

CANCER TREATMENT BASED ON YOUR GENETICS?

NEW STRATEGY ALLOWS TREATMENT TO BE TAILORED TO SPECIFICALLY ADDRESS A PATIENT'S INDIVIDUAL DIAGNOSIS.

3D RENDERING OF HUMAN CANCER CELLS

"I was one day away from a bone marrow transplant. My suitcase was packed and my husband had booked a three-month reservation at a hotel near UC Davis. We had been in a lengthy fight with the insurance company regarding how to proceed with my transplant. The doctors felt one way, and the insurance company felt another. In the meantime, the delay gave the medical world an opportunity to create the drugs I needed to be able to bypass the bone marrow transplant and I could do it right here in Redding. When I was diagnosed, I was told the FDA was getting closer to approving these drug therapies. They said that if I could just 'hang in there long enough,' there would be other options. Things happen for a reason," says Lynne Jackson, a patient with Mercy Medical Center Redding's Outpatient Oncology Center.

Precision Oncology, the use of targeted therapies to treat a cancer patient, based on their specific cellular pathology, is what helped Lynne avoid a bone marrow transplant. This strategy uses data garnered from Next Generation Sequencing (NGS) - a study conducted on tissue that identifies specific genes - to tailor a treatment that can specifically address a patient's individual diagnosis.

While some cancers can only be treated by traditional chemotherapy, there are certain diagnoses that allow for a more pinpointed approach. Instead of using traditional chemotherapy to kill off everything in the body that is fast-growing which may include hair follicles and skin cells - targeted therapies focus exclusively on the issue at hand by destroying only the cancer-ridden cells or modifying them so that they cannot replicate with the same frequency.

Mercy Medical Center's Outpatient Oncology Center utilizes the clinic model to treat patients in a way that helps them to maintain the highest quality of life. Under

one roof, patients can have their labs drawn, see their physicians and receive their targeted therapy in the treatment room.

"Life isn't much fun if all you are doing is treating cancer," says Linda Merrill, the clinic RN who has cared for Lynne at Mercy Outpatient Oncology Center for the last eight years.

"A clinic setting like this one means there is less disruption to the patient's everyday life. It gives people a chance to live."

Lynne and Linda have seen each other through life's ups and downs at Mercy Outpatient Oncology Center. "Spending that much time with someone, you become part of each other's lives - you become family. We are not just 'nurse' and 'patient'. We are sharing life's journey together," says Linda.

When asked if she has ever had a moment in which she lost hope, Lynne says unequivocally: "No. I've never shed a tear. All it takes is one glance at kids that are fighting cancer and there isn't an ounce of me that can feel sorry for myself. When I was diagnosed, I was told I had ten years to live. I'm hopeful that through the treatment I've received here, I can live a full life."

"It may sound strange to say you look forward to going to the Outpatient Oncology Center, but it's true. I look forward to connecting with other patients, I love my oncologists and I love, love, love my nurses! I can't say enough for their positive attitudes, their personalities and their kindness," says Lynne.

"I think the way a person is treated is as important - if not, more important - than the drugs we are giving them," says Linda. "It is the healing that happens. The drug is just the catalyst."