

# Together

## Together We Can

Newsletter of the Joan Karnell Cancer Center at Pennsylvania Hospital

### Living **EACH** Day Fully:

#### A SURVIVOR'S STORY

by Lynne Caplan

*The speech below was delivered by cancer survivor, Lynne Caplan, on National Cancer Survivors Day on June 9, 2002.*

It is an honor and a blessing to be here today—to share my experience, strength and hope with you. It's great to be alive! Besides, I love any gathering where you get applause just for having a disease!

It seems so fitting to be celebrating life, celebrating cancer survival today—the day of the First Union US Pro Cycling Championship and the Ladies First Union Liberty Classic, otherwise known as the “Tour de Manayunk.”

I am reminded, once again, to be inspired by Lance Armstrong. To remember that I am not a statistic. That even if the odds of survival to five years are low, there are people who comprise that small percentage. When I was given such awful statistics, I immediately told the doctors that it just wasn't acceptable. And I set out to prove their numbers wrong. I calculated everything by how old

my nephews were. And I knew I had to stick around for all the milestones ahead in their lives.

On March 31, 2001, I registered for the Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure. I had never participated in an event like that, and I thought it would be fun as well as worthwhile. Three days later, on April 3, 2001, after nine months or so of complaints, I was sent for an abdominal pelvic ultrasound. On April 6, I picked up a copy of those test results. On April 10, 2001, I saw my internist. On April 11, 2001, I saw my gynecologist at 11:30. By 2:30 that afternoon, I was sitting in a gynecologic oncologist's office learning about the surgery I would need to treat my ovarian cancer.

I had heard that awful word; that word that every person dreads hearing—Cancer — I had Stage IV ovarian cancer. And the doctors were all very grim. On the 12th of April, I had a 2 1/2 hour

MRI, on the 13th a 1 1/2 hour MRI with contrast and two doctor's appointments. On the 19th of April I went in for a pre-surgery colonoscopy. And on April 24, 2001, I was admitted to the hospital for surgery. I had turned 50 years old on April 6, the day I picked up the original ultrasound test results. That was a birthday present I'll never forget. I spent the next twelve days in Graduate Hospital, pretty much not knowing what was going on. My surgery had been far from successful. The cancer was all over and only my ovaries had been removed. I was discharged on May 5, 2001.

Then I came to Pennsylvania Hospital and met wonderful Dr. Mason, my medical oncologist. Dr. Mason and I met on May 9th and I began my chemotherapy on May 10, 2001.

As the Grateful Dead song states, “What a long strange trip it's been.” I remember those first feelings of shock and disbelief, of anger—not because I had cancer.

*(continued on page 4)*

### ICE: Improving the Chemotherapy Experience

This monthly, one-hour program is recommended for patients who are about to begin or have recently begun chemotherapy. Patients and family members are introduced to the basic concepts of chemotherapy, including side effects and symptom management by the chemotherapy nurses. Our social workers and nutritionist will also explain their roles in improving the chemotherapy experience. To learn more about chemotherapy and the impact it will have on you and your family, attend Improving the Chemotherapy Experience. For information about the program contact 215-829-6466. •

Joan Karnell Cancer Center at  
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# Herbal therapies

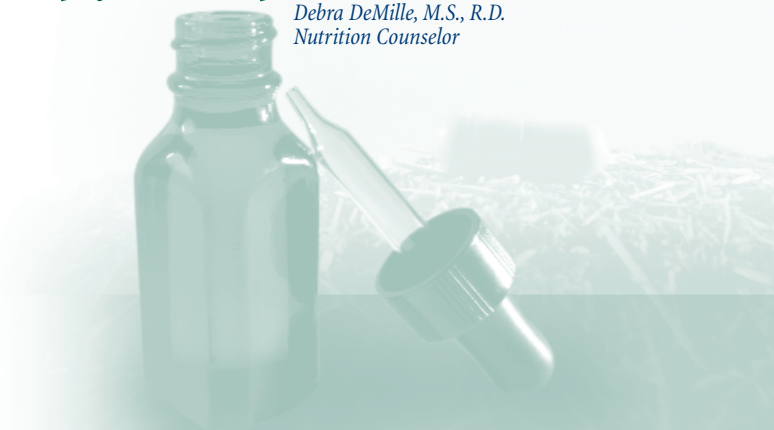
## Are they for everyone?

