

# cancer care

Hearst Cancer Resource Center

 **Dignity Health.**  
French Hospital Medical Center

Hearst Cancer Resource Center

## *About Cancer Care*

*Hearst Cancer Resource Center at French Hospital Medical Center provides comprehensive support services for all cancer patients in our community at no charge, and appreciates the generosity of our donors who make it all possible.*

# Celebrating

## Fifteen Years of the Hearst Cancer Resource Center

In 2008 Dr. Tom Vendegna and Steve Hearst started with a dream to have a place where cancer patients, survivors, and their families could receive and connect with FREE resources here on the Central Coast. Now, 15 years later, that dream has not only become a reality, but has exceeded the expectations anyone could have ever had for our community.



Left to right: Alan Iftinuiik, George Hearst, Steve Hearst and Tom Vendegna, MD, pictured at the Share the Hope event in 2008 near the Neptune Pool at Hearst Castle

Over the years, the Hearst Cancer Resource Center has created diverse programs and assistance for those who face a cancer diagnosis and provide a place where support is easily found. Over these 15 years, we have been a valuable part of the journey of many cancer patients and become a beacon of support for so many participants and families affected by cancer. With the support from the Hearst Family, Dignity Health, local businesses, and donors we have been able to keep our doors open for those battling a cancer diagnosis.

Services include support groups, educational lectures, making hats and wigs available, strength and exercise classes, wellness classes, art classes and so much more. We have also added social worker support, bi-lingual Spanish translation services, a cancer dietitian and a nurse navigator for all those important questions that come from a cancer diagnosis. We are proud to say that even during the darkest parts of the Covid pandemic, we continued offering support to cancer patients.

We cannot wait to see where the next 15 years will lead us.

# Immune Health and the Microbiome

We know that the immune system—a network of organs, cells and proteins—is crucial for fighting cancer, infection and disease. Current research has confirmed the role of the microbiome, microbes in the gut, in healthy immune function. Going through cancer therapies: surgery, chemotherapy, radiation, hormone therapies and immunotherapy is taxing for the GI tract and immune system. We can restore and heal these systems through nutrition and lifestyle choices.



**Heidi K. Lucas, ND,  
FABNO**  
Integrated Naturopathic  
Oncology

Research shows that eating a diverse diet, focusing on plant nutrients, can aid in the restoration of our microbiome and in turn improve immune function. When there are more varied sources of fiber on our plate, favorable gut bacteria thrive. Gut flora ferment these fibers and produce short chain fatty acids. These key compounds, short chain fatty acids, can regulate the immune system, decrease inflammation and allergic response. In essence, we are what our gut bacteria eats! If we eat less fiber, more refined sugars, processed foods and excess animal products we can see the gut microbiome suffer; disease and inflammation are more likely to increase.

We can restore our GI health in practical ways. For example choosing different nuts and seeds to add to breakfast or mixing up the type of greens you add to salad, soups or roasted vegetables can enhance beneficial bacteria. Aim for 30 different plants a week in your diet: this includes vegetables, whole grains, nuts, seeds and legumes. This rainbow of plant fibers can in some studies improve response to cancer treatment and serotonin production to balance mood.

Practices such as abdominal breathing, gentle stretching or a daily walk can also improve the microbiome health. These improve stamina and bring increased circulation to the GI tract. Research has validated that exercise increases the microflora diversity. This is especially important after stresses such as cancer diagnosis and treatment. In our daily choices, a commitment to moving our bodies and cultivating varied colors on our plates can increase immune vitality and overall health.

## Recharging the Immune System with Microbiome Support

*Our digestive system is the key to immune function and thankfully there are many tasty foods and herbs to heal and optimize your GI tract. Join us to learn the current research on diet diversity and for helpful recipes and teas to support health.*

**WHEN:** Wednesday, August 23 • 5:30 pm

**PRESENTED BY:** Heidi Lucas, ND, Integrated Naturopathic Oncology

**WHERE:** Wacker Family Auditorium  
(in the Copeland Health Education Pavilion at French Hospital)  
1911 Johnson Avenue, San Luis Obispo

To RSVP, contact: [hcrc@dignityhealth.org](mailto:hcrc@dignityhealth.org) or call 805.542.6234

# Why Community Oncology Clinical Trials Are So Important

*By Susan Diaz, RN, OCN, Clinical Oncology Center Director*

In the 30 plus years that I have worked as an Oncology Certified Nurse, I have seen the way cancer is treated change in dozens of ways. We have made tremendous advancements in all areas of cancer care—from new screening and diagnostic tests, to new pathology and molecular profiling technology, to a vast number of more effective treatments. All of these advances are guided by clinical research trials.

