation for rowers out there is getting messages from friends, family, and even from strangers.
- Miller I would like our listeners to keep in touch with you and we now have a way to do it, and we will go back over that again later. I guess being old enough to be your father, and I am sure your own dad has thought about it, and that is safety issues. What backup do you have just in case there is a problem?
- Ridley The safety of this project is really number 1, and a lot of the safety equipment that I have is technology based. I am carrying a life raft for example, but hopefully I never have to use it. The builder of my boat was really surprised when I told him I was going to do that because he said the boat is the best life raft you can ever possibly have, but I am taking precautions like that. Also, technology wise, I have an emergency beacon called an EPIRB, which, through a series of satellites, if something were to go wrong, I am able to flick the switch and that will send an emergency signal back to the international monitoring station outside of Washington DC, which will then organize a response.
- Miller Obviously I hope you never have to use it, but you certainly plan for it. What is your training schedule like?
- Ridley It is actually pretty light. I have been training hard for 2-1/2 years or so, but right now, I am more on an eating schedule than a training schedule, which is

nice in a lot of ways. I am on maintenance now trying to stay healthy and stay motivated and get everything that needs to be done before I leave done, so that I can arrive at the starting line in the best possible position and best possible health.

Miller How will you get there and how will the boat the get there?

Ridley The boat is being shipped over in a 20-foot ocean freight container, and the boat is leaving about a month before I do so that it can clear customs and go through all the different scrutineering that it needs to go through to get clearance to leave, which of course the authorities in the Canary Islands are very interested in. They will be ensuring the safety of me and the boat even before I get there. I will leave about a week before it is time to go and then I will be on standby for 9 or 10 days waiting for the weather to turn around my way and then I am off.

Miller The authorities in the Canary Islands, are they there for you?

Ridley Absolutely, there is a long checklist of equipment and different preparations and certifications that I need to have to do a trip like this, even though it is pretty rare here in the States. I will be the third American to row across an ocean solo, but there have been several dozen more British people and a handful of people from other countries that have done this, so the authorities in the Canaries know what to expect and are very much interested in helping us do this in the safest way possible.

Miller How many people have rowed this route?

Ridley At last count I think there were 34 that had done this solo on this route, and most of them happen to be British. I will be first American to do it in I think about 8 or 10 years.

Miller Are there other routes that are popular for this unusual sport?

Ridley Not really, you hear a little bit about solo rowers crossing the North Atlantic, which in this part of the country probably will get more press because they typically leave either from New York City or from Cape Cod and will row over to Ireland or to Britain, and that is really the only other solo crossing route.

Miller Why did you choose this one versus that one, I am just wondering?

Ridley The sort of mid-Atlantic route that I am taking is the “easy one.”

Miller Easy is relative.

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Ridley The route I am taking is a warmer solo route, and you do not have to worry about hurricanes, to be completely honest. In the North Atlantic you have a cold, foggy adventure, whereas down south you are at Caribbean latitude, so I get to row in the sun.

Miller You are a smart guy. Let me ask you a little bit about yourself. You have got this incredible trip coming up, which is an amazing fundraiser for a great cause, what do you want to do afterwards?

Ridley That is a great question. Hopefully, I do not lose my love of rowing afterwards. I will probably spend some time on the couch, which is something I have not been able to do recently, but I am not really sure what comes next. Certainly, I do not think this will be the end of Row for Hope.

Miller Right.

Ridley I will probably be out on the road showing off the boat, doing more publicity and fundraising, and hopefully finding the next person that wants to row across the Atlantic.

Miller And in terms of your own career goals, what are they?

Ridley I am 25. I will probably go back to school at some point, potentially to study non-profit management or something like that, but we will see. I have learned so much and have been exposed to so many different things through this project that I think it will be very much a time for some reflection.

Miller If I may ask you a personal question, and I hope this is an okay one, if your mom was here, what would she be saying about this project?

Ridley I would like to think that she would be completely supportive and be pushing me off into the ocean, and in some ways that is probably true, but at the same time she would still very much be my mother and would be very worried as I am sure you would expect, and would be hoping that I call her everyday.

Miller Well said, I have to say this has been a really wonderful session Paul. Thanks for joining us.

Ridley Thank you.

Miller Again, this is Dr. Ken Miller from Yale Cancer Center Answers and we want to wish Paul Ridley a wonderful journey, as he is doing terrific fundraising for the Yale Cancer Center. Until next time, this is Dr. Ken Miller from the Yale Cancer Center wishing you a safe and healthy week.

If you have any questions for the doctors or would like to share your comments, just go to www.yalecancercenter.org where you can also subscribe to our podcast and find written transcripts of past programs. Next week, we will hear from Dr. Frank Detterbeck and Dr. Lynn Tanoue who join us in the observation of lung cancer awareness month. I am Bruce Barber, and you are listening to the WNPR Health Forum from Connecticut Public Radio.