

HEALTH MATTERS

Cancer ISSUE

INSIDE:

Gifts from the Heart

Hyperbaric Help in Healing
Cancer Nutrition Myths
New Infusion Center Opens
& Much, Much More...



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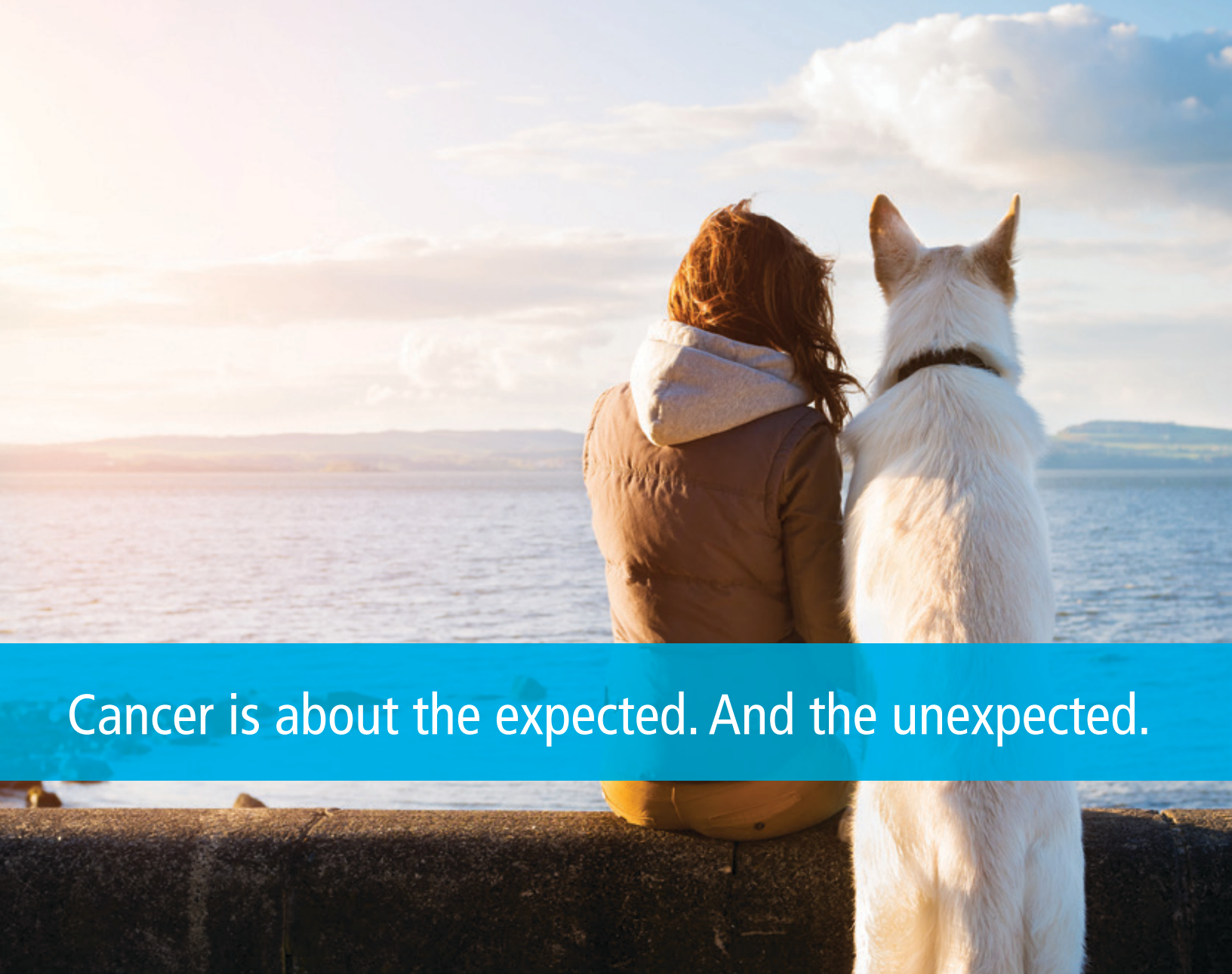
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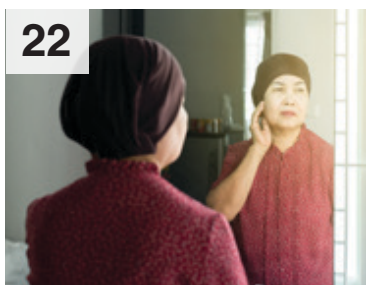
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DID YOU KNOW?

- > A recent study showed approximately one-fifth of patients with cancer still experienced post-traumatic stress disorder several months after diagnosis. Although PTSD is primarily known to develop in individuals following a traumatic event such as a serious accident or natural disaster, it can also occur in patients diagnosed with cancer.

Reference: The Wiley Foundation, www.wiley.com/en-us

CANCER

ISSUE

Owen Carr with mom Jenifer Carr, left, and Niko Peralta with mom Mylene Peralta. The boys created special gift bags for cancer patients after their mothers were diagnosed.

Cover Photo by Randy Tunnell



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Editor's Note



Photo by Susan Gerbic

More people are surviving cancer than ever before, thanks to advances in cancer prevention, early detection, treatment, and follow-up care. That's a fact. Just in the United States alone, says the American Cancer Society, more than 15.5 million people are alive today after being diagnosed with cancer.

And that's good news, right? Of course it is. But it also means that more attention needs to be paid to what is called survivorship. There will be new challenges for better understanding and managing the treatment and care of older adult survivors.

Surviving cancer can leave a host of problems in its wake — physical, emotional, and financial hardships often persist for years after diagnosis and treatment, according to ACS: "Cancer survivors are also at greater risk for developing second cancers and other health conditions. Add to that emotional struggles, strains on personal relationships, and the profound fear of cancer recurrence. The effects of cancer don't simply end when treatment does."