About ninety percent of cancer patients are treated at community practices, like San Luis Obispo—yet most clinical trials are performed at academic institutions, where they can be accessed by only about ten percent of patients. This significantly limits the number of patients who can enroll, and adds the burden of travel and travel related expenses to families that are already stressed by a cancer diagnosis.

The most important benefit of community-based clinical trials is that patients have more options for their healthcare close to home. Your local community oncologist builds their profile of clinical trials based on the needs of the community; they ask important questions about what treatment options are available in the community for each cancer treated. Our goal is to fill as many gaps in care as possible.

By administering trials at community oncology practices, such as those that comprise the NCORP (NCI Community Oncology Research Program), we can provide patients with access to cutting-edge and innovative therapies and medications close to home. The NCORP (<https://ncorp.cancer.gov/>) network designs and conducts cancer prevention, supportive care and symptom management, screening, and surveillance clinical trials.

The best resource for looking for a clinical trial close to home is the Clinical Trials.gov website (<https://clinicaltrials.gov/>). You can look for clinical trials by condition or disease, location, or by other terms including drug and investigator name. This website gives you access to 454,492 research studies in all 50 states.

If you need help finding clinical trials offered in this area or support for travel costs needed for your cancer care out of this area, please contact our office at: [hcrc@dignityhealth.org](mailto:hcrc@dignityhealth.org) or 805.542.6234.

## Prostate Cancer Treatment Updates

*Learn the latest advancements in prostate screening, as well as treatment options.*

**WHEN:** Monday, July 17 • 6:00 pm

**PRESENTED BY:** Christopher Johnson, MD, FACS, Urology

**WHERE:** Wacker Family Auditorium

(in the Copeland Health Education Pavilion at French Hospital)  
1911 Johnson Avenue, San Luis Obispo

To RSVP, contact: [hcrc@dignityhealth.org](mailto:hcrc@dignityhealth.org) or call 805.542.6234



**Kiersten Araudin,  
MSW, LCSW**

Licensed Clinical  
Social Worker

Clinical Social Workers  
offer no cost services  
such as:

- Help to address psychosocial, social, emotional and spiritual issues
- Information and referrals to community resources

# Maintaining Your Wellness Toolbox

Whether you or a loved one is recently diagnosed, in the midst of treatment, or navigating cancer survivorship it's important to maintain your wellness "toolbox." Think of your wellness toolbox as the resources, skills, and strategies we all use to maintain our day to day wellbeing as well as to help us cope when things are difficult. It's likely that cancer has impacted and interrupted your normal routines that help you feel balanced, so it's important to consider that you might have to learn and incorporate some new tools into your toolbox. Whatever it may be, take some time to list out the tools that are in your personal wellness toolbox such as an exercise or mindfulness practice, creative or social outlet or music. Then consider how cancer may have changed your ability to engage those tools; what tools seem to be missing or would you like to add?

The Hearst Cancer Resource Center offers a variety of wellness programs with the goal of helping patients and caregivers learn new strategies and tools to help them cope with cancer. Some patients find that a support group or one-on-one counseling with a therapist helps them during these times. Know that you're not alone in feeling like your world is turned upside down and we're here to help you fill your wellness toolbox.

## *Things that kept me going...*

- Walks with friends
- Short visits
- Food that was easy on the stomach
- Protein shakes
- Comedy
- A little bit of sunshine each day
- Hugs
- Funny memes
- Supportive friends who didn't complain if I was too sick or too tired to chat
- Ice cream
- Meditation podcasts
- A great patient support group
- Front porch dinners/hangouts with friends
- Going to the beach, even just to sit in the sand right in front of the car
- Beach cruiser for when walking seems exhausting
- Sitting in a dark movie theater
- Cards and letters from friends



# Collaboration

Engaging with local community members, we are able to provide information and services to patients and families who have faced a cancer diagnosis.

