

Journeys

News and inspiration for
Dignity Health Cancer Institute
patients and family

Fall 2019



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Does Stress Cause Cancer?

Written by: Eva Lukas, MA, LMFT

What an important question! Some patients believe that their diagnosis was linked to a traumatic event, like the death of a loved one, a contentious divorce and custody battle, a financial crisis, or even all of the above. We encounter many types of stressors across our lifespan: environmental (temperature, toxins), sociological (financial, loss of employment, death of a loved one), and even philosophical (purpose in life, use of time). Chronic stress, which occurs over a prolonged period of time, is multifaceted and experienced on a mental, emotional, and physical level. Chronic stress can result in disease if it is persistent or goes unabated. But does stress cause cancer?

A multitude of comparative studies have produced different conclusions. Some scientists claim certain predisposing factors may be present in the development of malignancies such as early adverse childhood events, the death of a parent before age 20, and low social support. Others posit that there is not enough evidence to support the claim of stress being a major factor in tumor formation.

October is Breast Cancer
Awareness Month

November is Lung Cancer
Awareness Month



Dignity Health™
Cancer Institute
of Greater Sacramento

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Does Stress Cause Cancer?, continued from page 1

Physiologically, we do not fully understand all pathways involved in the stress response yet. Responses to stressors appear on a wide spectrum. For example, we cannot explain why some people develop symptoms of PTSD when exposed to trauma while others only seem to be only mildly perturbed. One study with rats, for example, has shown an increased risk for recurrence in the group exposed to prolonged stress. However, because humans are not raised in a highly controlled environment, these findings may or may not apply to us. History tells us that in 200 AD, a physician named Galen asserted a correlation between personality traits and temperament in “melancholic” women with breast cancer. And I found many studies providing evidence that exposure to chronic stress does in fact lower immune functioning. In addition, we know that stress has physiological effects on all body systems, sometimes resulting in inflammation and muscle tension.

So, does stress cause cancer? It is too early to know for sure. But we can agree persistent stress is harmful. I know many of you are improving your quality of life by eating a decent diet, exercising regularly, and working on overcoming sleep disturbances. But what can we do about those ruminating thoughts and sensations of feeling overwhelmed? How can we lower our overall stress levels?

First, remember that mental and physical aspects are not isolated, unrelated, or separate. Wellness is the sum of many parts: physical, emotional, psychological. We evaluate our nutrition and exercise patterns. The body-mind connection is real. Next, we observe our behavior when we feel stressed. What do you do? Smoke a cigarette, drink vodka, eat a pint of ice cream, yell at your dog, or “stuff it” in order to avoid getting angry? Hopefully none of the above. And if you do,

there has never been a better time to reconsider.

Please understand that whatever happens to us is not the determining factor in how we live the rest of our lives. It is simply an event, or maybe a series of events. But it is not who you are. How we respond to stressors is mostly decided by the relationship we create to our past experiences. And our response or behavior (i.e., healthy coping skills) is something we can learn. After all, everybody owns the power to choose a response.

Next time somebody cuts you off on Highway 50, try compassion – that driver is struggling harder than you to get somewhere fast. Taking a deep breath and wishing that driver well is much healthier than ranting and raving for the rest of your commute. Waiting for the AT&T technician for hours? Maybe use the extra time to complete a task around the house. Responding mindfully will not always work, but you can practice when the opportunity presents itself. Try something different, but if that does not work, feel free to curse. Also try relaxation and breathing techniques, meditation, visualization, yoga, tai-chi, mindful walking and so on. Have compassion for yourself and all the challenges put in your path. Take a brief look into your past. Notice how far you have come and how much you have accomplished. You already have all the resources you need. Finding ways to tap into these resources is the key.

There is much to explore. And we can help. Please join us for our upcoming Stress Reduction & Mindfulness Course starting in mid-October. Just talk to any of our Nurse Navigators—they know the details and will be happy to add you to our group of participants.



