

cancer care

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2020



Hearst Cancer Resource Center | SLO Infusion Center | SLO Oncology & Hematology

About Cancer Care

Cancer Care is a collaborative partnership between the SLO Oncology & Hematology Health Center, Dignity Health Infusion Center of San Luis Obispo and the Hearst Cancer Resource Center at French Hospital Medical Center, offering comprehensive cancer care services to San Luis Obispo County residents. As a cohesive oncology treatment program, Cancer Care features innovative technological advancements and compassionate health care professionals from the nation's top medical training programs. The culmination of these centers provides a personalized, multidisciplinary approach to oncology treatment, clinical trials, pediatric oncology, infusion services, support programs and resources to promote healing.



How to find Emotional Wellness during Challenging Times

Guest Speaker: Lindsey Levenson, MS, LMFT. Cancer Survivor and HCRC Facilitate for Living with Cancer Support Group

A cancer diagnosis brings uncertainty, even under the best of circumstances. But with the pandemic, people with cancer and their loved ones can experience increasing anxiety, fear or unfamiliar emotions.

Join us from the comfort of your home as Lindsey shares her knowledge on how cancer survivors' can recognize common emotions in response to challenging events, identify and learn ways to manage stress and how to find creative ways to cope.

This will be an interactive event followed by a question and answer session.

How to find Emotional Wellness during Challenging Times

WHEN: Wednesday, November 4 at 5pm

WHERE: Virtual Zoom presentation

PRESENTED BY: Lindsey Levenson, MS, LMFT

This program will be offered on a Zoom platform. To register, please call Hearst Cancer Resource Center at **805.542.6234**. Valid email, name and phone number will be required for Zoom invite information.

This program is made possible through the support of the Martin Hulburd Family Cancer Education Fund and is offered as a community service.



Lung Cancer Clinical Trials at SLO Oncology and Hematology Health Center

By Dr. Tom Spillane, M.D.

The approach to management of lung cancer is drastically changing. The more we understand the biology of lung cancer, the better we can apply personalized treatment that targets the unique features of each individual cancer. Every lung cancer may require an individualized approach. We are moving away from the antiquated approach of using only chemotherapy and are transitioning into an era in which we may be able to avoid chemotherapy entirely. We currently analyze the genome of each lung cancer and base treatment on the genetic mutational signature of the cancer. Currently at San Luis Obispo Oncology and Hematology we are enrolling patients in clinical trials that are analyzing the optimal use of immunotherapy and targeted therapy. Please contact our office to meet with one of our medical oncologists for more information about our integrative approach to lung cancer management, at **805.543.5577**.

Share HOPE



Share Hope and Gratitude by Supporting the Hearst Cancer Resource Center

At this time of year, we often reflect back on what we are grateful for in our lives – people, places and experiences that have impacted us in some way. Many people also choose to express their gratitude by making a gift to support organizations with causes near to their heart. This year, we hope that you will consider making a gift to the Hearst Cancer Resource Center (HCRC).

Thanks to support from people like you, this unique center is able to provide all programs and services at no charge to cancer patients and their families, ensuring that all local cancer patients have access to the vital resources that the HCRC provides. This is especially important this year since cancer doesn't wait for a pandemic to end. Today, cancer patients are experiencing the two-fold challenge of navigating their cancer journey during COVID-19. The HCRC continues to be available for patients during this difficult time, offering services virtually.

You can help make sure that free services are always available to those who need them by donating to the HCRC today; 100 percent of every gift goes directly to support the HCRC.

To make a gift visit SupportFrenchHospital.org, call the French Hospital Medical Center Foundation at **805.542.6496** or mail your gift to the Foundation at **1911 Johnson Ave., San Luis Obispo, CA 93401**.





