

cancer care

 **Dignity Health.**
French Hospital Medical Center

Hearst Cancer Resource Center

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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.

Family, Genes and Cancer

By Holly Taylor, RN

I was diagnosed with breast cancer in January 2014 at the age of 38 after finding a lump. At the time I was working as an RN in a local hospital. My general surgeon ordered an ultrasound. The ultrasound looked like a benign lump, but because it wasn't "textbook" they decided to biopsy. Much to everyone's surprise the biopsy came back as aggressive triple negative breast cancer (TNBC).

I had a lumpectomy and started chemotherapy for four months. Given my young age and aggressive cancer, my oncologist recommended genetic counseling and testing. I had no family history and my risk appeared low, so we scheduled a phone call follow up, since I was sure to be negative. To everyone's surprise the results revealed that I had a BRCA1 mutation.

At that time, the BRCA1 mutation gave me an 87% risk of another breast cancer, and a fairly high risk of ovarian cancer. The genetic counselor recommended that my siblings and other family members be made aware of the risk and testing recommendations. I am one of four daughters, all three of my sisters chose to proceed with testing and all tested positive for the same mutation. My mother tested negative! This news means the BRCA1 mutation came from my father's side, which may explain why we didn't see cancer in our family history.

After completing chemotherapy, I chose to have a double mastectomy after radiation treatment, also had my uterus,



Taylor family
(left to right):
Austin, Holly,
Courtney, and
Greg

and ovaries removed, to further reduce my risk of cancer recurrence. Two of my sisters chose to have both surgeries done prophylactically.

Being a nurse and my intrigue for science, I took this diagnosis as an opportunity to learn as much as I could. I read articles on all the different types, treatment and surgery options. The internet can be a deep dark hole, so after hearing how aggressive TNBC can be, I had to focus on the knowledge I could obtain, not the negativity. My wonderful surgeon and friend told me that when looking at statistics, why did I focus on being in the bad percentage... why wouldn't I assume I was on the other side? This was a mantra I held with me.

I'm happy to say that I am now at the ten year mark and doing well—as are all of my sisters! When I was first diagnosed, I joined a local "Young Survivor" group and still keep in touch with many of the amazing women I met. It's been gratifying to take this negative and turn it into as much of a positive as possible.



Getting to know

Ashley Hahn, MSW, LCSW
Licensed Clinical Social Worker

**Ashley Hahn, MSW,
LCSW**

Licensed Clinical
Social Worker

The services of our clinical social worker allows Hearst Cancer Resource Center to offer personal support and expanded programs to address the psychosocial, social, emotional and spiritual issues a cancer patient may face.

I am grateful to join the remarkable team at the Hearst Cancer Resource Center as the new licensed clinical social worker. I am a native of the Central Coast and have worked in San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara Counties for the past 17 years. My social work career has been throughout healthcare settings including an adult day health care program, home health, hospice and palliative care. My experience includes work with people of all ages—from a few days old to 104.

The past four years have been focused on working in oncology and helping patients and their loved ones address issues unique to the cancer experience. At Hearst Cancer Resource Center my services are free and include referrals to counseling services in the community, information and referrals to community resources, and access to financial and social services. For those in need of a wig or head covering, I will personally work with you one-on-one in our appearance center to meet your needs. I will also be facilitating some of our groups and educational programs, such as the sleep hygiene workshop below. I am here to work with you and your healthcare team to maximize the support available to you. My hope for all patients in San Luis Obispo County is that they do not feel alone and they receive the best quality of care and support.

Upcoming Educational Program

In the U.S., one in three adults report issues with insomnia; for those facing cancer the numbers can be even higher. Sleep can be negatively impacted for cancer patients for a variety of reasons—including pain or discomfort, side effects of medications, stress, anxiety or other health problems. Sleep is so important to the ability of the body and mind to rest and recover from treatment and everyday life. Join us to learn more.

Workshop on Sleep Management Techniques

This interactive workshop will teach you an assortment of strategies to help you sleep better including positive self-coaching and relaxation techniques.