Breast Cancer Awareness

This October, Dignity Health Cancer Institute is proud to participate in National Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Breast cancer is the second most common cancer among women in the United States. About 1 in 8 women born today in the U.S. will get breast cancer at some point. The good news is that most women can survive breast cancer if it’s found and treated early.

Symptoms of breast cancer include:

- Any change in the shape or size of the breast
- Thickening or swelling of part of the breast
- Redness or flaky skin in the nipple area or the breast
- Pulling in of the nipple
- Pain in the nipple area or any region of the breast
- A new lump or knot in the breast or underarm
- Nipple discharge other than breast milk, including blood

The main factors that influence your risk for breast cancer include:

- Gender – women are significantly at higher risk than men
- Age – most breast cancers are found in women who are 50 years old or older
- Genetics – family history can influence your risk

Things that can be done to lower your breast cancer risk include:

- Get regular exercise and maintain a healthy weight
- Don’t drink alcohol, or limit to no more than one alcoholic drink per day
- Talk to your provider about the risks of taking hormone replacement therapy
- Breastfeed your children
- If you have inherited changes in your breast cancer genes or a family history of breast cancer, talk to your provider about other ways to lower your risk

Mammograms are the best way to find breast cancer early. The goal of breast cancer screening is to reduce deaths associated with breast cancer through early detection. Breast cancer treatment is more effective and less harmful when it is started in the early stages of the disease process. Mammograms are an essential prevention measure against breast cancer deaths and today’s advances in technology have made mammograms much less uncomfortable than in the past. It is recommended that women begin getting mammograms at age 40. If you are a woman 40 to 49 years old, it is a good time to talk to your provider about when to start and how often to get a mammogram screening. You may also contact your provider to discuss breast cancer risks and request a screening mammogram. Early detection of breast cancer increases survival!

What Can I Do to Reduce My Risk of Lung Cancer?

You can help lower your risk of lung cancer in the following ways:

- Don't smoke. Cigarette smoking causes about 80% to 90% of lung cancer deaths in the United States. The most important thing you can do to prevent lung cancer is to not start smoking, or to quit if you smoke.
- Avoid secondhand smoke. Smoke from other people's cigarettes, cigars, or pipes is called secondhand smoke. Make your home and car smoke-free.
- Get your home tested for radon. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency recommends that all homes be tested for radon.
- Be careful at work. Health and safety guidelines in the workplace can help workers avoid carcinogens (things that can cause cancer).

What Are the Symptoms of Lung Cancer?

Here are some conditions to look for:

- Coughing that gets worse or doesn't go away
- Chest pain
- Shortness of breath
- Wheezing
- Coughing up blood
- Feeling very tired all the time
- Weight loss with no known cause

If you have any of these symptoms, talk to your doctor, who can help find the cause.

Welcome to Our New Sierra Nevada Nurse Navigator



Mary Carvalho is thrilled to join the Oncology Navigation Team and to serve the community at Sierra Nevada Memorial Hospital in Grass Valley. Having started her nursing career with Dignity Health in 2007, Mary has primarily cared for critically

ill post-surgical patients and also supported patients during their first stages of cancer treatment. As a non-Hodgkin's lymphoma survivor, Mary not only understands how overwhelming a diagnosis can be but can also relate to how easy it is to feel lost trying to navigate the unfamiliar territory of cancer. Mary is passionate about advocating for patients. Her ultimate goal is to educate and empower so that patients gain the confidence and knowledge to advocate for themselves.

Would You Like to Have a Peer Navigator of Your Own?

A Peer Navigator is a trained volunteer who has had cancer and offers support to people with the same type of cancer. Peer Navigators can answer your questions, direct you toward needed resources (e.g., transportation, support groups, financial aid), accompany you to appointments, and connect with you by phone. Peer Navigators offer a message of hope and empowerment in coping with cancer. They listen with a compassionate and understanding heart because they have been on the same journey. If you are interested or would like more information, please contact your Nurse Navigator or the Dignity Health Nurse Navigation Team at 916.962.8892.