Debra DeMille, M.S., R.D.  
Nutrition Counselor

When a patient receives a cancer diagnosis, a common first step is to research every possible treatment, including alternative treatments, like herbal therapies. There are numerous opportunities to receive information from the media, internet, health food stores and well-intended friends regarding herbal therapies that may help to fight cancer. While there may be beneficial herbal therapies, you need to use them cautiously because any substance that has the potential to do good, has the potential to do harm. Natural ingredients are not necessarily safe. (Remember arsenic is considered a “natural” ingredient too.)

Prior to investigating an herbal treatment or a vitamin supplement, here are some things to consider:

1. Look for references with studies of people with cancer. Do not be swayed by glossy advertisements. If you have received literature on a product that gives a glimmer of hope for a cure, pass by all of the claims and look for references. Are there studies that address the use of this product in humans with cancer? Always ask “where is the evidence?” Studies conducted in a test tube or on animals may not be translated equally to humans.
2. What is the strength of the evidence? Is the evidence convincing, probably effective, possibly useful or is there insufficient or no evidence of the products’ effectiveness. Unfortunately, there really are a limited number of products that have been thoroughly studied in randomized trials.
3. What are the side effects associated with a therapeutic dose of the herb? Know the side effects so you can watch for them. Unfortunately, chemotherapy may cause nausea, vomiting and bowel distress, but these may also be a side effect of the herb. It’s important to know the cause.
4. Is there a possibility of drug/herb interaction? Many herbs are known to have a negative interaction with the drug Coumadin. St. John’s Wort, commonly taken for mild depression, may interact with other antidepressants, cause drug resistance to anti-retroviral drugs and interfere with some chemotherapies and anticoagulants (such as Coumadin).
5. What is the monthly cost? What are you willing to spend? If a product costs \$300 per month and the data is weak, this is probably not cost effective for you.



Dan Labriola, a Naturopathic doctor warns about the use of herbal and vitamin therapies during chemotherapy or radiation in the book *Complementary Cancer Therapies*. He labels the period where the chemotherapy or radiation is working as the protected zone. It is important to not use a nonconventional therapy during this period if there is the risk that it may decrease the effectiveness of the treatment or further stress processing organs.

Herbal products are not a regulated industry and there are no established standards. You may be getting ingredients other than what you see on the label. A recent example is the herbal combination PC-Spes which has been used by men with prostate cancer. An evaluation of the product found three additional prescription drugs in the product: diethylstilbestrol, Xanax and Coumadin (warfarin). The manufacturer of this product has now withdrawn it from the market and issued a product recall. These ingredients had caused serious side effects.

Many herbs and vitamins alter the platelets, a factor of blood that allows you to clot and not bleed excessively. A few of these are garlic, ginkgo and ginseng. Ginseng can cause blood sugar levels to drop. With this in mind, it is especially important to communicate with your physician the use of these over-the-counter medications if you are going to have surgery. Your doctor may recommend stopping the use of all herbs and vitamins at least one week prior to surgery.

Be upfront with your physician about the use of herbs, vitamins and other supplements. There are resources on herbs available to you through the Joan Karnell Cancer Center at Pennsylvania Hospital. A copy of the American Cancer Society’s Complementary and Alternative Cancer Methods is available for your review in the resource library. Available on request are the PDR (Physician’s Desk Reference) for Herbal Medicines and the PDR for Nutritional Supplements.

For questions regarding herbal treatments and complementary therapies, feel free to contact Debra DeMille at 215-829-6560. •

### SAVE THE DATE

On November 12th, a full-day seminar will be conducted at the Joan Karnell Cancer Center regarding the use of herbs. In this program we will be discussing herbal therapies for symptom management, the culinary use of herbs with anticancer properties and the drug-herb interactions that you need to know about. Please plan to attend. Registration is required. To register, call 215-829-6560.



*Above: Dr. David Mintzer, Tim Morgan, Executive Director of Pennsylvania Hospital and Dr. Chip Staddon spoke at the celebration.*

*Right: Peg Rummel, MSN, RN, Jeffrey Rosenstock, MD, Richard Lackman, MD and John Glassburn, MD pause to pose.*

*Top left: Following a moving introduction by Dr. Thomas Randall, Lynne Caplan delivered the speech featured in this newsletter.*

*Above: Kathy Tomczak, Kate Donnelly, Marianne Englander, Dottie McKeaney, Debra DeMille and Dana were among the many volunteers at Celebrate Life.*