Emotional support can make a big difference in the lives of cancer patients, as Tom Leyde's article points out in this issue. But it's important for cancer survivors to also get the help they need. Hopefully, more resources will be available for survivors in the years to come as these issues are studied more in depth.

Here's to your health!

Kathryn McKenzie

HEALTH+MATTERS

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Photos by Randy Tunnell

BY MELANIE BRETZ

GIFTS FROM THE HEART

INSPIRED BY THEIR MOTHERS, TEENS HELP OTHER CANCER PATIENTS

Jenifer Carr and Mylene Peralta have a lot in common. They gave birth to their sons—Owen Carr and Niko Peralta—at Salinas Valley Memorial Hospital on the same day, just 17 minutes apart. And both women were diagnosed with breast cancer, each at age 50, in January 2018.

Both moms are now in survivorship. And they couldn't be prouder of their sons.

Brought together by myriad twists of fate, Niko and Owen formed a bond that would inspire and help not only their moms, but many other local women who are undergoing cancer treatment. For their efforts, the teens were honored by the Salinas Valley Memorial Healthcare System Board of Directors at the board's meeting in May.

Niko and Owen's project was sparked by something their mothers received when going through cancer treatment at Salinas Valley Memorial. Jen and Mylene each received a bag of comfort items from Chemo Angels, a program of the hospital's Cancer Resource Center. This made an impression, not only on the women, but also on their sons.

The boys, both eighth-graders at the International School of Monterey last year when their mothers were diagnosed, had to do a community project as a graduation requirement.

Their project mentor helped them choose a mission for their project, which was to help residents in Monterey County feel safe and happy.

"I remember my mom getting the gifts and how much that helped her," says Owen. "Niko and I decided to do something similar for our school project."

The boys had signed up to volunteer at the Yellow Brick Road shop in Carmel, but then decided to do something more personal, says Niko: "We wanted to honor our moms and my grandmother who is also a cancer survivor."

It was something they did to help others, but it also helped them as well in dealing with fears over their mothers' health. "The best way to help yourself get through a tough situation is to focus on helping others," says Owen. The experience brought the teens and their families closer, ignited a spirit of service and set a shining example of caring in action.

The boys first interviewed their moms about simple things that helped make them more comfortable, kept their minds occupied and brightened their spirits during chemotherapy and other infusion appointments. Jenifer mentioned that she always seemed to forget headphones for listening to music and the hospital's meditation channel.

Niko and Owen also talked to other women who received cancer treatment through SVMHS to gather ideas. The boys made a list that included many of the same items found in the Chemo Angel bags.

They also added their own touches. Their baskets featured items such as books, warm socks, lip balm, tissues, peppermints and snacks, plus the addition of headphones. Niko and Owen started with 15 baskets, and the project quickly grew to 50 baskets and bags.

When they decided to shift their project focus to the baskets, Yellow Brick Road set up a bin in the shop for appropriate donated items.

THE DEPTH OF THEIR UNDERSTANDING AND EMPATHY WAS TOUCHING AS BOTH A MOM AND A HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER."

- JENIFER CARR



"Niko and I sold some of our things like our old bikes and toys to raise money to buy more items," says Owen. They also bought inspirational and humorous books from the Friends of Marina Library.

Perhaps one of the most touching elements were cards with motivational messages that Owen and Niko wrote and printed on colorful paper. "The notes told their personal stories of what they experienced when Mylene and I were diagnosed and in treatment, and were full of encouragement to never give up," says Jenifer. "The depth of their understanding and empathy was touching as both a mom and a high school teacher."

The boys made a presentation at the hospital's newly opened Outpatient Infusion Center and it was heartily received. Niko and Owen raised money, gathered the items, assembled the baskets and delivered them to nurses at Salinas Valley Memorial for distribution to cancer patients, and realized they were not just helping others, but also themselves.

The pride in the actions of their sons and the compassion the boys showed through this project was something that touched the hearts of many people. It never occurred to Jenifer and Mylene that the boys needed to act, to do something as a way of coping and grieving. They continue to be inspired by their sons.

Yet another similarity was that the two women were completely blindsided by their diagnosis of breast cancer. Their shared reaction was one of shock and regret of not acting sooner to get a screening mammogram, and in Mylene's case, despite a family history of breast cancer.



But their doctors, nurses and staff at the Nancy Ausonio Mammography Center and the Cancer Resource Center helped them see that the diagnosis wasn't their fault.

"They encouraged us to be honest with our kids," says Mylene, a nurse at Salinas Valley Memorial Hospital. "They said it was a chance to teach our kids resilience and that they can get through things that are just not fair."

After shedding more than a few tears, the women opted to put their experience to work in getting the word out about the importance of annual mammograms.

"Everyone, from the valet parking attendants to the technicians to the nurses and doctors all helped us get through this," says Jenifer. ■

Melanie Bretz lives in Monterey and has written on a wide range of topics, including health care, during a writing career spanning more than 30 years.



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SVMHS INFUSION CENTER

Designed with patients in mind, it's easing chemo treatments

BY KATHRYN MCKENZIE

Photo courtesy of SVMHS



Infusion Center staff from left: Donna Hughes, Mary Ann Artuz, Michelle Roberts Reyes, Leslie Souza, Elena Hermosillo, Marilyn Barriger and Terrie Salah.

THERE'S A DISTINCT HUSH inside the new Outpatient Infusion Center in Salinas, part of Salinas Valley Memorial Healthcare System's cancer treatment corridor along Romie Lane. And it's designed that way — to be quiet for the sake of its patients.

"We want them to be comfortable as possible," says infusion center clinical manager Michelle Roberts Reyes. "We want them to be calm and relaxed."

