

Journeys

News and inspiration
for Dignity Health
Cancer Institute of
Greater Sacramento
patients and family

Summer 2020



Weathering the Storm

Eva Lukas, MA, LMFT

Throughout history, events like war, climate changes, and labor actions have caused significant changes and disrupted lives. Consequently, a quote by philosopher Albert Camus will resonate with us today: “There have always been as many plagues as wars in history: yet always, plagues and wars take people equally by surprise.” Needless to recall how surprised we were when a virus from China traveled all over the world, bringing chaos and confusion. It was not the first time. We look at the small town named Eyam, England in 1665, when an order of cloth from London arrived, exposing the community to the bubonic plague. Convinced by their pastor, the villagers decided to voluntarily quarantine themselves rather than flee and risk infecting their surrounding communities. Two thirds of the population of 300 died. And there was New Haven, CT, in the early days of 1794; scarlet fever broke out. The college was closed, re-opened in May, only to experience another plague in the form of yellow fever three months later. Meanwhile, in 2020, resources have been activated to study the microbiology of this pandemic while identifying treatments to manage disease and improve outcomes. Less than half a year into this crisis, trials for vaccines have already started.

What lessons can we learn? Basically, it is normal to feel disoriented and fatigued, considering all the changes we had to adjust to on such short notice. It is okay to feel the way you do. On a positive note, and because focusing on the positive helps us better absorb the negative,

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we are incredibly fortunate to live in the 21st century, when isolation translates into staying home and connecting to family and friends via social media instead of... well... just being home in England in 1665 without 'Friday Night Happy Hour' on Zoom.

But to cope with coronavirus stress, it is especially important to strengthen—what mental health experts call—the psychological immune system. A strong immune system will keep us mentally resilient. Psychologist Jaqueline Sperling

gratitude can serve as a boost for psychological well-being. Choose from different evidence-based approaches. First, spend time in nature. You may even stay home and explore havens of tranquility and experience peaceful calm from the comfort of your recliner. For example, I took a tour of Monet's Secret Garden in Giverny last night and went on a virtual visit to the orchid show in New York's Botanic Garden. YouTube makes it possible. You may prefer your backyard, your thriving houseplant, or a trip to your local park. Again, you are in control.

Also, keeping a gratitude journal is a great exercise; write down three things you are grateful for every day, then notice how you feel. And, if you like journaling, feel free to elaborate. Gratitude cannot be forced but needs to be cultivated. Daily practice will shift your brain's attention (and ultimately help control negative thoughts). Write a letter to make somebody else feel good—your brain's gratitude circuitry will be strengthened over time. Say thank you. Smile. But most of all, always be aware of your language. 13th century Persian poet Rumi posits that "the words you use build the house that you live in." So, build a peaceful calming house by counting your blessings, speaking kindly, bringing up those great memories of times spent in the community of family, friends, and neighbors. You are in control.