*Top right: Survivor, Dot Pinder Allen (L) signs a quilt square which will be embroidered and incorporated into the Woven Ribbons Quilt. Kay Dych (R) from the Moorestown Area Quilters is coordinating this project which includes survivors among the volunteers who will complete the quilt.*

*Top right: Adele Miller, Shelly Keller and Judy Karff represented the Hope Afloat Dragon Boat Team for breast cancer survivors. In addition to the opportunities to race, this sport provides camaraderie and a sense of focused relaxation and serenity. If you would like to find out more, contact Shelly at 215-233-2449.*

## Celebrate Life:



*Judy-Tudy the clown entertains Sean Lynch. Judy-Tudy made fantastic balloon animals and told outrageous stories.*

On Sunday June 9th, as the days turned warmer and the sun's light lasted longer, the Joan Karnell Cancer Center at Pennsylvania Hospital joined the nation in celebrating not just the warm glow of summer but also the persistence, courage and determination of our cancer survivors. Our doctors, nurses and staff joined together with our patients to Celebrate Life, the theme of this year's National Cancer Survivors Day.

More than 500 survivors, families and staff gathered in the historic Elm Garden to visit with one another, share stories and most of all, appreciate life. As survivors arrived, they were invited to be part of "Woven Ribbons," a series of quilt patches signed by each

survivor that will be assembled into a complete quilt and displayed at next year's Survivors Day. The Moorestown Area Quilters are graciously working on this quilt, whose pattern represents the familiar ribbon pins that are often used as symbols of support for cancer patients.

While survivors signed quilt patches, children at this year's picnic were entertained by Judy-Tudy the Clown and Michigan the Frog as they played and created crafts under the trees in the garden.

Four of the physicians from the Joan Karnell Cancer Center, Allen Barr, MD, Richard Lackman, MD, Thomas Randall, MD, and Joseph Harryhill, MD,



## Survivors' Day 2002

introduced our key-note speakers, who are cancer survivors. These people reflected on the challenges presented by their cancer diagnosis—the ways cancer has resulted in both negative and positive changes to their lives. As the program continued, the Person-to-Person support group received special recognition for its role in helping match cancer survivors with newly diagnosed patients.

Surrounded by beautiful weather and friends and family enabled everyone to Celebrate Life. Special thanks goes to the Joan Karnell Cancer Center Survivors Day Committee, a team of more than 50 people, who coordinated our Survivors Day Celebration. •

# Living EACH Day Fully:

## A SURVIVOR'S STORY

(continued)

After all, the question, isn't "Why me" but "Why not me" – But anger because I felt that the doctors hadn't been paying attention.

I had feelings of confusion, fear, panic, but I didn't really have a lot of time to spend on all those feelings. Once the cancer ball got rolling, it picked up momentum and I was carried along. I realized, very early on, that I had two choices, one was to sit in the corner and feel sorry for myself — to be a victim; the other was to fight for my life. And I chose to fight.

About 19 years ago, under radically different circumstances, I almost died. At that time, I had no real desire to go on; nor did I have much courage or strength. But I have learned a lot in those intervening years, much that has helped me to face and cope with the challenge of living with cancer. This time, when my life was at stake, I wanted to live. And I was willing to do whatever I had to do, to endure whatever I had to, in order to stay alive. And as everyone with cancer knows, sometimes you have to endure a lot.

The two most valuable tools I possessed were a sense of humor and strong faith in God. I had been having frequent, overwhelming hot flashes for a long time. But once my ovaries were removed, I became a veritable firestorm. My most frequent utterance being, "Oh my God, I'm so hot." I could have turned fanning into an Olympic Event. And with hot flashes like these, wearing a wig was out of the question. Besides, my nephew, David, told me that if I wore a wig, I wouldn't be his aunt anymore. And I certainly couldn't let that happen.

Going bald and going wig-less had some unexpected positive benefits. I met lots of wonderful people and had incredible support from dozens of strangers. People who took time to stop and say that they had battled cancer or that someone they loved was battling. Some people stopped to say they would pray for me — and I needed all the prayers I could get. I began to ask people to put me on the prayer lists at their churches or synagogues. A friend even sent my name to some missionaries in Africa! I didn't care where the prayers came from, as long as they kept coming.

And I tried to remember that God wouldn't give me any more than I could handle on any day. I met with Dr. Randall for the first time on September 11, 2001. My mother called me in the morning to tell me the country was being attacked. I turned on the television to be sure she wasn't being overly dramatic. And then, because I had to, I went to my appointment to discuss my second surgery. I had completed six rounds of chemo by this time. The country was being attacked by terrorists and I was facing my own terror. As I sat in Dr. Randall's office—those awful images flashing across the TV screen—I realized fully and completely that having cancer was not the worst thing that could happen.