Everything about the 7,580-square-foot facility has been designed with patients in mind, and in particular for those undergoing chemotherapy, a process which kills cancer cells but is sometimes difficult for patients. Due to the types of compounds used in chemotherapy, patients may be nauseated or fatigued, in addition to the unique stresses that come along with battling cancer.

The Outpatient Infusion Center offers what Reyes calls "a one-stop shop" for these patients, where they can have their lab work done prior to chemo treatments, an in-house pharmacy mixes medications on site, and a team of specialists is there to help patients and their families.

Patients receive chemo or other infusions in 14 bays and three private rooms, and are able to relax in comfortable chairs or on gurneys and watch TV or visit with a friend, if they wish. They can also dim the lights for comfort, and take advance of healthy snacks and beverages at no charge — all important features for people who may spend as long as 10 hours receiving an infusion.

"We want to make it a little bit easier for patients who are symptomatic from chemo," says Reyes, a registered nurse who has been with SVMHS for 22 years. "Our goal is to streamline everything and make it smoother and easier for them."

In addition to providing chemotherapy, the center also serves other patients who need infusions of various types, such as for pulmonary hypertension or Crohn's disease.

The infusion center is located at 515 E. Romie Lane, directly across the street from Salinas Valley Memorial Hospital, and is on the same block as Salinas Valley Medical Clinic Cancer Care and the Susan Bacon Cancer Resource Center, making it convenient for patients to see their oncology doctors, receive chemotherapy, and get advice and support within a short walk.

Patients also can register at the infusion center rather than having to check in at the hospital first, another time- and stress-saving feature, Reyes says.

In addition to chemotherapy infusion and immunotherapy, the center also offers blood transfusion, injections and lab draws. Previously, chemotherapy and other infusion treatments were done in a wing of the hospital.

Funds from Salinas Valley Memorial Hospital Foundation and the Volunteer Service League contributed to the construction costs of building the \$3.6 million dollar facility, which opened in May with a ribbon-cutting and comments by state and city officials. It's the first center of its kind in the Salinas Valley.

Many of the features of the infusion center's interior were chosen with input from the staff, such as the soothing color scheme in shades of blue, gray and taupe. According to SVMHS marketing and public relations director Karina Rusk, the front line nurses had a hand in designing the center's layout and flow.

Staff members, like nurse practitioner Dawn Goodman, are part of a team that is in constant communication about patients' requirements and needs. "They build a real rapport and patients become like family," says Reyes.

Registered dietician Ashley Bough is also on hand to assess patients and their nutritional status, since issues such as poor appetite, weight loss and changes in taste are common side effects of chemotherapy.

Having nutritional help provided there is "a huge service for our patients," says Reyes. "They often don't have the energy to make more appointments" for services such as nutritional assessment and counseling.

Having pharmacy staff on site helps when communicating about treatment regimes and prescriptions, and Goodman's skills as a nurse practitioner are invaluable when it comes to treatment clarifications, Reyes said: "This makes the center very efficient — people are not sitting around waiting."

In addition, the center's registration clerks can also make appointments with other physicians or medical professionals for the patient, another service that saves time and effort.

Reyes says that patients seem very pleased with the new center: "We've had so much positive feedback." ■

Health Matters editor Kathryn McKenzie, a former Monterey Herald staff writer, contributes to a variety of print publications and websites.



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Nancy Tray, MD

Dr. Tray completed her undergraduate degree at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland, where she was the recipient of the Woodrow Wilson Undergraduate Research Fellowship. She received her medical degree from Georgetown University School of Medicine in Washington, D.C. She completed her residency at New York-Presbyterian/Weill Cornell Medical Center in New York, NY. She then joined the faculty at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center as a hospitalist prior to her fellowship at NYU Langone Health. During her training, she was recognized by the Perlmutter Cancer Center as the Matthew Harris Breast Cancer Research Fellow for her work in breast cancer, immunotherapies and clinical trials. She was also awarded the Hematology/Oncology Fellow of the Year by the Department of Medicine. She enjoys traveling, photography, running, tennis, hiking, and most of all, spending time with her family.

Dr. Zhang received her undergraduate training in Biology at Peking University in Beijing, China. She received her medical degree from the top-rated medical school in China, Peking Union Medical College. She was awarded a merit scholarship every year during her medical education. She moved to the United States where she received her master's degree in Public Health at the University of Pittsburgh. She completed her internal medicine residency at Albany Medical Center, Albany, New York. She attended Tufts Medical Center located in Boston for her fellowship. She was interested in applying the statistical skills she learned from her public health degree to cancer research. Her fellowship research focused on dissecting the prostate cancer screening data. She completed her fellowship in 2018 and has been working as a medical oncologist and hematologist in a comprehensive community cancer center in Albany, New York prior to relocating to Monterey. Dr. Zhang enjoys traveling around the world as a foodie with her husband and 2 children.



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A FRIEND IN NEED

Tips on how to support a loved one diagnosed with cancer

BY TOM LEYDE



A DIAGNOSIS OF CANCER can be frightening, overwhelming, devastating. And going through treatment for the disease can be equally challenging. Supporting a person battling cancer can take many forms. But knowing how to be supportive is essential.

In spite of major advances in treating cancer, a diagnosis is still alarming. The American Cancer Society's Cancer Statistics Center estimates that this year there will be 1,762,450 new cancer cases in the United States and 606,880 cancer deaths. That's about 4,830 new cases a day and 1,660 deaths per day.

The need for support for cancer patients is immense and can be of great importance in a patient's successful recovery. Sometimes it can be difficult and confusing for a supporter to approach the subject. What do you say? What do you do? What does the patient really want and need?

"You need to take a cue from them as to how they're approaching their illness, because they may want to see it as a fight or they may see it as a journey, or they may see it as a private moment," says Meg Cornish, an oncology social worker at the Comprehensive Cancer Center at Community Hospital of the Monterey Peninsula.

Cornish also says that it's not always helpful to ask the person what he or she needs, "because they may not know what they need yet. They may be overwhelmed and in a state of shock."