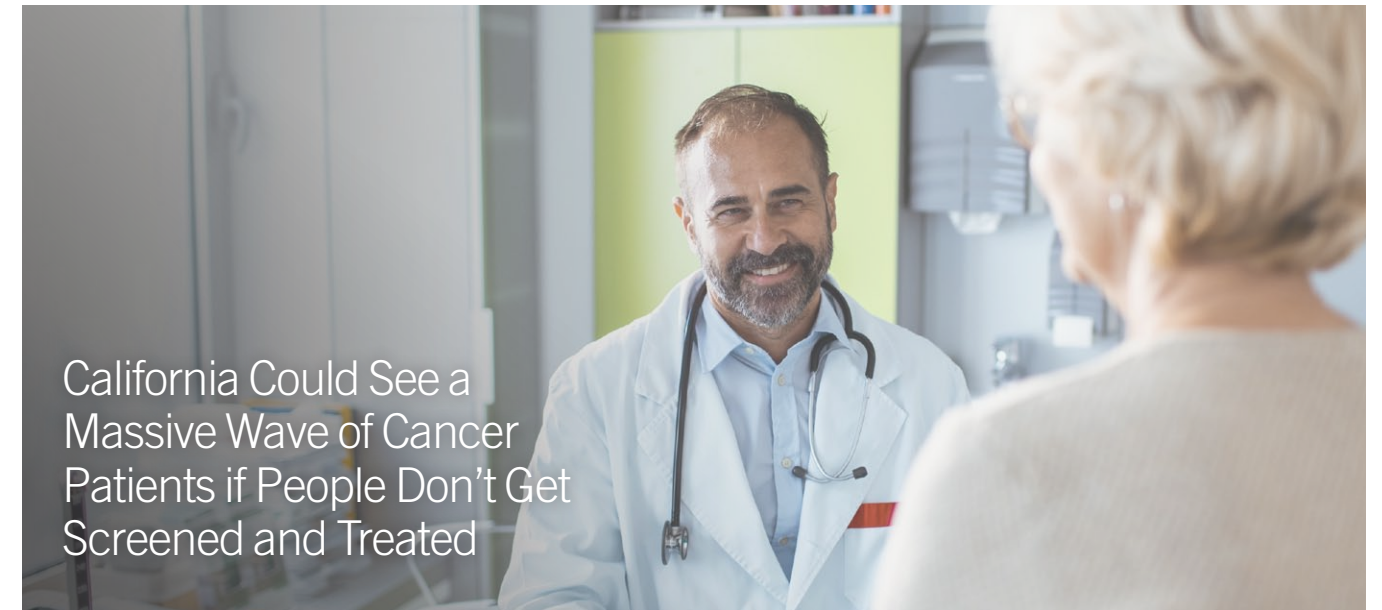
compares our psychological immune system to a cell phone battery: in a crisis, usage increases, and the battery drains more quickly. We have to re-charge the battery continuously. Fortunately, there are powerful ways to boost immunity. First, let us focus on what we can control—eat a healthy diet, keep your body moving, and do your best to sleep well. Acknowledge that life is challenging right now, and do not judge yourself for feeling the way you do. Be aware that you do not have to believe your thoughts. Challenge your negative thoughts, ask if they are true. Then try and re-frame: instead of telling yourself that you have not seen your family in months, guide your thoughts to the time when you will reunite. Can you notice the difference in the way you feel when you think both ways?

Be mindful and pay attention to the present moment instead of worrying about the economy. Neuroscientist Alex Korb claims that well-being depends less on what happens to us but more on the things we pay attention to—we choose. Pay attention to your family, pets, or the birds chirping in the tree outside your kitchen window. Express gratitude by noticing that you get to spend another day in your soft and most comfortable sweatpants. Consequently, the practice



GO2 Foundation for Lung Cancer 5K

On Saturday, June 20, the GO2 Foundation for Lung Cancer held their first ever "Summer Jam Virtual 5K Your Way" event. The GO2 Foundation had support from 15 local and national sponsors, with participants from 50 states and 3 countries, and raised over \$152,000 that will help GO2 Foundation continue to provide dedicated programs to increase lung cancer survivorship. Dignity Health Cancer Institute was proud to be part of this extraordinary event.



California Could See a Massive Wave of Cancer Patients if People Don't Get Screened and Treated

The article below is an excerpt from Capital Public Radio that was authored by Sammy Caiola and posted to their website May 19, 2020. To view the full article, visit capradio.org.

In late April, California Gov. Gavin Newsom announced a plan to return to some standard medical services after weeks of telling people to avoid clinics and hospitals. But almost a month [after that announcement], many physicians say [they saw] far fewer patients than normal.

Many hospitals are encouraging patients to reschedule delayed procedures, touting excess capacity and new cleaning routines to keep visitors safe.

