A portrait of Diane Kamen, M.D., a woman with long brown hair, smiling. She is wearing a black blazer over a grey top, a necklace with a butterfly pendant, and a pearl earring. The background is an office setting with a desk and a computer monitor.

“We certainly see a lot of people with lupus who have no known family history.”

—Diane Kamen, M.D.
MUSC rheumatologist

Diane Kamen, MD, and colleagues see 1,600 new lupus patients annually.


have succumbed to lupus include former Philippine president Ferdinand Marcos, journalist Charles Kuralt and actor Ray Walston. Each of them lived a normal or close-to-normal life span, as do most lupus patients. But lupus has earned its “cruel” nickname. Underscoring its fatal breadth is the 2012 death of Sasha McHale, the daughter of NBA Hall of Famer Kevin McHale. Sasha, a college basketball player herself, was only 23.

And one’s station in life has no bearing on who contracts lupus and who doesn’t. Singer Toni Braxton has it and entertainer Lady Gaga has revealed a family history of lupus.

At MUSC, approximately 1,600 new lupus patients are diagnosed annually.

“Our goal is to keep people out of the hospital with as few complications as possible,” Kamen says. “That involves early diagnosis, trying to catch people and start treatment for lupus before the disease’s damage occurs.

“So we do a lot of outreach in the community to try to



“We have a large research team with a wide range of expertise to bring everything together, trying to figure out what it is that is making certain people prone to autoimmune disease.”