Instead, she suggests giving concrete suggestions, like, "I can help you around the house or help you with grocery shopping."

Phillip Williams, director of the Comprehensive Cancer Center, offered this advice:



PHILLIP WILLIAMS

"Don't just ask (to help a cancer patient) once. Keep close contact," he says. "End with the suffix that you have the time. Some feel like they're being an imposition."

Williams says observing a patient's boundaries is also important, and notes that getting a patient's permission for other friends to help is good protocol. Friends may prepare meals for the patient on different days, take them to medical appointments or to shop for food.

That kind of support was vital for Salinas resident Sonia Valenzuela, who is battling stage 3 breast cancer. She lost both of her sons to cancer and said she was in shock when she learned of her own cancer diagnosis in December 2016.

Valenzuela received much of her support from family members as well as staff at the Susan Bacon Cancer Resource Center of Salinas Valley Memorial Healthcare System, especially from social worker Jacqueline Pena.

"I have a wonderful family and a lot of good friends who are always there," says Valenzuela. "My two brothers and my stepfather, they're always checking in to help."

They also give her encouragement in her cancer battle. They tell her things like, "You better not quit. You can do this. You're going to do this," Valenzuela says.

"I'm a little stubborn by nature," she says. "It's a positive thing that keeps you going. I have a positive faith. I believe in Jesus Christ and I'm not ready to go."

The 50-year-old recently took a part-time security job that she said helps her on her journey: "I like to keep myself busy. I go out with friends. Distractions help."

CONTINUE TO PAGE 16

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Dr. Pechak with his twin boys



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Anne Casler, a licensed clinical social worker at Community Hospital, says that even if a cancer patient isn't expected to recover, friends and family can offer help. "People can have a spiritual tradition that can give them strength. Let the patient be in the driver's seat. Find out what they really need. You're not in the driver's seat, they are," she says.

Cornish agreed, saying that accomplishing end-of-life tasks can provide a sense of closure. "If somebody is in stage 4 and knows they don't have that much time left," she says, "they can plan ... 'Do I need to make amends with family? Do I need to accomplish something on my bucket list?'"

A supporter, Cornish says, can help the person make a decision about what she or he is going to do with the time that's left and how to get through that.

"Have a family person in charge of making sure their desires are met," Cornish says. These can include such things as the choice to die at home, having family members visit in the last days, and other items that can enhance that time.

"Most people," Cornish says, "pull out the reserves within themselves" when they are diagnosed with cancer. "It seems a natural state: This is life and we've had other hardships, we'll face this one. People are able to handle crises in life. It's a common humanity that we feel these states, but we come through."

Tom Leyde, a veteran print journalist on the Central Coast, now lives in Arizona.

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- ANNE CASLER

TIPS FOR FAMILY & FRIENDS OF CANCER PATIENTS from WebMD:

- Feel free to ask the doctor questions if you accompany your loved one to an appointment. Write down questions so you don't forget them.
- Be prepared for changes in your loved one's behavior and mood. Medications, discomforts and stress can cause someone with cancer to become depressed and angry.
- Encourage your loved one to be active and independent, as much as possible, to help him or her regain a sense of self-reliance and confidence.
- Be realistic about your own needs. Be sure you are sleeping enough, eating properly and taking some time off for yourself. It is hard to offer much help when you are exhausted.
- Don't hesitate to ask other family members and friends for help. They will appreciate the opportunity.

Family members and friends of a person coping with cancer may also find themselves under a great deal of stress.

To reduce your stress:

- Try to keep a positive attitude.
- Accept that there are events you cannot control.
- Be assertive instead of aggressive. "Assert" your feelings, opinions or beliefs instead of becoming angry, combative or passive.
- Exercise regularly. Your body can fight stress better when you are physically fit.
- Eat well-balanced meals.
- Rest and sleep. Your body needs time to recover from stressful events.
- Don't rely on alcohol or drugs to reduce stress.
- Consider joining a support group to share your experiences and learn from others. It may help to feel like you're not alone.

Other resources:

Caregiver organizing:

www.sharethecare.org <https://www.sharethecare.org/>

Comprehensive Cancer Center:

www.chomp.org/services/cancer-center

American Cancer Society Caregiver Resource guide:

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Cancer resources at Salinas Valley Memorial Healthcare System:
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UNDER PRESSURE

Hyperbaric chamber helps healing after radiation

BY LISA CRAWFORD WATSON



DAVID KELLER

Hyperbaric technician/safety officer Sydney Smith

RADIATION IS A POWERFUL WEAPON in the fight against cancer. Radiation therapy or radiotherapy uses high doses of radiation to kill cancer cells and shrink tumors.

Unfortunately, the treatment sometimes also can kill some of the healthy surrounding cells, breaking down soft tissue and damaging the white blood cells that help fight infection.

Most patients heal well after radiation therapy; the technology has gotten so advanced that tumors can be pinpointed with remarkable accuracy and dosages, minimizing damage to healthy cells. But for a small number, about 1 percent, hyperbaric oxygen therapy is a valuable tool to help with healing.

Hyperbaric oxygen therapy is best known for its use in treating people suffering from “the bends”—decompression sickness experienced by divers who ascend too quickly to the surface. But the chamber at Community Hospital of the Monterey Peninsula has other medical applications as well.

“While the effects of hyperbaric therapy are not fully known, the principal benefit of the treatment is that it causes blood vessels to regenerate,” says Dr. David Wilson Keller, an infectious disease specialist who also treats patients at the Wound Healing and Hyperbaric Medicine clinic at Community Hospital. “The pressure, when high enough, causes more oxygen to be dissolved into the bloodstream, promoting the establishment of more blood vessels.”

Hyperbaric oxygen therapy uses 100 percent pure oxygen at pressures up to three times greater than the surrounding atmospheric pressure. This requires an enclosed chamber in which the patient rests while passively inhaling the oxygen.