Throughout 2023 the Hearst Cancer Resource Center (HCRC) is proud to have continued to grow new relationships and add energy to historic relationships with local businesses and organizations here in SLO County. The value of these relationships proves to be vital in terms of collaboration, networking, and getting the word out into the community of the supportive programs that the HCRC has to offer.

San Luis Obispo County is such a unique community that does a tremendous job working together to fill voids and create new pathways to success. By engaging with local community members, we are able to provide information and services to patients and families who have faced a cancer diagnosis, when they need us the most.

We are grateful for the opportunity to work with groups and companies who understand the importance of what we do in San Luis Obispo County. With community support, the Hearst Cancer Resource Center has been able to add versatile programs and funding that are so vital to our mission and our people. If you or your organization would like to collaborate with HCRC either to raise funds or to support patients and families affected by cancer in a new way, please reach out to us at 805.542.6234.



**You can support our work by making a donation today.**

Visit [SupportFrenchHospital.org/HCRC](https://SupportFrenchHospital.org/HCRC), call the French Hospital Medical Center Foundation at 805.542.6496, or mail your gift to the Foundation at 1911 Johnson Avenue, San Luis Obispo, CA 93401.



## Advisory Committee Member Spotlight

### Gayle Cekada, MD

Internal Medicine

*Q: How long have you been a part of this committee and what is something that you are proud of contributing to?*

I have been a member of the committee for about two years but my involvement with the HCRC goes back to the very beginning! My husband (Tom Vendegna, MD) first had the idea of a cancer support center after his treatment for sarcoma almost twenty years ago. We are both physicians and we were working with a team of wonderful doctors guiding his treatment, but we still struggled to find local resources such as lymphedema treatment, nutrition guidance and emotional support groups. The idea of a resource center was born.

Believe it or not, the very first unofficial HCRC fundraiser was held in my kitchen! We held a party to celebrate Tom completing cancer treatment and asked some friends to donate items for a silent auction. With the sale of items such as “a batch of cookies once a month for six months” and from generous donations we were able to raise about \$5000 that night. I still smile every time I think of these humble beginnings—it has been such a joy to watch the HCRC grow over the years.

*Q: Why is HCRC important to you and/or this community?*

HCRC is important to our community because it provides comprehensive resources to patients with cancer (and their family/friends) that help them overcome barriers to receiving care. As a primary care physician, I have diagnosed hundreds of patients with cancer and I refer them immediately to top notch oncologists and surgeons in our local community. But I am even more proud that I can refer them to the HCRC for extra support, kindness and guidance.

# Turn to us for answers

## HEARST CANCER RESOURCE CENTER

1941 Johnson Avenue, Suite 201,  
San Luis Obispo, CA 93401  
805.542.6234  
Monday–Friday  
9AM–4:30PM  
[dignityhealth.org/hcrc](http://dignityhealth.org/hcrc)

Please call for an appointment.

**Thomas Spillane, MD**  
*Medical Director*

**Shannon D'Acquisto**  
*Director, Cancer Survivor*  
HCRC@dignityhealth.org

**Julie Neiggemann, RN, MSN, OCN**  
*Nurse Navigator*

**Lauren Jermstad, MSW, LCSW**  
*Social Worker*

**Kiersten Arnaudin, MSW, LCSW**  
*Social Worker*

**Eloisa Medina**  
*Patient Navigator*  
805.786.6130—en español

**Angela Fissell, RD**  
*Registered Dietitian*

**Ramie Castilleja**  
*Program Coordinator*

**Lisa Steinbeck**  
*Cancer Registrar*

## IMAGING CENTERS

FHMC San Luis Diagnostic Center  
1100 Monterey Street, #210,  
San Luis Obispo, CA 93401  
805.542.9700

FHMC Women's Health and  
Imaging Center  
1941 Johnson Ave., Suite 104,  
San Luis Obispo, CA 93401  
805.597.6700

## SLO ONCOLOGY & HEMATOLOGY HEALTH CENTER

715-B/C Tank Farm Road  
San Luis Obispo, CA 93401  
Direct: 805.543.5577

*Care Providers:*  
**Thomas Spillane, MD**  
*Medical Oncology Director of  
Clinical Trials*