November is Lung Cancer Awareness Month

*By Fred S. Vernacchia, M.D.,
Medical Director San Luis Diagnostic Center*

Lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer death in the U.S. for both men and women. This year, approximately 228,000 new cases will be diagnosed and 135,000 people will die of this disease, more than the number of deaths from colon, breast and prostate cancer combined!

More often than not, lung cancer is not discovered until a patient presents with symptoms, and that is usually when it is at an advanced stage. We knew we needed a tool to diagnose this disease in its early stages when it is potentially curable. Beginning in the mid 1900s, we tried screening patients with chest X-rays. Unfortunately, the cancers detected on X-rays were still so big that we could not impact mortality.

Then around 2002, researchers began screening patients who were at high risk of developing lung cancer with low-dose CT (Computed Tomography). For three years, they annually screened patients between 55 and 74 who had a 30-pack-year smoking history (1 pack per day for 30 years or 2 packs per day for 15 years) and were current smokers or had quit within 15 years of beginning screening. They found that they were able to detect more than 65 percent of cancers that were Stage I and were able to reduce mortality by more than 20 percent! We now had a tool to save people from dying of lung cancer.

Beginning in 2015, most insurance companies began covering this screening. This simple test involves a 1- to 2-minute scan of your chest. It requires no special preparation, no injections and can be performed on anyone, even if they have pacemakers, pain stimulators or other implantable devices.

This screening is a covered benefit for Medicare patients but may still be subject to deductibles. To qualify, patients must meet the smoking history outlined above and be between 55 and 77 years of age. (Most private insurers will cover the exam if a patient is between 55 and 80 years of age.) In addition, patients may need to undergo some smoking cessation counseling. Screening is offered at Dignity Health out-patient facilities, including San Luis Diagnostic Center, Matthew Will Memorial Medical Center and Plaza Diagnostic Imaging.

If you are interested in this service, please call nurse navigator Carol Lowe, RN, OCN. Oncology Nurse Navigator/ Lung Cancer Screening Program at 805.346.3463.

While November serves as a gentle reminder to schedule your lung screenings, we encourage you to remember all of your essential screenings. Although we are still in a pandemic, we are encouraging you to get the care that you need. Delaying routine screenings – such as mammogram or colonoscopy – can put you at great risk. Our facilities have put extensive safety measures into place and are here to care for you. A delay in seeking treatment could make all the difference in your health condition.





Order, Disorder, Reorder – Life in the Midst of COVID

By Flora Washburn, BCC
Spiritual Care Manager, Central Coast

When we first heard about a pandemic and COVID-19, most of us felt we could hunker down and it would be over by the end of May; the worst would be over, like a cloud or storm that can be seen on the horizon, draws closer, dumps and then moves on. At least that is what we thought.

And then, all that was familiar changed and fear set in. We weren't in control. We feared the unknown factors and the "what ifs." Grocery store shelves were emptied. Many people furloughed. Stores, restaurants, businesses, schools closed. People began working from home. For the most part, people listened when they were told to stay home, wore masks and used hand sanitizer, sanitized homes and just did not venture out. With stores closed, online shopping and home delivery became very popular.

Fear makes us do crazy things when we don't know what to expect. As COVID dragged on and we experienced a surge, the unknown became an even greater factor. What if... I have cancer, heart problems, health issues and get COVID? What if....? Two basic reactions: fear of the unknown or what will be will be attitude.

Let's put some perspective on the last several months. Go back to when this first began and follow the months since, the roller coaster ride, the waves of COVID, closings, openings, closing again and so on. It has been quite an unexpected experience.

OK, so let's add "life" to a pandemic year. Weddings, funerals, celebrations canceled or postponed. Deaths, births. Let's add unprecedented fires in the state of California and the Northwest that have stripped people of homes, possessions, life. Ask yourself: How has life changed for me? How has it been difficult? What has affected me the most? Is it possible to be unaffected by the last several months?

It is important for us to take time to recognize the trauma we have all been walking through. It opens the door for us to talk about it, process it and realize where our strength comes from. What good has come out of it that we may not have noticed before? What is the hope that we have?