While red blood cells carry oxygen, he says, there is only so much they can carry. By dissolving more oxygen into the blood vessels, capacity is increased, and the blood delivers the oxygen directly to the tissues.

HOW HYPERBARIC THERAPY WORKS

Although he’s never had radiation therapy and had no persisting wounds, Sydney Smith had himself sealed within the acrylic cylinder of a hyperbaric oxygen chamber at Community Hospital. The hyperbaric technician and safety officer simply wanted to understand, firsthand, what his patients experience.

“Oxygen is a giver of life,” Smith says. “It re-boots the vascular system, creating angiogenesis or the development of new blood vessels to carry lifeblood to the wound.”

The patient slides into the chamber on a padded gurney, which attaches to the outside of the hyperbaric chamber. The pad, bearing the patient, slides into the acrylic chamber, the gurney chassis is removed, and the chamber door is sealed. The patient can neither get into or out of the chamber without assistance.

As a hyperbaric technician, once Smith presses “start,” he never leaves the patient’s side. The machine makes a brief clanking sound while the pure oxygen begins pumping into the chamber. After that, the chamber is quiet, and the patient receiving treatment can rest comfortably, listen to music, or settle in to watch the flat-screen TV positioned above the clear arch of the chamber. “For the first 10 minutes,” Smith says, “the patient feels an ear-pressure deviation, like when an airplane is gaining altitude, or when driving up into the mountains. I coach the patient on ear-clearing maneuvers, to help them equalize their ear pressure.”

Smith recalls a case where a post-radiation-therapy patient was suffering from osteoradionecrosis; his bone was dying because the radiation had damaged its blood vessels, thus halting its life source. This rare side effect develops after the radiation therapy has ended, most commonly, as in the case of this patient, to the lower jawbone.

“The patient’s tissue was down to the bone,” says Smith, “exposing the dying bone and the metal plate that had been used to create structure. After 60 hyperbaric treatments, blood supply was restored to the area. A cadaver bone was put in place, the tissue filled in over the bone, and the patient healed.”

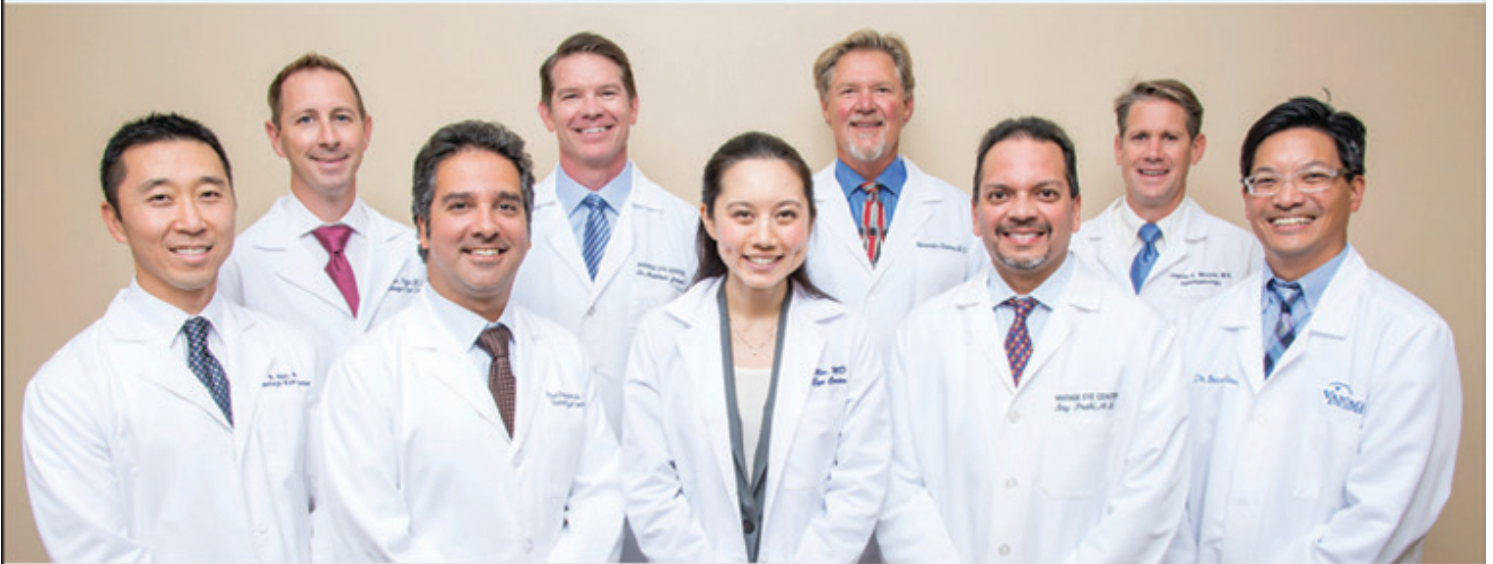
In addition to healing radiation injury, hyperbaric therapy is used to resolve other nonhealing wounds, diabetic ulcers, and infection. It’s also thought to arrest the scarring or fibrosis left over from scarring, and it may cause stem cells to regenerate.

“These patients are so past vanity; they simply want to heal, to live,” Smith says. “We have the technology to help them; they have the will, the courage, the energy, the determination to muster the strength to do this. It is an honor that we get to participate in returning them to health and well-being.” ■

Lisa Crawford Watson lives with her family on the Monterey Peninsula. She specializes in writing about art and architecture, health and lifestyle, and food and wine.



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TO TELL THE TRUTH

Facts and fiction about nutrition and cancer prevention

BY BARBARA QUINN, MS, RDN, CDE



WHAT ARE THE SCIENTIFIC FACTS about nutrition and cancer prevention? See how you do with this quiz, thanks to the American Institute of Cancer Research:

T or F?

