Statewide Partnership to Improve Treatments

by Jeffrey Radawski, MD, Radiation Oncologist

Radiation therapy plays an integral role in the lives of women being treated for breast cancer. In many cases, it allows women to avoid mastectomy with cure rates that are as good as mastectomy. Researchers studying radiation therapy in the treatment of breast cancer have reported significant advances in reducing side effects, thereby increasing the quality of treatments.

West Michigan Cancer Center has been enrolling patients in a statewide study headed by the University of Michigan and Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan to look at the quality of radiation therapy treatment. The effort is called the Michigan Radiation Oncology Quality Consortium— or MROQC, for short. A total of twenty-six institutions across Michigan have enrolled more than three thousand breast cancer patients who were treated with lumpectomy and radiation therapy over the past three years.

The healthcare institutions participating in the study meet every four months to review how women are faring as a result of their treatments. They also discuss new directions and treatment goals for the state as a whole. One significant improvement came following discussion about radiation dose to the heart as a consequence of treatment. After reviewing its initial data, the consortium aimed to lower the heart dose to patients. This year, the dose has been more carefully tracked and met the planned targets for the maximum radiation dose allowed to the heart.

Cancer care continues to improve and MROQC is one example of how quality measures are continually studied and improved. This ensures that your cancer treatment is as advanced and effective as it can be. West Michigan Cancer Center is proud to stand alongside its partner institutions statewide to continue to contribute to improving patient quality, not just within the confines of our center, but throughout the state. This is largely thanks to the thousands of patients who consent to provide their cancer experiences so that meaningful conclusions can be drawn for the benefit of the broader population.

Dr. Radawski talks to a breast cancer patient before her radiation treatment.
**WMCC Welcomes a New Provider**

MOHAMMAD OMAIRA, MD, joined our medical oncology team in September. Dr. Omaira earned his medical degree from the University of Damascus. He completed a residency in internal medicine and pediatrics at Hurley Medical Center in Flint, followed by a fellowship in hematology/oncology at Michigan State University in East Lansing.

Dr. Omaira is board certified in internal medicine and board eligible in medical oncology and hematology. His clinical and research interests include hematologic malignancies—leukemias and lymphomas.

**Parking Update**

We hope that you have found it easier to park at our center with the addition of the lot directly to the north of our building (formerly known as Lot 16). For those who may not be familiar, there is a connection drive between the two lots which allows you to park without having to return to Park or Water Street. Let us know if you have any additional suggestions.

**Area Women Get Free Mammograms Through Pink Saturdays**

Two women were diagnosed with breast cancer and 37 more were sent for follow-up testing after receiving free mammograms through the 8th Annual Pink Saturdays program. A total of 575 uninsured women in Southwest Michigan received free mammograms through the initiative, which was supported by nearly every hospital, radiology group and cancer center in the region. Pink Saturdays is funded in part by a grant from Susan G. Komen Southwest Michigan.

The free mammograms were provided to uninsured women between the ages of 40 to 64 in eight Southwest Michigan counties: Allegan, Berrien, Branch, Calhoun, Cass, Kalamazoo, St. Joseph and Van Buren. Women over the age of 65 automatically qualify for a mammogram through Medicare.

The importance of early detection and treatment of breast cancer was a driving force behind the creation of Pink Saturdays, according to Joseph Mirro, MD, CEO/CMO of West Michigan Cancer Center. “Women diagnosed at an early stage have a much higher cure rate”, said Mirro. “According to the US Centers for Disease Control’s (CDC) National Center for Health Statistics, only 36% of uninsured women age 40-64 get an annual screening mammogram compared to 74% of insured women in the same group”, he added.

According to Bunny LaDuke with Access Breast Cancer Screenings, Pink Saturdays provides a critical service to uninsured women who don’t qualify for the Healthy Michigan Plan (Medicaid expansion program) as well as those who have not signed up for Obamacare. “Even with expanded insurance coverage, there are still thousands of women in Southwest Michigan who remain uninsured and therefore eligible for a free screening mammogram”, added LaDuke.