You see, life is regenerating. Hope is regenerating. Facing the unknown, facing our fears can actually help us learn to cope as we walk through the storms, through the hell we may think we are in. There is a strength in the human spirit that is greater than we sometimes realize. Each person who has had to face cancer or another major illness has had to face their fears, to find this strength even though they didn't realize they had it.

As we walk forward not knowing what is coming, how will we respond? How can we encourage one another and build relationships in the midst of Zoom? We can cling to hope.

Please join us for an inspirational talk:

Order, Disorder, Reorder – Life in the Midst of COVID

WHEN: Thursday, November 12 at 5pm

WHERE: Virtual Zoom presentation

PRESENTED BY: Flora Washburn, BCC, Spiritual Care Manager, Central Coast

Reservations are required. Please call Hearst Cancer Resource Center at **805.542.6234**. Valid email, name and phone number will be required for Zoom invite.

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COVID-19: What We Know and What We Can Do

By Matt Katics, D.O.

Medical Director, Dignity Health Hospice and Palliative Care

“It’s time to throw away the masks!”

My sister stopped in her tracks. She was out for her morning walk, wearing her mask, on the still somewhat crowded bike path in Newport Beach. She regarded the 50-something man on his beach cruiser not wearing a mask, took a deep breath, and then responded.

“Why do you say that?”

“Well, this is all just a hoax, isn’t it?”

Intentionally keeping her calm, she replied, “I am definitely not an expert on the virus, but my brother is a doctor in Santa Maria and he is caring for people who are dying from it.”

There was a pause. Then, “Really? Wow. I didn’t know that. I guess I should start wearing a mask.”

As odd as this encounter might sound, it illustrates some important points. First, there are still people who don’t appreciate the risk of the pandemic. Understandably, the events of the last few months seem “unreal”; recommendations have changed as we learn more about the virus and how it spreads, and messages from our national leadership have at times been confusing or contradictory.

Second, yes, please wear a mask! It has now been clearly demonstrated that simple low-tech interventions such as masks and hand washing drastically reduce viral spread. Corona is “clever”; some studies indicate up to 40 percent of people are asymptomatic carriers, making routine distancing and precautions all the more important when we interact with those outside of our household. This is especially important for those receiving active treatment for cancer and their families.

What we know: COVID-19 is highly infectious and deadly. Many people who never have symptoms spread the virus, and those who get symptoms are most infectious before they know they are ill. The virus spreads through droplets, in saliva or mucus, from sneezing, coughing, or just talking. Remember, most spread happens before we have symptoms.

What we can do: Be vigilant. Be kind. And don’t panic. We can protect ourselves and our community. Good analysis has shown dramatic reduction in viral spread, even from symptomatic people, by just wearing a mask and washing your hands. Cold running water and soap is fine, 60 percent alcohol sanitizer is fine, and masks should have at least two layers of fabric. They should be worn whenever you are within six feet of someone who is not part of your household, and you should wash hands frequently when out and about. It is also best to avoid close contact or groups, especially when indoors, whenever possible.

Lastly and importantly, we should all be more like my sister. Distancing, fear, loss of jobs and loved ones have been devastating to our culture and psyche. Instead of responding with anger, argument, or accusation, she asked an honest question, which resulted in growth, community, and participation.



Making the Holidays Happy While Being Treated for Cancer:

How to Navigate the Holidays and Put the Happy Back into Happy Holidays

By Susan Diaz, RN, OCN Director of SLO Oncology and Hematology, Diane De Vos-Schmidt, FNP-C, MSSN, OCN and Melissa Simoes, RN

This year the holidays are going to be different. Take a joyful season, add the challenges of cancer and cancer treatment and add a global pandemic and that removes the best part of the holidays—our families and friends. What is left is going to be different and difficult; it will stretch your resources and tax your creativity.

