

among the firm's big wins. Maris doesn't intend to stop pursuing these kinds of deals. But he has other ambitions, too. "There are plenty of people, including us, that want to invest in consumer Internet, but we can do more than that," he says. He now has 36 percent of the fund's assets invested in life sciences, up from 6 percent in 2013.

"There are a lot of billionaires in Silicon Valley, but in the end, we are all heading to the same place," Maris says. "If given the choice between making a lot of money or finding a way to make people live longer, what do you choose?"

Maris is standing at the front of Joshua Tree, Google Ventures' large conference room. Each room at headquarters is named after a national park. "OK, we have a lot to get through today," he tells his staff. The group meets here biweekly to talk about prospects and strategy.

Maris has a team of 70, most of whom are in the room this day or patched in by phone or video. The group includes the fund's 17 investing partners, who are in charge of finding startups. Among the investing partners are Joe Kraus, co-founder of Excite; Rich Miner, co-founder of Android; and David Krane, employee No. 84 at Google.

The mood in the room is casual. Some staffers sit cross-legged on the floor; others curl up on soft felt couches. There are a lot of jokes. One partner starts his presentation with a slide entitled "Secret Project"—which most people in the room already know about—and concludes it with a doctored-up photo of Maris's head superimposed on the body of someone playing tambourine. It's a jab at the boss, who married the singer-songwriter Tristan Prettyman last August and recently went on tour with her. Everyone laughs. Maris smiles, but immediately he's back to business. "Time is the one thing I can't get back and can't give back to you," he says, turning to an agenda on the screen behind him.

"I know you're all aware of the conference happening this week," Maris says. An hour away in San Francisco, JPMorgan Chase is hosting its annual health-care confab, nicknamed the Super Bowl of Health Care. Thousands of pharmaceutical executives and investors have gathered for what has become a huge part of the industry's dealmaking. Most of Google Ventures' life sciences startups are attending. One, Foundation Medicine, which uses genetic data to create diagnostic oncology tools, is generating huge buzz this year. In January, Roche Holding announced plans to take a majority stake in the company, in a transaction valued at \$1 billion. The stock more than doubled the next day. Google Ventures has a 4 percent stake in the company.

For Maris, Foundation Medicine represents the beginning of a revolution. "The analogy I use is this," he says, holding up his iPhone 6. "Even five years ago, this would have been unimaginable. Twenty years ago, you wouldn't have been able to talk to anyone on this."

When Google Ventures invested in Foundation in 2011, the company's promise was mostly theoretical. The world was still waiting for the breakthroughs that have seemed inevitable ever since scientists first mapped the human genome in 2003.

Foundation's team included eminent geneticists, including Eric Lander, one of the leaders of the Human Genome Project. Still, the company had no viable commercial product.

Technology has made huge strides since then, allowing Foundation to create products like its Interactive Cancer Explorer, which is a kind of Google for oncologists, allowing them to do research and devise treatments for their patients.

"We had a lot to learn from the experts in Silicon Valley," says Foundation's CEO, Dr. Michael Pellini, who sought out Google Ventures as an investor for help with designing his company's technology. "Think about Google search. We never think about all the algorithms that go behind what we see on the screen. They were able to do the same for us with genetic information."

"Twenty years ago, without genomics, you could only treat cancer with a poison," Maris says. "That's really different from, 'We can cure your cancer by reverse-engineering a stem cell.' You can now legitimately invest in a company that could cure cancer."

Identifying promising life sciences companies isn't like hunting around Silicon Valley for coders with a cool app.

Biotech companies are built around complicated science. They require millions of dollars in investments, partnerships with big pharma companies, and lengthy clinical trials. To help with his hunt, Maris has brought in scientists as partners. One, Dr.