Thousands of people died that day. Ordinary people who got up and went to work and never had a chance. I was still alive. I still had a chance. And my determination to fight became even stronger. I wondered, in quiet moments, how many of the victims of the terrorist attacks would have readily changed places with me?

It's not always easy and it's certainly not always fun doing battle with cancer. The surgery, the tests, the chemo, the shots, the appointments—it seems never ending. But the people I met—my doctors, the nurses, the entire staff at the Joan Karnell Cancer Center became a family to me. They always had a hug and candy.

And truthfully, some days I came not for the chemo, but for the candy. I had a lot of support—family, friends, professionals and fellow cancer survivors—who stood by me even when I didn't know they were there. It's been a truly amazing experience. Probably not one I'd have chosen for myself, but one I have learned so very much from—about cancer, about myself and about the preciousness of life.

I was so flattered to be asked to speak as a survivor today. After all, my last of ten chemos was only in January. But once you enter the world of cancer, survival takes on a new definition. Survival is every day that you are alive once you've been diagnosed. •



## September is

### **GYNECOLOGICAL CANCER AWARENESS MONTH**

On Sunday, September 22 The Carolyn Marks Walk for the Whisper will unite ovarian cancer survivors, families, friends, caregivers and the community for a day of education, fun and celebration along Kelly Drive in Philadelphia. The Joan Karnell Cancer Center at Pennsylvania Hospital is a sponsor of this walk and will provide information at the health fair. Registration begins at 11am and registration forms are available at the Joan Karnell Cancer Center or by calling 610-942-9495. •



## *Music Therapy* at the Joan Karnell Cancer Center

### *A new form of complementary therapy for oncology patients will begin this fall.*

Music therapy services will commence at the Cancer Center in mid-September. Music therapists have been working in medical settings for more than 20 years, providing a range of services using both active methods (such as playing instruments and singing) and receptive methods (music-assisted relaxation). These methods address a broad range of physical and psychological issues encountered as a patient, such as pain, nausea, depression and stress.

The services are provided by Dr. Tony Meadows, PhD, MT-BC, LPC, a Board-Certified Music Therapist and licensed professional counselor. Tony has nearly 15 years clinical experience, working with both children and adults. He will be at the Cancer Center and he will also be working on the inpatient unit.

This service is open to all patients. No previous music training or skills are necessary to participate. For more information, or to make an appointment, call Marylou Osterman at 215-829-6466. •

## What's New IN THE PATIENT AND FAMILY EDUCATION ROOM

Located off the waiting room at the Joan Karnell Cancer Center at Pennsylvania Hospital, the Patient and Family Education Room offers current information on cancer treatment. We continue to acquire new books that are categorized by subject and are available for loan. The room is also equipped with a computer with Internet access, a TV and VCR to view videotapes, and a phone for local calls. For children, we've included a play table with coloring books and puzzles to help pass the time.

Designed with you, our patients, in mind, the Patient and Family Education Room offers a quiet space for you and your family to gather information. Your doctors and nurses will also be providing information specifically about your disease and treatment. If you need additional information about a specific topic, please note it on our comment sheet and we will do our best to get the information for you. And, if you currently have a book on loan, we would like to remind you to return it upon your next visit. •

## What's New in GYN Oncology?

Welcome to Susan Hunter, CRNP, MSN, OCN, who has joined the staff of the Joan Karnell Cancer Center at Pennsylvania Hospital. Susan recently graduated from the University of Pennsylvania School of Nursing with a Master's Degree in Nursing from the Oncology Nurse Practitioner Program. She will be working closely with Dr. Thomas Randall and Dr. Patricia Ford as the GYN-Oncology Nurse Practitioner. Susan will be a facilitator for the GYN Cancer Support Group. This group meets on the second Monday of each month and will resume this fall with a new name to encourage women with various types of gynecologic cancer to attend. Call Susan Hunter at 215-829-8259 to register or for more information. •

# Supportive Care Services CALENDAR

The Joan Karnell Cancer Center offers a variety of support groups to help cancer patients and their families cope with the diagnosis of cancer. Led by trained professionals, these groups offer emotional support, education, an opportunity to learn ways of coping with uncertainty and change, and a chance to meet others who face similar issues. One-day seminars are also regularly scheduled on a variety of topics for patients and families.