Once again this year, Pink Saturdays focused on increasing breast cancer screening rates among uninsured African American and Hispanic women. According to the US Census Bureau, a greater number of African Americans and Hispanics/Latinos are uninsured, compared to non-Hispanic whites. Also, while African American women are less likely than Caucasian women to get breast cancer, they are more likely to die from the disease than any other group, according to the CDC. Pink Saturdays is partnering with the Hispanic American Council of Kalamazoo as well as local churches to reach minority populations.

“Cancer has no color or ethnicity”, said Megan Smith, Mission Coordinator with Susan G. Komen. “We have a strong initiative to make sure all eligible women take an active role in breast health and have the opportunity for a free mammogram”, she added.

Partners in the Pink Saturday 2014 initiative include: Access Breast Cancer Screenings; Advanced Radiology Services PC—Kalamazoo Division; Allegan General Hospital; Berrien County Health Department; Borgess Health Park; Borgess-Lee Memorial Hospital; Borgess Medical Center; Borgess-Pipp Hospital; Borgess Westside; Borgess at Woodbridge Hills; Bronson Advanced Radiology Services; Bronson Battle Creek; Bronson Center for Women; Bronson Diagnostics at Woodbridge; Bronson LakeView Hospital; Kalamazoo County Health and Community Services; Lakeland Center for Outpatient Services; Lakeland Regional Medical Center, St. Joseph; Lakeland Community Hospital, Niles; Lakeland Community Hospital, Watervliet; Lakeland HealthCare Marie Yeager Cancer Center; Mary Coleman Mammography; Oaklawn Hospital; Premier Radiology; Radiology Associates of Berrien County; Radiology Consultants PLC; South Haven Health System; Southwest Michigan Breast and Cervical Cancer Control Program; Southwest Michigan Radiology; Sturgis Hospital; Summit Radiology PC; Susan G. Komen Southwest Michigan; Three Rivers Health; Western Michigan University School of Medicine (WMed) and West Michigan Cancer Center.
To put Florence West’s incredible longevity into perspective, consider this fact. She was born before the famed Titanic sank in the Atlantic Ocean in 1912 which, by the way, her late husband had a ticket to ride. Fortunately, she recalls, his parents cancelled the family’s planned trip on the doomed ocean liner at the last minute.

Nearly 103 years later, Florence lives happily in Portage—far from her native England—and keeps busy playing the piano and knitting hats for cancer patients. She identifies with them because she, too, had cancer. Not once but twice. Florence has survived breast and jaw cancer, receiving her most recent treatment at WMCC. She says what helped her through treatment was a positive attitude, and not dwelling on cancer during the healing process. Florence adds that she received tremendous support from her family, church and friends.

Florence meets every Thursday afternoon at the retirement community where she lives, to knit and share laughs and conversation. As she works the needles, Florence enjoys spinning a yarn or two…especially, fond stories about her three sons, ten grandchildren and nineteen great grandchildren. When the session ends, she puts the newly-knitted hats into basket which she makes sure gets promptly delivered to the cancer center.
No Shave November Features Events to Benefit WMCC

A Kalamazoo-based non-profit organization called The Proper Possible Movement is focusing on men’s health and cancer education and prevention with two events this month to benefit WMCC. On November 1st, Urban Salon hosted a ‘Shave the Date Party’. Amid a festive atmosphere of music and Bell’s beer, male patrons were treated to a full shave for a suggested donation.

The bookend event to the ‘Shave the Date Party’ is ‘Beers with Beards’, a beard and moustache competition on November 26th at 8 pm at Bell’s Eccentric Café in downtown Kalamazoo. Participants will have the opportunity to have their beards and moustaches ‘judged’ in an intense competition!

Donations from both events will be directed to research and community education toward genitourinary (prostate, testicular, bladder) cancers.

The goal of No-Shave November is to grow awareness by embracing our hair, which many cancer patients lose, and letting it grow wild and free. The idea is to donate the money you usually spend on shaving and grooming for a month to educate about cancer prevention, save lives, and aid those fighting the battle.