WHEN: Wednesday, April 10, 2024 • 5:30 pm

WHERE: Wacker Family Auditorium, Copeland Health Education Pavilion
at French Hospital/Third floor

To RSVP, contact: hcrc@dignityhealth.org or call 805.542.6234



Robin DiBiase, NP
Hematology & Oncology

Healthy Living During Cancer Treatment

By Robin DiBiase, NP

Living well during one's cancer treatments is a highly variable experience. A very common concern for patients undergoing chemotherapy is the risk of contracting an infection. After chemo sessions it is quite common to experience a "nadir" which is when the white blood cells of our immune system hit their lowest point. White blood cells typically decrease anywhere between 10-21 days after chemo infusions depending on the specific medications being prescribed. This is the critical time when serious infections are most likely to occur. This is the time to be vigilant.

So what can you do to prevent infection and hospitalizations?

It is very important to wash your hands before eating, and after being around other people. Wearing masks is another way to avoid germs when in crowded spaces. You don't need to obsessively check your temperature (this will just increase stress and anxiety), but if you are feeling extra tired, achy, or have chills you should check. If your temperature is over 100.4°, you absolutely need to call your oncologist. In those situations, you may be told to report to a local hospital to be checked out with labs, X-rays, etc. While no one wants to go to the ER, it is always better to be safe than sorry.

Another way to keep your body and mind healthy is to keep your body moving with exercise. A study published in *The Oncologist* (2020) concluded that, "Exercise during chemotherapy is suggested to have clinical benefits including improved chemotherapy completion." I am a big fan of getting exercise while undergoing chemotherapy. While this isn't the time to start training for a marathon, even small, consistent increases in your activity can be of benefit. Taking a brief 10-15 minute walk to get some fresh air and stretch your legs can do wonders. It can be even more beneficial if you do it with a friend or family member (even four-legged friends count too!) And while I know not everyone is a swimmer, being in the water for lap swimming or taking an aqua-aerobics class is a great way to get exercise while also taking a little weight off of your joints and muscles.

In summary, while it is expected that the ups and downs of needing chemotherapy for a cancer diagnosis is a highly trying time, there indeed are many simple and effective things you can do to be proactive about achieving your best overall physical and mental health.

Mijwel, C. et.al. (2020). Effects of Chemotherapy Completion and Hospitalization Rates: The OptiTrain Breast Cancer Trial. *Oncologist*, 25(1), 23-32. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6964125/>.

Key takeaways: If your temperature is over 100.4°, you absolutely need to call your oncologist. A beneficial way to keep your body and mind healthy is to incorporate modest activity and/or exercise into your daily routine.

Surfing for Hope

Pure Stoke Surf Camp is a healing surfing program organized by the Surfing for Hope Foundation. Camps are offered for children touched by a family member's cancer with alternating dates for men and women currently undergoing treatment or cancer survivors. Established in 2012, Surfing for Hope was created to inspire families challenged by cancer through the positive energy of surfing.

The Pure Stoke Youth Program provides a safe, fun environment, utilizing the healing energy of the beach and ocean, in which these young participants and cancer survivors, can find an outlet to help them deal with the stress of cancer. This program involves a day at the beach with participants who are facing similar situations. The day includes surf lessons and all equipment, staffed by supportive instructors. Repeat sessions are encouraged and each year many students build lifelong friendships through this program.

This program involves an uplifting day at the beach with people who are facing similar situations.



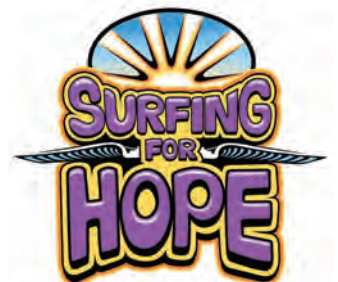
Participation includes:

- All equipment including surfboards and wetsuits
- Surf lessons
- Fun beach activities
- Hands-on ocean and marine biology education
- Non-intimidating environment
- Supportive staff of instructors and counselors

Upcoming Pure Stoke Surf Camps:

- Saturday, April 20–Pure Stoke Kids Camp
- Saturday, May 18–Cancer Survivor Camp (Pismo Beach)
- Saturday, June 8–Pure Stoke Kids Camp
- Saturday, July 20–Pure Stoke Kids Camp
- Saturday, August 17–Pure Stoke Kids Camp
- Saturday, September 21–Cancer Survivor Camp (Avila Beach)
- Saturday, September 21–Memorial Paddle-Out

Go online for more event details and the sign up application in addition to information about volunteering or funding a camper:



<https://surfingforhope.org/surf-camps>

Introducing Tessa Espinoza

We are excited to welcome Tessa Espinoza to the French Hospital Foundation as our new Chief Philanthropy Officer (CPO). As CPO, Tessa will be advancing the Foundation's vision and mission to support French Hospital's vital community services, patient care, and clinical programs.



"I look forward to leading the hospital's philanthropic strategy in partnership with hospital management, the dedicated staff, and Foundation Board of Directors in support of our best-in-class healthcare in San Luis Obispo. We will build a promising future together," said Tessa.

Tessa comes to French Hospital with more than 19 years of experience in management and nearly 16 years as a successful leader at Cal Poly, working in various capacities including external affairs and fundraising. Most recently, she served as the Senior Director of External Relations and Director of Development for Student Affairs at Cal Poly where she was responsible for leading capital campaign strategy, corporate and individual donor prospecting, and large-scale engagement events. Her most recent efforts resulted in closing millions of dollars in gifts supporting the Cal Poly Food Pantry, emergency grants for students in crisis, and substance abuse prevention programs.

"Tessa is a proven leader with a deep commitment to our community," shared Patrick Caster, President and CEO of French Hospital Medical Center. "We are thrilled to have her leading our Foundation during a very critical time as we amplify our fundraising efforts to expand the hospital and bring new life saving medical technology to the area."

To learn more about giving opportunities at the French Hospital Medical Center Foundation and ways to get involved, please visit supportfrenchhospital.org.



Staff Spotlight

Eloisa Medina

Bilingual Patient Navigator

Q: How long have you worked at HCRC?

I've been with the HCRC since 2015 as the Bilingual Patient Navigator. I've gotten the opportunity to work with so many local, and out of the area, medical professionals providing live interpretation and translation services for patients who are primarily Spanish speaking. The last nine years have been incredible and I can't wait to see where the next nine years takes me!

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

The HCRC is important to me because this is where miracles happen for patients. The lives that are touched by all the services we provide and how we help each patient to feel empowered is a true gift. I've been able to help advocate for our community and show the compassion that all patients deserve. I get to help people and know that our center has truly made an impact on their lives.

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

I love to read and spend my time with all of my kids. I'm a homebody most of the time but my kids always make sure to get me out and do fun things. My son just graduated the naval academy and I'm such a proud mom!

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

Ashley Hahn, MSW, LCSW
Social Worker

Eloisa Medina
Patient Navigator
805.786.6130—en español

Roxana Aranda
Patient Navigator
805.458.4526—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

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

DreamMakers SLO
dreammakersslo.com

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,
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San Luis Obispo, CA 93401

HCRC Advisory Committee

French Hospital Medical Center

Patrick Caster—PRESIDENT AND CEO

Julia Fogelson, MSN, RN—CNE

Tessa Espinoza—CPO

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

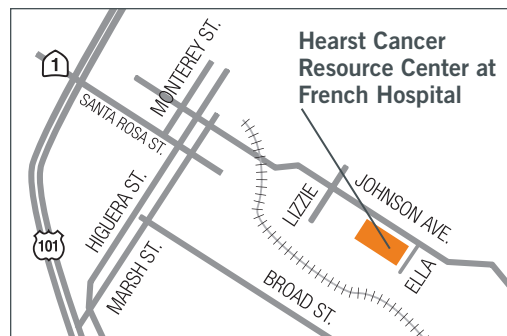
Colleen Russell, DPT

Thomas Spillane, MD

Jackie Starr

Christine Williams

Hearst Cancer Resource Center



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Commission on Cancer Community Cancer Program

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