

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.

Our Cancer Journey as a Family and as a Community

By Michael Hammons

“Honey, how did the mammogram go?” I asked. “Well, they did not find anything, but I still feel something. I think I need to have this looked at more deeply,” she replied. Thus, the realization that not all tests are accurate and I am thankful that my beautiful bride of 26 years continued to advocate for herself until they found the tumor. In April 2022, the floor fell out from under us after her surgery and we found out the cancer had spread more than they originally thought. She now had to go through chemotherapy, radiation, and a drug regimen.

With the above description, one would think the story of our journey was going to be more about the actual medical treatment, but that is not my intent. Our experience was that the medical science and treatment process is well known and continues to advance. With all the medical data and testing, they knew how not only to medically treat her but also to minimize the possibility of it coming back. What I found in my research is that often the medical treatment was the focus and forgot about the other aspects of recovery. These are the sometimes-subtle other elements of healing like diet, exercise, and—maybe most importantly—having a support network.

Having a support network does not have to be complicated. It can be anything that takes your mind off what you



are going through whether that is family, friends, or the healing therapies that Hearst Cancer Resource Center provides. I cannot stress enough the importance of this in the recovery process. This is the mental aspect of recuperation: “Your mind has to want to and be brave enough to get better.”

So, what could I do to bring more visibility to this? I know: I’ll grow my hair and have it shaved off to make a wig for a cancer patient. It started that simply; then more people got involved and wanted to turn it into something that could monetarily benefit HCRC. Thus, was born the event to raise money around shaving my head. I could claim to have a fair number of follicley-challenged friends and they fantasized about seeing me bald; but more than that the community came together. And in an interesting twist, our 19-year-old son (our youngest), jumped in and said, “If you’re doing this Dad, I am doing this with you.”

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Breast Cancer: When to Consider a Genetics Evaluation

Have you heard someone talk about being tested for “the BRCA genes”? What are they? What about other cancer related genes? When should you care about them?

By Bianca Russell, MD, and Amanda Shrewsbury, MS, Genetic Counselor

Our bodies consist of cells that contain DNA (our genetic instructions). Genes are the words in our DNA that control the growth and function of our cells. We have two copies of every gene, one from each parent. Certain genes related to cancer regulate cell growth (increasing or decreasing how quickly cells divide) and others spell check and fix our DNA. When these genes aren't working normally, cancer can develop.

As we age, changes (mutations) are acquired in genes related to cancer, making them unable to do their job. These changes occur from exposures, the way we live, age, or by chance. These are called somatic variants and are not inherited. Oncologists typically test cancer cells to see what genetic mutations are present so targeted genetic therapies can be used.

In hereditary cancers, one or both copies of someone's cancer genes doesn't work properly at conception, long before they develop cancer. They are therefore at increased risk for cancer at a young age. These are called germline variants and can be inherited or new in a person. The BRCA1 and BRCA2 genes are the most common example of genes that when altered from birth, increase someone's risk for breast cancer. Other genes include ATM, CHEK2, and PALB2 along with many other more rare genes.

Certain factors in someone's personal or family history may indicate an increased risk of hereditary breast cancer. These factors include:

- A family history of breast or ovarian cancer, especially among close relatives like parents, siblings, or children
- A personal history of breast cancer before the age of 50, breast cancer in both breasts, or triple negative breast cancer
- Personal or family history of certain cancers like ovarian, pancreatic, or male breast cancer
- Ashkenazi Jewish ancestry

Identifying hereditary cancer can guide personalized screening, prevention, and treatment strategies. If you meet any of these criteria, consider seeking a cancer genetics evaluation. Genetic counseling involves evaluating personal and family medical history, providing education about genetic conditions and inheritance patterns, and offering emotional support and guidance to make informed decisions about genetic testing and its implications. We are thrilled to be offering these services on the Central Coast through our UCLA Health office in SLO.