We wanted to offer you some useful tips on ways to help with your treatment side effects, ways to find purpose and joy, and ways to restore and conserve your energy. So we went to the best possible source to get these useful tips: we asked you, our patients for their advice.

Best tip ever: Talk to other cancer patients while getting your treatment or on a Zoom meeting with the Hearst Cancer Resource Center. Use this time to ask about what has helped them get through the tough times.

Simplify: Shop online, email a holiday letter, arrange a Zoom cookie recipe exchange (with a Best Holiday Hat contest).

Ask for help: Family, friends and co-workers really do want to lend a hand; just give them a little nudge.

Express yourself: Though art, music, crafts, or writing (Pinterest is your friend).

Acknowledge moments of joy: Whatever brings a smile to your face or lightness to your heart, hold it close, savor it.

Give yourself permission to feel and express all of your emotions: Joy, fear, love, loss—they are all part of you and deserve acknowledgment.

Set boundaries: Make sure you give yourself the gift of time to care for yourself.

Listen to music: Sing or play a holiday song (my self-imposed rule is that I can't tune in the holiday Pandora station until after Halloween). "Music can divert the brain's attention, giving you a break from repetitive thoughts and judgments" (ONS Voice 2019).

Stay hydrated: Keep your water bottle close by; flavor it with lemon, mint, strawberries, oranges or limes.

Aromatherapy: Lavender and lemon essential oils promote sedative and relaxing sensations. Use ginger, peppermint and citrus to help alleviate nausea, and pine and cinnamon to stir holiday memories.

Call us: When you have a question, a concern, a fear, a funny story, give us a call. We are here for you; you are our number one concern. SLO Oncology and Hematology **805.543.5577**.

Turn to us for answers:

HEARST CANCER RESOURCE CENTER

1941 JOHNSON AVENUE, SUITE 201,
SAN LUIS OBISPO, CA 93401
805.542.6234

HCRC is temporarily closed to walk-ins.
Please call for assistance.

MONDAY–FRIDAY
9AM–4:30PM

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COMMUNITY PARTNERS

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

American Cancer Society

Cancer Connections

Cancer Support Community

Cancer Well-Fit Program

Jack's Helping Hand

Central Coast Dragon Boat
Association—Central Coast
SurviveOars

SLO ONCOLOGY & HEMATOLOGY HEALTH CENTER

715-B/C TANK FARM ROAD
SAN LUIS OBISPO, CA 93401
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Chief Nursing Executive (CNE)

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FRENCH HOSPITAL MEDICAL CENTER

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SAN LUIS OBISPO, CA 93401

805.542.9700

FHMC WOMEN'S HEALTH AND IMAGING CENTER

1941 JOHNSON AVE SUITE 104,

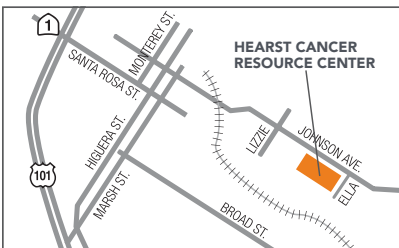
SAN LUIS OBISPO, CA 93401

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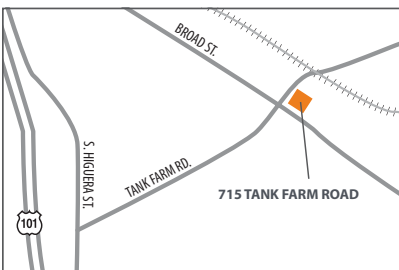
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San Luis Obispo, CA 93401

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San Luis Obispo, CA 93401

Dignity Health Cancer Care Centers



Hearst Cancer Resource Center
Commission on Cancer Community Cancer Program
1911 JOHNSON AVENUE
SAN LUIS OBISPO, CA, 93401
805.542.6234



SLO Oncology & Hematology
715 TANK FARM ROAD, SUITE C
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