Cancer is caused by inherited genes, so there is nothing we can do about it.

False. According to the AICR, only 5 to 10 percent of cancer cases are caused by genetic syndromes. They estimate that about 40 of every 100 cases of cancer could be prevented by eating a healthful diet, being more active and not smoking.

T or F?

Drinking red wine can help prevent our risk for cancer.

False. While red wine contains substances that may benefit our hearts with moderate consumption, cancer researchers now consider any type of alcohol a carcinogen — capable of causing cancer.

T or F?

Coffee can help fight off cancer.

True. Despite recent controversies, the AICR says there is strong evidence that coffee drinking can reduce the risk for endometrial and liver cancers.

T or F?

Eating organically grown fruits and vegetables versus conventionally grown produce offers extra protection against cancer.

False. The most important thing, says the AICR, is to eat plenty of fruits and vegetables. There is currently no strong evidence to support the idea that organic foods offer added protection against cancer compared to conventionally grown produce.

T or F?

Soy foods can lead to an increased risk for cancer.

False. Whether you have had cancer or not, current research says that a moderate intake of soy foods is safe. Soy foods contain several nutrients and other substances well studied for their cancer prevention properties, says the AICR.

T or F?

There is not enough evidence to link stress and cancer risk.

True. While a majority of Americans believe that stress is linked to an increased risk for cancer, cancer researchers have yet to prove this.

T or F?

Artificial sweeteners are linked to increased cancer risk.

False. According to the AICR, there is no strong evidence to link artificial sweeteners such as aspartame or saccharin to cancer.

What does the scientific research say we can do to significantly reduce our risk for cancer? These are the top 10 tips drawn from the most recent Expert Report of the American Institute of Cancer Research (AICR) and the World Cancer Research Fund.

1. Keep your weight in a healthy range and avoid adding extra pounds as an adult. Believe it or not, next to smoking, weight control is the most important thing we can do to reduce our risk of cancer, say experts.
2. Be physically active ... a minimum of 150 minutes a week, say experts. And additional benefits come with additional exercise.
3. Eat a diet rich in whole grains, fruit, vegetables and beans. Because they are loaded with cancer-fighting substances, aim to fill at least two-thirds of your plate with these foods, say experts.
4. Limit your consumption of "fast foods" that are high in fats, refined starches and sugars. We don't need the extra calories in these foods.
5. Limit consumption of red and processed meat. Studies show we can consume up to 12 to 18 ounces of beef, pork and lamb per week without increasing our cancer risk. With processed meats such as bacon, salami and hot dogs, however, cancer risk begins to increase with even small amounts.
6. Limit consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages. Reliance on these empty calories can promote weight and obesity, which is linked to 12 different types of cancer, say experts.
7. Limit alcohol consumption. Although modest amounts of alcohol may help protect against heart disease, if you're concerned about cancer, the best advice is not to drink.
8. Don't rely on supplements to reduce your risk for cancer. While experts don't discourage the use of multivitamins or other supplements recommended by your health care provider, researchers say that a healthful diet can lower our risk for cancer better than dietary supplements can.
9. If you are a new mother, breastfeed your baby. Moms who breastfeed have a lower risk for breast cancer. And infants are less apt to become overweight.
10. If you are diagnosed with cancer, follow the nutrition advice of an appropriately trained nutrition professional. Once your treatment is completed, if you are able to do so, follow the above guidelines for cancer prevention. ■

Barbara Quinn is a registered dietitian nutritionist and certified diabetes educator. She is the author of "Quinn-Essential Nutrition: The Uncomplicated Science of Eating." Email her at barbara@quinessentialnutrition.com.



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WHEN CANCER HITS HOME

Esthetician goes from learning about it to living with it to helping others

BY LISA CRAWFORD WATSON



Soothing treatments can help ease itchiness and other skin problems that cancer patients experience.

THIS WASN'T SUPPOSED to happen. First of all, no one in her family has had cancer. No one.

Second, the year had already seen enough heartbreak and challenge. Her husband, Bill, a tall, strapping man, had died from complications of congestive heart failure just shy of his 80th birthday, just shy of their 31st anniversary.

She, who'd been living in pain due to bulging discs in her lower back, learned she needed a full hip replacement. During her workup in preparation for surgery, her doctor had discovered she was anemic. He ordered a colonoscopy.

For so many years, she had taken care of her ailing husband, her clients—everyone but herself. It had been a while since she'd had health screenings. The colonoscopy revealed Stage III colon cancer. She needed surgery immediately.

The Beginning

Dominique Gallet-Shanklin was born in Freiburg, in southern Germany's Black Forest, to a beautiful German mother and an elegant Parisian father. Her mother, a photographer, died a tragic death in a car accident, at 47. Her father, an astrogeophysicist, was a distinguished scientist, but the impression his daughter recalls regards his "toilette," a skin care ritual to which he was devoted.

Her father extended his skin care regime to his children, on whom he smoothed moisturizer as they were headed out the door.

Gallet-Shanklin bears her mother's gift of beauty, but it is her father she feels she most resembles in their shared love of research, their insatiable curiosity, and fascination with science and skin care. She could have pursued various career paths but, as a young woman, people found her "fortunate enough to be photogenic," so she went into modeling.

When she admired the beautiful, smooth skin of the woman who owned the modeling agency, Gallet-Shanklin vowed to one-day be able to afford a good skin cream and monthly facials. In 1977, she made good on her goal and opened Dominique Skin Care at the Barnyard Shopping Village in Carmel.

Over the years, as she studied the science of skin care and applied it to her clients, Gallet-Shanklin became particularly interested in her clients who were going through cancer, and the effects the illness and its treatments had on their skin. She started studying the principles of skin care for oncology patients.

According to the American Cancer Society, cancer and its treatments can cause various skin changes and problems, including dry skin, itchiness and color changes. People with cancer also might have to address scars, wounds, or pressure sores.