To learn more, make plans now to attend our special educational event focusing on breast cancer, genetics and menopause to be held Tuesday, October 17, at 5:30 p.m. (See page 3 for details)

The Hearst Cancer Resource Center invites you to attend a panel presentation

Let's talk about
Breast Cancer, Genetics and Menopause



Bianca Russell, MD
Clinical Geneticist



Karen Song, MD
Obstetrics/Gynecology



Amanda Shrewsbury, MS
Pediatric and Cancer Genetic Counselor

This panel of experts will present the latest information for women to navigate their long term breast health with confidence. Discussion will include the genetic influence on breast cancer as well as cancer predisposition syndromes, common side effects and treatment of menopause after cancer. Learn when and how to access cancer genetic counseling services.

Tuesday, October 17, 2023 • 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.

Wacker Family Auditorium

(in the Copeland Health Education Pavilion at French Hospital)

1911 Johnson Avenue, San Luis Obispo

Space is limited; reservations required. Please call Hearst Cancer Resource Center at 805.542.6234 or email us at HCRC@dignityhealth.org

Meet our Breast Health Panel Experts:

Bianca Russell, MD, is a clinical geneticist and assistant professor at UCLA. She is also the Associate Director for the Medical Genetics Residency Program. She sees patients from the Central Coast in the San Luis Obispo UCLA Health clinic as well as via telemedicine.

Karen Song, MD, is a board-certified obstetrician and gynecologist and a fellow of the American College of OBGYN. Dr. Song takes a holistic approach in the care of her patients as compared to a fragmented approach of treating only the symptoms. She provides care for women in San Luis Obispo county.

Amanda Shrewsbury, MS, is a pediatric and cancer genetic counselor with UCLA Health. She sees patients in-person in San Luis Obispo. Amanda is passionate about increasing access to cancer genetic services among historically underserved and marginalized communities. She is experienced in providing bilingual genetic counseling services in both Spanish and English.

September is Blood Cancer Awareness Month

Advocating for Funding and Resources for Research, Treatment and Care

September is Blood Cancer Awareness Month, a time to honor the 1.5 million people in the United States living with, or in remission from, blood cancers. For all those impacted by cancer, every minute matters—whether it's racing against time to find the right treatment, achieving remission, or savoring quality moments with friends and family.

Blood cancers make up a family of cancers that include leukemia, lymphoma, myeloma, myelodysplastic syndromes (MDS), and myeloproliferative neoplasms (MPNs) which are types of cancer that can affect the bone marrow, the blood cells, the lymph nodes, and other parts of the lymphatic system. According to the American Cancer Society, many types of blood cancer have seen survivability double in the past 40 years, giving us tremendous hope for those fighting and surviving these diseases. To learn more about blood cancers and new treatments please visit both: lls.org and cancer.org.

The Hearst Cancer Resource Center is proud to host the only local Blood Cancer Support Group here on the central coast with our own Social Workers and in partnership with the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society (lls.org). This group helps connect those who have been touched by a blood cancer diagnosis and to aid in support around their disease. Adult patients, their family members and friends living with leukemia, lymphoma, myeloma or myelodysplastic syndrome are invited to join the meetings to share their experiences in a comfortable and caring environment. Our dedicated staff is here to provide support for all cancer patients and survivors within SLO County.

Approximately every three minutes, one person in the United States is diagnosed with leukemia, lymphoma or myeloma.

All Blood Cancer Support Group

(Leukemia, Lymphoma and Multiple Myeloma)

This support group is designed to provide mutual support and education to members who may feel a little less alone by meeting with others whose situations are similar to their own.

Meetings alternate monthly between Zoom and in-person

Wednesday, September 13 • 1:00 p.m. (onsite)

Wednesday, October 11 • 1:00 p.m. (Zoom)

Facilitated by Lauren Jermstad, LCSW; Kiersten Arnaudin, LCSW; and Deirdre Feigen, LVN, LPT, Multiple Myeloma Survivor

1941 Johnson Avenue, Suite 201, San Luis Obispo

To reserve a spot, contact: hcrc@dignityhealth.org or call **805.542.6234**

In collaboration with



Share Hope

Throughout the month of October, Hearst Cancer Resource Center hosts an annual fundraiser “Share Hope,” in honor of breast cancer awareness and cancer support service in San Luis Obispo County.