But in Sacramento, Dignity Health thoracic surgeon Dr. Costanzo DiPerna says people are still too anxious to come in for necessary cancer screenings and treatments. CapRadio's Sammy Caiola talked to him about the potential long-term consequences of this trend.

What is your patient load like these days?

The last couple months have been historically low as far as volume, as far as screening, as far as cancer surgeries, basically because patients are concerned and very anxious to be going to a clinic environment, a hospital environment, because of their concerns regarding COVID-19... Many patients are concerned about coming to visit us, to be screened for cancer, to be surveilled for their previous cancers we've taken out.

What are the potential consequences for people who don't get this care?

What I'm concerned about right now, not just for lung cancer but for all cancers, is are there patients out there that don't want to come in because they're afraid of getting COVID-19? And so they avoid mammograms, they avoid CT scans, they avoid colonoscopies... Then in two years we're hit with this massive wave of patients that are all at a later stage of essentially incurable cancers.

How do you persuade patients to come in?

For cancer patients who need to be screened, who need to be evaluated, who need to be having surgery for cure—because lung cancer is curable if you catch it early and do surgery—I have a frank discussion with those patients by assuring them, and reassuring them, that the experience of seeing us, of going to the hospital, of having surgery... that experience really should not expose them, and most likely will not expose them, to the COVID virus.

What are medical facilities doing to prevent coronavirus from spreading?

In our hospital systems, especially Dignity Health, we have a number of measures that have drastically reduced any chance of the patient being exposed to COVID-19. We have testing, to test patients before and after they get surgery. And once they come into the hospital, we do everything possible to not expose them. They are safe in the hospital.



Power of Food: Is There a Best Diet for Cancer?

Susan Liebert, MS, RD, CSO, CDE

If you search the internet for the best diet for cancer, you will find so many different recommendations. So how do you decide what to eat?

None of the cancer organizations recommend any one diet to help reduce the risk of cancer and recurrence. But, all of them have very similar evidence-based recommendations on how to reduce risk: eating a healthy dietary pattern, being physically active, and keeping to a healthy weight.

Research has found correlations between higher intakes of fruits and vegetables and lower risk of cancer. But no one fruit or vegetable is the key. The recommendation is to eat a variety: 2–4 servings of fruit, and 4–6 servings (or more) of non-starchy vegetables every day, in all the colors of the rainbow. Every fruit and vegetable has a different combination of antioxidants, vitamins, minerals, and fiber to keep you healthy.

High fiber diets have also been correlated with lower risk of diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and cancer. Fiber can reduce carcinogen exposure, increase the diversity of healthy bacteria in your intestinal tract, decrease inflammation, help keep you regular, slow the digestion of food to keep blood sugar more stable and keep you fuller, and decrease levels of certain hormones (including estrogen).

Fiber is found in fruits and vegetables, whole grains, nuts and seeds, legumes, and pulses. These foods are all “plant-based.” So, eating a more plant-based diet is a healthy dietary pattern.

You don’t need to cut out all animal products. You only need to increase the amount of plant foods you eat.

So, how can you do this?

- Add vegetables to eggs or a morning smoothie.
- Substitute tofu for eggs in a veggie scramble.
- Snack on nuts, fruit, and vegetables instead of processed snacks.
- Try frozen steamer vegetables to quickly add servings of vegetables to meals.
- Replace white bread with a high fiber whole grain bread.
- Include sides of high-fiber carbs like quinoa or millet in place of white rice. Include some lentils with the whole grains to boost protein and fiber.
- Try a bean pasta in place of white pasta.
- Have a couple of plant-based meals during the week. Make your own veggie burger with beans and vegetables. Whole grains, legumes, nuts and seeds, and vegetables all have some protein. You don’t have to worry about eating a complete protein. Your body is able to make complete proteins from amino acids (building blocks) from foods eaten throughout the day.



Start by making just a couple of changes to your diet. Soon you will be eating a healthier, more plant-based diet!