The Power of Food: Herbs and Spices

Written by: Susan Liebert, MS, RD, CSO, CDE

Herbs and spices are not just flavorings for your food. They are plants that contain powerful antioxidants, essential oils, compounds with anti-cancer properties, as well as a variety of vitamins, minerals, and fiber. A spice used in cooking is usually a powder or seed from dried fruit, root, bark, or other plant substance. Herbs are the leaves, flowers, or stems of plants used for flavoring or as a garnish and are used either fresh or dried. It does not matter if you use fresh or dried herbs. Dried herbs are more concentrated so use approximately 1/3 as much as fresh herbs. Use fresh herbs as a garnish or add near the end of cooking. Add dried herbs at the beginning of cooking. Below are some common herbs and spices and their nutritional value:

Herbs

- Rosemary, thyme, sage, and basil are all aromatic flowering plants in the mint family. They all contain essential oils that have anti-inflammatory, antibacterial, antioxidant, and beneficial gut properties. They provide vitamin C, vitamin A, iron, magnesium, calcium, and fiber. In addition, sage and basil are both excellent sources of vitamin K, the clotting vitamin.
- Parsley, an aromatic flowering plant, contains powerful antioxidants helpful for the immune and digestive systems. It is an excellent source of vitamin K and vitamin C.
- Garlic, a member of the onion family used as an herb, contains sulfur compounds and antioxidants that provide a number of health benefits including reducing LDL cholesterol and blood pressure. It is being studied for its anti-cancer properties.

Spices

- Turmeric, made from the ground roots of a flowering plant, has a number of antioxidants, namely curcumin, which features anti-inflammatory, antibacterial, and anti-cancer properties. Curcumin gives turmeric its bold yellow color. Using black pepper along with turmeric significantly increases its absorption. Turmeric also contains vitamin C, beta carotene, calcium, iron, potassium, zinc, and fiber.

- Ginger root contains the antioxidant 6-gingerol, which can help reduce pain and inflammation. Ginger is also helpful for nausea and helps to increase gut motility. Ginger contains vitamin C, iron, potassium, protein, and fiber.
- Cinnamon, made from the inner bark of the tree, contains many compounds with antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, and antimicrobial properties. It may help improve glucose and lipid levels in patients with diabetes. It contains calcium, vitamin A, iron, potassium, and fiber.
- Cloves, made from the dried flower buds of an aromatic plant in the myrtle family, contain volatile oils with anti-inflammatory, antifungal, and antioxidant properties. Cloves are an excellent source of manganese as well as vitamin C, vitamin K, and fiber.
- Cayenne pepper gets its heat from capsaicin which in addition to giving cayenne its spicy taste, provides pain relief, anti-inflammatory, and digestive properties. It also contains antioxidants that may help slow cancer growth. The pepper provides an excellent source of vitamin A, as well as vitamins C, B6, E, K, manganese, fiber and protein.





Special Events

BREAST RECONSTRUCTION AWARENESS (BRA) DAY

Wednesday, October 16, 6 – 8 p.m.
The Cannery: 1601 Alhambra Blvd., Ste 200,
Sacramento, CA 95816
Admission is free. Pre-register: 916.851.2138

MAKING STRIDES AGAINST BREAST CANCER

Sunday, October 20, 8 – 9 a.m.
West Steps, State Capitol
For further information, please contact Angela Gianulias:
916.962.8893 or Angela.Gianulias@DignityHealth.org

SHINE A LIGHT ON LUNG CANCER EVENT

Wednesday, November 6, 11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
Mercy Cancer Center
3301 C Street, Ste 550, Sacramento, CA 95816
Lunch will be provided
For further information, please contact Angela Gianulias:
916.962.8893 or Angela.Gianulias@DignityHealth.org

SKIN CANCER PREVENTION & SCREENING

Saturday, November 9, 9 a.m. – Noon
Sierra Nevada Memorial Hospital
Community Cancer Center “Living Room”
155 Glasson Way, Grass Valley, CA 95945
Building 3, Lower Level
For more information, call 530.274.6883
No appointments given. First come, first served.