Committed to offering soothing, effective skin care treatments for people dealing with cancer, Gallet-Shanklin enrolled in a nationally accredited intensive course to become certified in skin care for cancer patients. She saw it as a good way to help move past the grief of losing her husband, and turned her attention toward helping others.

And then, she was diagnosed with cancer.

"I was so excited to introduce the treatments I'd learned to my clients. On the last day of class," she says, "we worked on cancer patients—such brave, lovely people. I quickly saw how much they needed care,

CONTINUE TO PAGE 24

William Khieu, MD, FACS, FACOG Senior Medical Director

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Dominique
Gallet-Shanklin

Seeing a healthy reflection in the mirror can be healing in itself.

how much they needed to be touched, gently. But this was going to have to wait.”

Cancer Journey

A new widow who couldn't work but needed surgery and a course of cancer treatments, Gallet-Shanklin moved from her Carmel home to a place she could afford in Salinas. What she found there was the unexpected blessing of new friendships.

On Nov. 6, 2018, Gallet-Shanklin underwent surgery to remove her entire ascending and transverse colons, as well as 21 lymph nodes. Three of the nodes carried cancer, which meant she would need chemotherapy. The surgery also revealed her cancer had not metastasized.

“I know enough about cancer,” she says, “to be relieved. And, thanks to laparoscopic surgery, I have almost no scar. If I were in the mood to wear a bikini, you wouldn't see the scar. It was amazing.”

Nearly two months later, she underwent hip-replacement surgery, just in time for Christmas.

“A new hip was the best Christmas present I could have received,” she says. “My doctor had said I would do much better during my chemo if I could get up and walk. Walk? I can practically pirouette now!”

By the end of January, Gallet-Shanklin was strong enough to begin her course of chemotherapy. Yet in March, she almost died from what tests revealed was a gene mutation that makes chemotherapy toxic to her body.

“When we receive chemotherapy, it dissipates over a period of time,” she says. “I neither assimilate nor get rid of it. I couldn't tolerate it; it was destroying my liver.”

It took nearly two months for Gallet-Shanklin to recover. She was put on a new protocol she could tolerate and was able to complete her treatment.

“When I think about it, as a scientist's daughter,” she says, “this whole experience has been fascinating to me. But every now and then, I'm just a regular human being, and I think and feel about it differently.”

“WE DON'T NEED TO LOOK 40 FOR THE REST OF OUR LIVES, BUT WE DO WANT TO LOOK NATURAL, HEALTHY, PRETTY.”

- DOMINIQUE GALLET-SHACKLIN

Helping Others

Today, Dominique Gallet-Shanklin has the health, the training, the science, and the deep insight to help others heal and restore their skin during and after their cancer journey.

Sometimes she considers the irony of working to understand the science and develop the products to help cancer patients look and feel better, and then going through her own cancer journey. But mostly she sees the blessing in it.

“Sometimes I'm angry about it,” she says, “but I try not to be. At some point you realize, when it happens to you, it's just the way it is. Most of us don't understand the blessing, and we shouldn't have to go through such hardship to get it, but we deserve to feel it.”

Gallet-Shanklin, who was a volunteer for the “Look Good, Feel Better” support program at Community Hospital of the Monterey Peninsula, is a firm believer that when we look like ourselves, when we can recognize ourselves in the mirror, it's healing.

“We don't need to look 40 for the rest of our lives,” she says, “but we do want to look natural, healthy, pretty. There are so many things we can do to improve our skin, whether we're in our 40s or our 80s. Whether we've had cancer or not.” ■

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Dr. Heather Cunningham

Dr. Cunningham is board certified in Internal Medicine, Oncology, and Hematology and has over 10 years of basic science research experience. Her goal is to provide compassionate care in her patient-oriented clinic that recently opened in Monterey. Dr. Cunningham is welcoming new and returning patients.

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Breast Cancer Assistance Group of Monterey County

Volunteer organization helps local women through financial challenges



Breast Cancer Assistance Group of Monterey County

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Any kind of serious illness takes its toll, not just physically, but also financially. And when there is a long, involved treatment period, the economic challenges mount up even more steeply.

One local organization is helping ease this burden for people being treated for breast cancer.

"Being diagnosed with breast cancer can throw your life into immediate chaos," says Susan Jordan, vice president of the Breast Cancer Assistance Group of Monterey County (BCAG). "You've been diagnosed with a devastating illness, you're hit immediately with medical bills, you might have to quit your job to focus on your treatment. Your life is turned upside down."

BCAG was created more than 20 years ago by a group of breast cancer survivors who knew full well the financial impact of such a diagnosis. They formed the nonprofit in order to lift financial stress from those undergoing treatment for this disease.

In its most recent fiscal year, BCAG distributed more than \$147,790 to 74 women to assist with food, utilities and general living expenses such as rent — "That's one of the main things we help with, since the cost of housing is so high here," Jordan says.

To qualify, breast cancer patients must reside in Monterey County, or be receiving treatment within the county. Applications are available on the BCAG website, www.bcagmc.org/grants, and through doctors' offices and hospital social workers.

"We try to respond to all applicants very quickly, typically within a week," says Jordan, who notes that in special cases, such as an impending eviction, BCAG can act even more quickly.

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month, and businesses throughout Monterey County are offering special promotions and events to raise money for BCAG. Most prominently, Quail Lodge & Golf Club in Carmel Valley hosts a monthlong "Quail in Pink" promotion that gives guests the multiple opportunities to donate to BCAG.

A complete list of participating businesses can be found at www.bcagmc.org and on the BCAG Facebook page.

Other fundraisers during the year include a charity golf and tennis tournament in June at Carmel Valley Ranch, hosted by the ranch's Women's Golf Association, and BCAGMC's annual Bowl-a-Thon each March at Monterey Lanes.