Why You May Not Want to Delay Your Mammogram During the Coronavirus Pandemic

The article below is an excerpt from Forbes that was authored by healthcare contributor, Dr. Miriam A. Knoll, and was posted to their website May 11, 2020. According to the article, cancer screenings across the U.S. dropped between 86%-94% in March 2020, as compared to March 2019. Not surprisingly, at the beginning of the pandemic, organizations such as The American Society of Clinical Oncology and The Susan G. Komen Foundation recommended delaying routine screenings in an effort to prevent exposure. Yet across-the-board, there have been valid concerns about delaying cancer screenings. To view the full article, visit forbes.org.

Some patients are at higher risk of cancer

“Delaying routine cancer screenings during the COVID-19 pandemic has made sense for many patients who are considered normal risk for cancer. I think it has created a lot of anxiety, however, for people who are at increased risk, such as patients with a hereditary cancer risk, such as a BRCA mutation or Lynch syndrome,” said Merry-Jennifer Markham, MD, FACP, FASCO, an oncologist at University of Florida. For higher risk patients, it may be appropriate to begin these cancer screenings again, assuming the hospitals and centers conducting these screenings have measures in place for physical distancing and appropriate PPE for both healthcare workers.

Screenings can likely be done safely

The good news is that hospitals and medical offices have quickly adapted to new protocols to protect patients, including in-office physical distancing, having staff and patients wear personal protective equipment (PPE), and strict sanitation. This has set the stage for screenings, and office visits to resume.

“I understand the fear and anxiety so many are experiencing right now. I recently spoke with one of my patients whose follow-up CT scans indicated that their cancer had grown. Understanding this person’s concerns about COVID-19, I reassured the patient that we are taking the right measures to reduce exposure to the virus during a hospitalization,” said Costanzo DiPerna, MD, a thoracic oncologist at Dignity Health in California. “Rather than delay the surgery by six months, my patient felt confident enough following our conversation to move forward with the life-saving surgery.”

Cancer diagnoses should not be delayed

Leslie Lopez Montgomery, MD, FACS, a breast surgeon at Hackensack University Medical Center in NJ, stressed the importance of patients not ignoring worrisome symptoms.



“Unfortunately, cancer does not wait for the pandemic. It is very important that anyone who is experiencing any concerning breast symptoms reach out to their primary care physician or gynecologist for an immediate evaluation.”

The purpose of a screening mammogram is to detect tiny cancers—that’s not the scenario if someone has a breast mass they can feel. Anyone who experiences symptoms or has questions should call their doctor right away.

Delaying may be OK, but omitting isn’t

Another concern is: will some patients to delay their mammogram or colonoscopy indefinitely, and simply omit them altogether? This is especially worrisome given the known health disparities both in screening and coronavirus.

Coronavirus isn’t going away anytime soon

Given that COVID-19 isn’t showing signs of going away for good, we need to adopt a new normal of routine health management, i.e. everything health-related that has nothing to do with COVID-19. Over 600,000 people are estimated to die from cancer in the U.S. in 2020, and over 1.8 million will be diagnosed with cancer. In contrast, COVID-19 has killed over [140,000] Americans so far.



7 Strategies for Serene Sleep

1. Ritualize the Rhythms of Activity and Rest

- Create an energizing ritual with morning light exposure and exercise.
- Learn to rest during the day with meditation and breathing practices.
- Maintain a regular sleep-wake schedule, even on weekends.
- Develop a soothing evening ritual as a bridge to sleep.

2. Use Dusk and Darkness as Sleep Medicine

- Simulate dusk: dim your lights for a couple of hours before bed.
- Always use blue light reduction technology to watch TV or use computers.
- Slow down with a warm bath, journaling, rest practices, and yoga.
- Consider melatonin replacement therapy, as needed, and sleep in total darkness.

3. Quiet Your Body Noise

- Avoid “counterfeit energies”—caffeine, sugary foods, and adrenalin.
- Carefully check for possible sleep side effects of all medications used.
- Check your alcohol intake—drinking less, earlier, and with food is best.