**Gorgun Akpek, MD, MHS**  
**Robin DiBiase, NP, OCN**  
**Daniel Lewis, MD**  
**James Malone III, MD**  
**Lin Soe, MD**  
**Tim Souchek, PA**

## SLO INFUSION CENTER

715-B/C Tank Farm Road  
San Luis Obispo, CA 93401  
Direct: 805.786.6140  
Nurse Line: 805.786.6144

**Susan Diaz, RN, OCN**  
*Director*

## DIGNITY CANCER CARE CENTRAL COAST

Mission Hope Cancer Center  
1325 East Church Street, Suite 102  
Santa Maria, CA 93454  
805.219.HOPE (4673)

850 Fair Oaks Avenue  
Arroyo Grande, CA 93420  
805.474.5300

**Katherine Guthrie**  
*Senior Regional Director,  
Cancer Services*

**Kathleen Sullivan, PhD, RN**  
*Vice President, Post Acute Care and  
Health Services Operations*

## ADDITIONAL SERVICES

DIGNITY HEALTH HOME HEALTH  
& HOSPICE  
800.549.9609

PALLIATIVE CARE  
805.739.3950

## COASTAL CANCER PARTNERS

The Hearst Cancer Resource Center has partnered with these organizations to bring programs and activities to the community:

**17 Strong**  
[seventeenstrong.org](http://seventeenstrong.org)

**American Cancer Society**  
[cancer.org](http://cancer.org)

**Camp Kesem Cal Poly**  
[campkesem.org](http://campkesem.org)

**Cancer Connections**  
[cancerconnectionslo.org](http://cancerconnectionslo.org)

**Cancer Support Community**  
[cscslo.org](http://cscslo.org)

**Cancer Well-Fit Program**  
[cancerwell-fit.com](http://cancerwell-fit.com)

**Central Coast Dragon Boat Association—Central Coast SurviveOars**  
[ccdba.org](http://ccdba.org)

**Hats for Hope**  
[hatsforhope.com](http://hatsforhope.com)

**Jack's Helping Hand**  
[jackshelpinghand.org](http://jackshelpinghand.org)

**Leukemia and Lymphoma Society**  
[lls.org](http://lls.org)

**SabesWings**  
[SabesWings.org](http://SabesWings.org)

**Surfing for Hope**  
[surfingforhope.org](http://surfingforhope.org)

**Teddy Bear Foundation**  
[teddybearcancerfoundation.org](http://teddybearcancerfoundation.org)

## Hearst Cancer Resource Center

Mailing address:  
1911 Johnson Avenue,  
San Luis Obispo, CA 93401

Street address:  
1941 Johnson Avenue, Suite 201,  
San Luis Obispo, CA 93401

## HCRC Advisory Committee

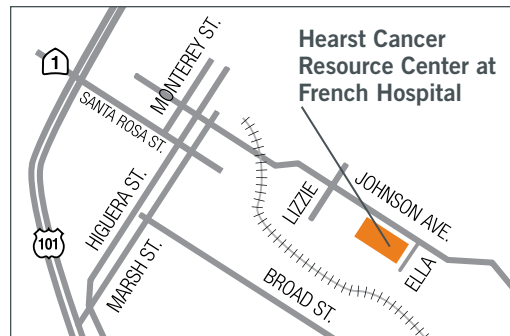
*French Hospital Medical Center*

**Patrick Caster**—PRESIDENT AND CEO  
**Julia Fogelson, MSN, RN**—COO, CNE  
**Nancy Bussani**—INTERIM  
VP PHILANTHROPY  
**Thomas Vendegna, MD**—CMO  
**Debbie Wettlaufer**—CFO

### *Committee Members*

**Sandy Dunn**—CHAIR  
**Gayle Cekada, MD**  
**Edwin Hayashi, MD**  
**Jack Hearst**  
**Stephen Hearst**  
**Stephen Hilty, MD**  
**Robert Johnson, MD**  
**Noreen Martin**  
**Susan Minker, MD**  
**Don Oberhelman**  
**Colleen Russell, DPT**  
**Thomas Spillane, MD**  
**Jackie Starr**  
**Christine Williams**

## Hearst Cancer Resource Center



### Hearst Cancer Resource Center

*Commission on Cancer Community Cancer Program*

1911 Johnson Avenue  
San Luis Obispo, CA, 93401  
805.542.6234