Jordan emphasizes that every dollar raised goes to help people in need, since the board of directors is all-volunteer, and the group's operating expenses are minimal.

"If an applicant has an immediate financial crisis, we do our best to help," says Jordan. "Although these grants are not a long-term solution to financial difficulties, it is a way to overcome critical short-term needs." ■



The BCAG board at the Bowl-A-Thon.



HEALTH MATTERS

Monterey County's Health Magazine

Health Matters is a regional magazine for Monterey County residents offering information about local health care providers, hospitals, clinics, medical groups, and other matters relating to health and wellness on the Central Coast. Each issue of Health Matters details the latest news on the area's medical community, innovations in health care, and information on healthy lifestyles, fitness, and nutrition. Written by experienced columnists and journalists, Health Matters makes it easy to find the health news you need to know.

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Big Sur Health Center marks 40th anniversary



A community-wide celebration is planned on Tuesday, Oct. 8, 12-5 p.m. for the 40th anniversary of the Big Sur Health Center.

Food, music, and an opportunity to reconnect with some of the center's past board and staff members will all be part of the celebration. There will be a short program at 2:30 p.m. to honor local officials and the foundations that support the Health Center.

Since its start in the Grange Hall in October 1979, the Health Center has grown from a basic-needs clinic, open one day a week, to a full-service family practice, open 5 days a week. The center continues to grow, not only in numbers, but also in services and projects that benefit the Big Sur community.

The celebration also features free health and wellness screenings that include blood sugar and cholesterol tests, blood pressure, BMIs, dental screens and flu shots. Healthy and delicious barbecue by Matt Glazer is available and some surprises are in store, so stay tuned to the Big Sur Health Center Facebook page and "Like" us for the latest up-to-date information.

The Health Center is located at 46896 Highway 1, Big Sur. More information is available by calling (831) 667-2580 or emailing info@big-surhealthcenter.org.

Lantern workshop celebrates loved ones who have passed

A special workshop in King City to remember those who have passed will be hosted by the Visiting Nurse Association and Sol Treasures this month.

The community is invited to attend La Luz de tu Memoria Lantern Workshop to create a lantern in honor of someone who has died, and to celebrate lives of their loved ones.

The workshop with instructors Luz Monroy and Sonia Chapa will be held from 5:30-7:30 p.m. Friday, Oct. 11, at La Cocina, 815 Broadway, in King City. A \$10 donation is requested. For information, contact Elizabeth Birruete at (831) 241-3834.

Walk-in flu clinics slated for community

The Visiting Nurse Association will offer walk-in flu immunization clinics every Friday in October, November and December at its Ryan Ranch offices in Monterey.

Professional registered nurses from the nonprofit will offer quadrivalent, FluMist and high dose flu immunizations from 9 a.m.-5 p.m. on Fridays, October through December, except for Nov. 29 and Dec. 27. The VNA clinic is at 5 Lower Ragsdale Dr., Monterey. These walk-in clinics are open to adults and children 2 years and older.

Cost is \$35 for a quadrivalent flu shot (designed to protect against four different flu viruses; two influenza A viruses and two influenza B viruses) or nasal spray for ages 2 to 49. Medicare Part B will be billed for pneumonia and flu vaccines (high dose and standard).

In addition to the Friday clinics, flu shot clinics will be held throughout the county during the fall months. For a complete schedule, see ccvna.com/community-flu-clinics-2019.

Vaccines to protect against pneumonia, whooping cough and shingles are also available by appointment. If you're traveling internationally, travel immunizations and consultation are available by appointment.

VNA also provides health screenings and education for corporate business, in the field or in the boardroom. Its nurses provide services to local schools to meet state mandated screenings, vaccines and staff education. For information, go to CCVNA.com or call (831) 648-3777.

Natividad diabetes program shows positive results

The Frank Pye Smith M.D. Medical Facilities Fund of the Community Foundation for Monterey County has awarded Natividad Foundation a \$30,000 grant for its 5 Steps to Prevent Diabetes® program. This is the eighth consecutive year of funding for the program, which grew by 25 percent for each of the last two years.

"We are incredibly grateful to the Community Foundation for giving us the financial resources that help us better serve people in Monterey County," says Natividad Foundation President and CEO Jennifer Williams. "Their ongoing and increased support speaks highly of the work done by the 5 Steps to Prevent Diabetes team and the program's success."

Natividad's Diabetes Education Center offers outpatient services to children and adults with diabetes Type 1, Type 2, gestational diabetes and pre-diabetes. Outpatient services include individual counseling and education, group counseling and education, community presentations and outreach. Services are provided by a registered nurse, certified diabetes educator and registered dietitian; and are available in English, Spanish and other languages.

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MEDICAL NOTES

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 28

In June, the American Association of Diabetes Educators' Accreditation Program accepted the Diabetes Education Center's Annual Status Report. The acceptance verifies the DEC is in ongoing compliance with the National Standards for Diabetes Self-Management Education and Support and remains an accredited diabetes education center.

The annual status report involved analysis and submission of patient outcome data, including clinical outcomes, patient behavioral changes and a quality improvement project. Patients completing the program saw meaningful improvement in their average hemoglobin A1c levels, the standard for long-term blood glucose control.

In Monterey County, 57 percent of adults have diabetes or pre-diabetes, outpacing the national average of 42 percent. Type 2 diabetes can be prevented or delayed through a healthy lifestyle, including diet, increasing levels of physical activity, and maintaining a healthy weight.

"The good news is that pre-diabetes is often reversible, but success may be dependent on quality education," says Natividad Foundation's Medical Director of Health Promotion and Education Dr. Dana Kent. "Our program empowers patients and gives them the tools they need so they can live longer, healthier lives." For more information on the Center and the 5 Steps to Prevent Diabetes® program, please visit www.natividad.com/community/diabetes-education. ■



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