4. Create a Sleep Sanctuary

- Keep your bedroom cool (68 degrees or less), dark, and quiet during sleep.
- Gradually move toward a more “green”—organic and natural—bedroom.
- Get electric clocks and other such devices away from your head and bed.
- Do all you can to feel psychologically safe in your bedroom.

5. Learn to Surrender to Sleep

- Avoid the chemical knockout of sleeping pills and alcohol.
- You cannot literally “go to sleep”—practice “letting go of waking.”
- Approach getting to sleep as a personal spiritual practice—an act of faith.
- Consider using natural sleep aids such as lavender and valerian, if needed.

6. Don't Battle Nighttime Wakefulness

- Go to bed only when you feel sleepy.
- Never watch the clock from bed—it pulls us back into the waking world.
- If you can't sleep, get up and sit in a comfortable spot until you're sleepy again.
- Use nighttime wakefulness as an opportunity to meditate or pray.

7. Arise Mindfully with Intention in the Morning

- Obtain at least 20 minutes of daily exposure to morning light shortly after arising.
- Awaken slowly and explore your grogginess in the morning.
- Let the memories of your dreams come and note them.
- Set conscious intentions to guide your waking day.

Dignity Health Welcomes New Physician Expertise



Clayton Hess, MD, MPH, is a board-certified radiation oncologist with special clinical interest in treating brain tumors, head and neck tumors, and bone and soft tissue sarcomas. Dr. Hess holds professional memberships with American Society of Radiation

Oncology and Pediatric Radiation Oncology Society. He is a member and Radiation Oncology Young Investigator for International Outreach of the Children's Oncology Group. He is also a member of the International Pediatric Radiation Oncology Society participating in the low- and middle-income countries working group. Dr. Hess will be seeing patients at Sierra Nevada Memorial Hospital.



Smit Singla, MD, is a board-certified complex surgical oncologist. After earning his medical degree from Government Medical College in Patiala, India and Cardiff University, United Kingdom, Dr. Singla went on to complete his residency at Temple

University Hospital. He then completed a fellowship with Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center in New York and University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. Dr. Singla's special clinical interests include gastrointestinal malignancy including hepatico-pancreatic and biliary, peritoneal malignancy, melanoma, sarcoma, and endocrine. He will be seeing patients at Mercy Cancer Center in Sacramento.

Upcoming Events

Throughout the year, Dignity Health Cancer Institute hosts events at each of their facilities. These events are geared toward patients and their families after diagnosis, where physicians address attendees on concerns before, during, and after treatment. Services are offered at no cost to cancer patients, family members, and caregivers. In light of COVID-19, we have temporarily scheduled our events to be virtual. For further information, please contact Angela Gianulias at 916.962.8893 or Angela.Gianulias@DignityHealth.org.

Bra Day USA, October 21, 2020

In honor of Breast Reconstruction Awareness Day, Dignity Health Cancer Institute of Greater Sacramento and Mercy Medical Group are teaming up to educate and empower women on treatment after breast cancer. Hear from our panel of experts on reconstruction options and connect with doctors and nurses virtually.

Shine A Light on Lung Cancer, November 2020

Shine a Light on Lung Cancer is the largest coordinated lung cancer awareness event in the United States. Hosted by healthcare facilities during Lung Cancer Awareness Month (November), Shine a Light events bring together survivors, caregivers, and loved ones to learn about the latest research and treatment options from their local healthcare providers, and provide the opportunity to meet and support each other by sharing their personal stories.