## Look Good, Feel Better

To gain control over the cosmetic effects of cancer treatment, the American Cancer Society and experts from the cosmetic industry offer a special program for patients while they are being treated. This group is led by a registered cosmetic advisor who addresses hair and skin care issues and provides various make-up tips.

## Nutrition Well Being

This workshop is designed for individuals with cancer and their loved ones to enhance nutrition knowledge and to provide skills that emphasize the role that healthy eating plays in cancer treatment and recovery.

## Fatigue Day

Several workshops are held throughout the year to help patients learn how to manage cancer-related fatigue by addressing the medical aspects of fatigue, energy conservation, relaxation, exercise and nutrition.

## I Can Cope

During four weekly sessions, healthcare professionals provide factual, straightforward information and answers about the day-to-day issues of living with cancer. Learn about diagnosis, treatment, side effects, emotions, self-esteem and community resources. The workshops are led by Pennsylvania Hospital professionals in cooperation with the American Cancer Society.

## Be the Best You Can Be

Created for cancer patients over age 65, this seminar offers information about drug interactions, health insurance, financial information, nutrition, emotional and physical well being. A cancer diagnosis is a life changing experience. Be the Best You Can Be helps provide answers to questions for seniors who are coping with this disease.

## Strength for Caring

A one-day seminar of education and psychosocial support for caregivers of cancer patients is offered periodically during the year. This program focuses on the needs of the caregiver, including education about cancer and its treatment, how to talk to the doctor, how to deal with common emotional issues such as anger and depression, time management skills, and community resources.

## National Cancer Survivors Day

Help celebrate life with National Cancer Survivors Day. Joan Karnell Cancer Center staff and patients (former and current) join together to honor cancer survivors and those who support them. The event highlights how cancer survivors can live active, productive lives despite the challenges they may face.

## PROSTATE CANCER SCREENING

Tuesday, September 17

4:00 PM - 8:00 PM

Wednesday, September 25

9:00 AM - 12 noon

To register, call 1-800-789-PENN.

## FACING FORWARD: BREAST CANCER

Support and Information

Tuesday, September 17

5:30 PM - 7:00 PM

To register, call 1-800-789-PENN.

## MOVING ON

*A meeting for patients who have recently completed treatment for cancer*

Wednesday, September 18

1:30 PM - 3:00 PM

## ICE

*Improving the Chemotherapy Experience*

Wednesday, September 25

2:30 PM - 3:30 PM

Wednesday, October 30

2:30 PM - 3:30 PM

Wednesday, December 11

2:30 PM - 3:30 PM

## SICKLE CELL AWARENESS DAY

Tuesday, September 24

10:00 AM - 3:00 PM

## NUTRITION WELL BEING

*The first session is for patients currently on treatment, the second is for patients who have completed treatment*

Wednesday, September 25

5:30 PM - 7:30 PM

Wednesday, October 2

5:30 PM - 7:30 PM

## NUTRITION WELL BEING

*Different location - Penn Medicine at Radnor*

Wednesday, October 9

1:00 PM - 3:00 PM

## PERSON TO PERSON

Thursday, September 26

5:30 PM - 7:00 PM

Thursday, October 31

5:30 PM - 7:00 PM

## LEUKEMIA & LYMPHOMA SUPPORT GROUP

Thursday, October 3

5:00 PM - 7:00 PM

Thursday, December 5

5:00 PM - 7:00 PM

## I CAN COPE

Thursday, October 10

9:00 AM - 3:00 PM

## GYN CANCER SUPPORT GROUP

Monday, October 14

4:00 PM - 6:00 PM

Monday, November 11

4:00 PM - 6:00 PM

## BREAST CANCER: EARLY DETECTION IS THE KEY

*A day long seminar in Zubrow Auditorium in recognition of Breast Cancer Awareness Month*

Wednesday, October 23

8:30 AM - 1:30 PM

## IN THE LOOKING GLASS

*A day long seminar*

Monday, October 28

8:30 AM - 3:00 PM

## SEMINAR: HERBS AND NUTRITION SUPPLEMENTS WORKSHOP

*A day long seminar*

Tuesday, November 12

9:00 AM - 3:00 PM

## HOPE FOR THE HOLIDAYS

*A day long event focusing on coping during the holiday season.*

Tuesday, December 3

9:00 AM - 3:00 PM

*Meetings are held in the Conference Room, Farm Journal Building, 2nd Floor, 230 West Washington Square. Registration is required. For more information, call 215-829-6466.*

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