This program connects with local businesses, programs, and community members to help us continually grow our programs that support cancer patients here in SLO County. These funds allow us to champion for those with a cancer diagnosis through our Angel of Hope resources, and continue to create beneficial programs for our local cancer community.

Join companies like Sunset Honda and Movement for Life, who choose to support the Hearst Cancer Resource Center and continue to work alongside us with sponsorship, business and personal fundraising and pledges. These funds are able to help carry on and enable us to provide support for those who have faced a cancer diagnosis.

If you or your business are interested in partnering with the Hearst Cancer Resource Center for the month of October—whether that be by a percentage round up, personal fundraiser, sales of pink items, general donation or sponsorship, we’d love to work with you!

You can help make sure that cancer services are always available at no charge to those who need them by donating to the HCRC today. 100% of every gift goes directly to support the HCRC. The fall season is a time to reflect, share gratitude and support others in ways that truly impact local lives. To make a gift or to partner with the HCRC, visit <https://www.supportfrenchhospital.org/sharehope2023>, call our office at 805.542.6234 or mail your gift to Hearst Cancer Resource Center at 1911 Johnson Avenue, San Luis Obispo, CA 93401.



“The Hearst Cancer Resource Center (HCRC) supported me throughout my cancer journey, offering guidance, hair accessories for chemo, introductions to medical specialists and, most importantly, a support group. I can’t thank donors enough for the support they provide to the HCRC.”

—Amy Spain, cancer survivor



Advisory Committee Member Spotlight

Colleen Russell,
PT, DPT, OCS

Orthopedic Physical
Therapy

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

I am new to the committee, joining about a year ago. I have known of the HCRC for years and have attended the event at Hearst Ranch a few times. I have always been impressed by the amount of resources the center provides and depth of support formed through the organization. After talking further with Tom Vedegna and Alan Iftiniuk at one of these events, I knew it was something I wanted to be a part of. Over the years I have treated numerous patients in the physical therapy setting who are battling cancer. Years ago, there was limited knowledge of the benefits exercise can provide for patients with certain cancers. That information has grown significantly in recent years. I am proud to contribute to the discussion around this topic for the benefit of the committee and patients it serves.

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

When someone hears “you have cancer,” immediately there are so many questions. Many of these questions can be answered by the oncologist but others cannot. The HCRC has the ability to provide answers to many of these questions through the team and relationships they have formed. It is a patient centered approach. My family has been part of this community for generations. I have friends, family, and patients who have battled this terrible disease. Having HCRC, a single place, that can help direct you and provide information is invaluable to this community.

Q: What is something personal that you enjoy and would like to share?

I love spending time in this community. Yes, it’s cliché. My family and I love our beaches, we love going to Cal Poly events (especially for CP athletics), the hiking, the arts, the festivals. I truly enjoy living here and giving back to a community that has given so much to me and my family.

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

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

American Cancer Society
cancer.org

Camp Kesem Cal Poly
campkesem.org

Cancer Connections
cancerconnectionslo.org

Cancer Support Community
cscslo.org

Cancer Well-Fit Program
cancerwell-fit.com

Central Coast Dragon Boat Association—Central Coast SurviveOars
ccdba.org

Hats for Hope
hatsforhope.com

Jack's Helping Hand
jackshelpinghand.org

Leukemia and Lymphoma Society
lls.org

SabesWings
SabesWings.org

Surfing for Hope
surfingforhope.org

Teddy Bear Foundation
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

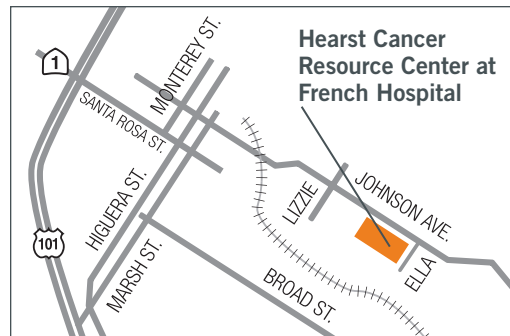
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VP PHILANTHROPY
Thomas Vendegna, MD—CMO
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Commission on Cancer Community Cancer Program

1911 Johnson Avenue
San Luis Obispo, CA, 93401
805.542.6234



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