Transition to Wellness

Hosted by our team of experts, Transition to Wellness is designed for patients who have completed cancer treatment and are on the road to recovery. Our forums address the long-term needs of cancer survivors, empowering them to advocate for their well-being. A dietitian, psychosocial therapist, and oncology nurse navigators will be available to cover topics including:

- Surveillance for reoccurrence
- Screening recommendations
- Emotional well-being
- Guidance about health education, diet, exercise, and nutrition

Look Good, Feel Better

Look Good Feel Better is a non-medical, brand-neutral public service program that will virtually teach beauty techniques to people with cancer to help them manage the appearance-related side effects of cancer treatment. The program includes lessons on skin and nail care, cosmetics, wigs and turbans, accessories, and styling, helping people with cancer find some normalcy in a life that is by no means normal. Visit lookgoodfeelbetter.org/alliance-partner-virtual-workshops to register for an LGFB Alliance Skin Care and Makeup workshop and receive a complimentary Look Good Feel Better makeup kit, in partnership with Look Good Feel Better Alliance member hospitals. Kits for virtual workshops can only be requested via this partner link.

Support Groups

Dignity Health Cancer Institute of Greater Sacramento hosts a variety of support groups for patients and their loved ones throughout Sacramento, Yolo and Nevada counties. Visit us online at [DignityHealth.org/SacCancerSupport](https://www.dignityhealth.org/SacCancerSupport) for current listing of support groups and access to ZOOM meeting details.

45 and Younger Breast Cancer Support Group

Via ZOOM

For information: email Maribeth.Williams@DignityHealth.org

Breast Cancer Support Group: Mercy General

Via ZOOM

Fourth Tuesday of the month, 11 a.m.–12:30 p.m.

For information: email Kelly.Croteau001@DignityHealth.org

Breast Cancer Support Group: Mercy San Juan

Via ZOOM

Third Thursday of the month, 11 a.m.–12:15 p.m.

For information: email Maribeth.Williams@DignityHealth.org

Cancer Support Group

Via ZOOM

Second and Fourth Thursday of the month, 11 a.m.–Noon

For information: email Maribeth.Williams@DignityHealth.org

Caregiver Support Group: Sacramento

Via ZOOM

Third Thursday of the month, 11 a.m.–Noon

For information: email Eva.Lukas@DignityHealth.org

Caregiver Support Group: Grass Valley

With Jeanine Bryant

Weekly on Wednesday, 3–4:30 p.m.

Sierra Nevada Memorial Hospital

To register: call 530.274.6654

GATE

With Jeanine Bryant

Weekly on Tuesday, 3–5:30 p.m.

Sierra Nevada Memorial Hospital

To register: call 530.274.6654

Gynecological Cancer Support Group

Via ZOOM

Third Wednesday of the month, 11 a.m.–Noon

For information: email Ann.Chrisler@DignityHealth.org

Living with Advanced Cancer

Via ZOOM

For information:

email Mary.Carvalho001@DignityHealth.org

Lung and Esophageal Cancer Support Group

Via ZOOM

For information: email Tiffany.Porter@DignityHealth.org

Multiple Myeloma Support Group

Via Zoom

For information: call Anita at 916.662.4706

Ovarian Cancer Group

With Mary Peterson, LMFT

Third Tuesday of the month, 11 a.m.–12:30 p.m.

Sierra Nevada Memorial Hospital

To register: call Mary Peterson at 530.478.1880

Prostate Cancer Support Group: Sacramento

Via GoToMeeting

Every other Thursday, 1:30–3:30 p.m.

For information: email Michael.Mair@DignityHealth.org

Prostate Discussion Group: Grass Valley

With Mary Peterson, LMFT

Last Monday of the month, 4:30–6 p.m.

Sierra Nevada Memorial Hospital

To register: call Mary Peterson at 530.478.1880

Transformational Wholeness

With Nanci Shandera, PhD

Weekly on Tuesday, 10 a.m.–12:30 p.m.

Sierra Nevada Memorial Hospital

For information: email drnanci@earthspiritcenter.com

Woman to Woman Cancer Support Group

With Jeanine Bryant

Weekly on Wednesday, 9:30–11 a.m.

Sierra Nevada Memorial Hospital

To register: call 530.274.6654