STRESS REDUCTION & MINDFULNESS COURSE

Thursdays, 4:30 – 6 p.m.
Mercy San Juan Medical Center
6555 Coyle Avenue, Carmichael, CA 95608
Lukens Auditorium
October 17 – November 21
Please call the Oncology Nurse Navigators at
916.962.8892 to RSVP.

This six-week class series will promote well-being and relaxation. Expert facilitators will teach skills to reduce stress and anxiety, resulting in a lasting improvement in physical and psychological symptoms related to life with a cancer diagnosis. Through presentations and experiential practice, participants will gain practical skills to reduce stress. Attendees will be introduced to evidence-based practices, like Guided Imagery, Mindfulness Meditation, Qi Gong, Breathing Exercises, Art Therapy, and Restorative Movement.

TRANSITION TO WELLNESS

Thursday, October 10, 4:30 – 6 p.m.
Mercy Cancer Center
3301 C Street, Ste 550, Sacramento, CA 95816
To RSVP, please call 916.962.8893.

ZERO PROSTATE CANCER RUN/WALK

Saturday, November 16, 8 – 11 a.m.
Inderkum High School Track
2500 New Market Drive, Sacramento, CA 95835
zerocancer.org
For further information, please contact Michael Mair
at 916.962.8864.

Grass Valley Cancer Center Resources

A Cancer diagnosis impacts not only the patient but loved ones as well. Families and other interested patients are welcome to utilize these resources. Services are offered at no cost to cancer patients, family members, and caregivers. For information on any of the groups or classes below (where another number is not given) call Rebecca Parsons at **530.274.6656**.

CANCER CENTER LENDING LIBRARY

THE ART OF HEALING WITH Nanci Shandera, PhD
8-week courses, 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.
drnanci@earthspiritcenter.com or EarthSpiritCenter.com

CANCER SUPPORT GROUP WITH Linda Meyers, LCSW
Wednesdays, 3 – 4:30 p.m.
Contact: 530.478.1273

**CARE SUPPORT GROUP WITH Jeanine Bryant, MS
FOR FAMILY AND FRIENDS OF CANCER PATIENTS**
Wednesdays, 3 – 4:30 p.m.
Contact: 530.274.6654

COMFORT CUISINE MEALS

Delicious, nutritious, homemade meals for patients and caregivers. Frozen, individual portions, ready to reheat. Pick up in the Cancer Center.

**G.A.T.E.: GRIEVING AND TRANSITIONING EMOTIONAL
SUPPORT FOR THOSE WHO HAVE LOST A LOVED ONE
TO CANCER WITH Jeanine Bryant, MS**
Tuesdays, 3:30 – 5 p.m.
Contact: 530.274.6654

HARP CLASSES WITH Lisa Stine

Fridays, weekly for 12 weeks
Contact: Lisa Stine, 530.632.6226

**KIDSCOPE: FOR CHILDREN IMPACTED BY CANCER
WITH Jeanine Bryant, MS**
Contact: 530.274.6654

**NUTRITIONAL CONSULTATIONS
Kelley Kull, RD, CDE**
Available for appointment
Contact: 530.274.6600

**ONCOLOGY NURSE NAVIGATOR
Mary Caravalho, RN**
Contact: 530.274.6179

**ONCOLOGY SOCIAL WORKER
Rebecca Parsons, LCSW, OSW-C**
Referrals to community resources,
individual and family counseling
Contact: 530.274.6656

OVARIAN CANCER GROUP

Third Tuesday of each month, 11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
Contact: Rebecca Parsons, 530.274.6656

**PROSTATE DISCUSSION GROUP WITH
Mary Peterson, LMFT**
Fourth Thursday of each month, 4:30 – 6 p.m.
Contact: 530.478.1880

**TRANSFORMATIONAL WHOLENESS WITH
Nanci Shandera, PhD**
Tuesdays, 10 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
Contact: 530.265.9097
drnanci@earthspiritcenter.com
EarthSpiritCenter.com

**WOMAN TO WOMAN: SHARING THE CANCER
EXPERIENCE WITH Jeanine Bryant, MS**
Wednesdays, 9:30 – 11 a.m.
Contact: 530.274.6654

**WRITING TO HEAL WITH Molly Fisk
CREATIVE WRITING CLASS**
8 weekly classes
Thursdays, 2:30 – 4:30 p.m.
Contact: 530.265.8751

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

CANCER AID THRIFT SHOP
Provides financial assistance, equipment, etc.
Contact: 530.273.2365

HOPE BEARERS
Christ-centered cancer and chronic illness support group
Third Saturday of the month, 11 a.m.
Foothill Church
Contact: Amy & Wayne, 530.518.0519
or Sally, 530.273.1468

Dignity Health Cancer Institute Complementary Classes & Support Groups

For more information on any of the listings below, call **916.962.8892**. If you're looking for support from our Oncology Nurse Navigators, please call **833.DHCINAV** or email **DHCINAV@dignityhealth.org**.

BREAST CANCER SUPPORT GROUP

3rd Thursday of every month, 4:30 – 6 p.m.

Mercy San Juan Medical Center

6403 Coyle Avenue, Carmichael, CA 95608

4th Tuesday of every month, 11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Mercy Cancer Center, Large Conference Room

3301 C Street, Sacramento, 95816

CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUP

3rd Friday of every month, 11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Mercy Cancer Center

3301 C Street, Sacramento, 95816

For more information please contact 916.990.8454

FOLSOM CANCER SUPPORT GROUP

Every Thursday, 11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

1675 Creekside Dr., Boardroom

Folsom, CA 95630

GYNECOLOGIC CANCER SUPPORT GROUP

3rd Wednesday of every month, 11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Mercy Cancer Center

3301 C Street, Sacramento, 95816

LIVING WITH CANCER SUPPORT GROUP

1st Monday of every month, Noon – 1:30 p.m.

Woodland Healthcare Cancer Center

Haarberg Building, Conference Room

515 Fairchild Ct., Woodland, CA 95695

Lunch will be provided

LUNG AND ESOPHAGEAL CANCER SUPPORT GROUP

1st Wednesday of every month, 11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Alternates every other month between Mercy Cancer Center & Mercy San Juan Medical Center

(MCC = Jan, Mar, May, Jul, Sep, Nov)

(MSJ = Feb, Apr, Jun, Aug, Oct, Dec)

Call 855.637.2962 for location

MULTIPLE MYELOMA SUPPORT GROUP

1st Saturday of every month, 10 a.m. – noon

Mercy San Juan Medical Center

6555 Coyle Avenue, Ste. 140, Carmichael, 95608

OSTOMY SUPPORT GROUP

1st Saturday of every month, 10 a.m. – noon

Mercy San Juan Medical Center

6501 Coyle Avenue, Carmichael, 95608

PROSTATE SUPPORT GROUP

3rd Thursday of every month, 1:30 – 3:30 p.m.

Alternates every other month between Mercy San Juan Medical Center & UC Davis

(MSJ = Mar 21, May 16, Jul 18, Sep 19, Nov 21)

(UCD = Apr 18, Jun 20, Aug 15, Oct 17, Dec 19)

YOGA CLASSES

Every Monday & Wednesday, 5 – 6 p.m.

Mercy Cancer Center

3301 C Street, Sacramento, 95816