Ashley Booden shaves a customer's beard at Urban Salon.
Cassopolis-based Midwest Energy Cooperative presented WMCC with a check for nearly $3,500 following its ‘Fueling the Fight’ for cancer campaign. During the month of August—when propane tanks are topped off in preparation for the upcoming winter heating season—subsidiary Midwest Propane donated one penny for every gallon of gas delivered to the ‘Fueling the Fight’ campaign. Service technicians delivered almost 384,000 gallons during the month. The company also donated $10 for every customer who signed up for new service. The money goes to the WMCC Patient Care Services Fund.
Cooking Class

**COOKING CLASS**
Led by WMCC Registered Dietitians

**When**
Thursday, February 19

**The Joy of Soy Cooking**

**Time**
4:30 pm – 6:00 pm

**Place**
WMCC 3rd Floor
Multi-Purpose Room
200 North Park Street
Kalamazoo

**Register**
WMCC at 269-373-0109
or email nutrition@wmcc.org

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Healing Yoga

**HEALING YOGA**

**When**
Every Monday
Drop-in

**Time**
5:00 pm – 6:15 pm

**Place**
WMCC 3rd Floor
Multi Purpose Room
200 North Park Street
Kalamazoo

**Information**
WMCC at 269-373-0109
or email nutrition@wmcc.org

This introductory yoga class is open to cancer patients who are currently in treatment or up to three years post treatment. One caregiver is allowed to attend the class with the patient. Yoga can help promote balance, strength, flexibility and stress management. It can also help decrease symptoms of fatigue and help raise energy levels, especially during treatment and in the months that follow. Yoga mats are available if you do not have one.

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LIVESTRONG®

**LIVESTRONG® at the YMCA**

**When**
January 2015

**Time**
TBA

**Place**
YMCA
2900 W. Centre Ave.
Portage, MI

**Register**
Trish Harrison
tharr@kzooymca.org
or 269-324-9622 x 435

LIVESTRONG® at the YMCA is a FREE 12-week fitness program designed for adult cancer survivors who have recently become deconditioned, or chronically fatigued from their treatment and/or the disease itself. The goal of the small group series is to help participants build muscle mass and strength, increase flexibility and endurance, and improve functional ability. The program is designed to strengthen and support survivors on the road to recovery after their treatment regimens. Registration and medical release is required.

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Look Good... Feel Better

**LOOK GOOD FEEL BETTER**
Sponsored by WMCC and the American Cancer Society

**When**
November 24
December 22
January 23
February 26

**Time**
5:30 pm – 7:00 pm

**Place**
WMCC 3rd Floor
Multi Purpose Room
200 North Park Street
Kalamazoo

**Register**
American Cancer Society
at 1-800-227-2345

The Look Good Feel Better Program provides free information and cosmetic advice to women battling cancer. This training includes hands-on instruction on makeup and skin care. Cosmetics are provided for your personal makeover.

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Tai Chi

**TAI CHI**

**When**
Every Tuesday

**Time**
5:30 pm – 6:30 pm

**Place**
WMCC 3rd Floor
Lobby Area
200 North Park Street
Kalamazoo

**Register**
WMCC at 269-373-0109
or email nutrition@wmcc.org

Tai chi can be extremely beneficial to cancer patients during treatment. This introductory class can help you to safely improve balance as well as provide strength and flexibility, reduce stress, lower blood pressure and increase energy. No previous experience is necessary. If Kalamazoo Public Schools close, tai chi will be cancelled.
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Mr. Duane Hostetler
Sau Hsielh & Tsai Feng Chang
Ms. Sau Hsteh
Mr. and Mrs. Fred R. Hunter III
Mrs. Dorothy Hurt
Mr. Frank Iagnocco
Mr. Russell D. Iuni
Ms. June M. Johnson
Mr. and Mrs. Donald M. Johnston
Ms. Eileen Jones
Mr. and Mrs. Andrew J. Jursczak
Mrs. Ruth Kacienda
Mr. and Mrs. Larry D. Kahler
Conda Kane
Mr. and Mrs. Richard E. Kane
Mr. and Mrs. Louis M. Klein
William and Marlene Klein
Ms. Hertha J. Klimp
Mr. Ivan Klinesteker
Ms. Peg Kolaja
Mr. and Mrs. Clarence Kooy
Ms. Elaine Kovach
Reverend and Mrs. Frederick R. Kruthof
Ms. Laurie L. Krum
Ms. Patricia Kube
Ms. Mary M. Kugler
Mr. Bela Lahner
Mr. Nancy Landon
Mr. and Mrs. John A. Lang
Mr. and Mrs. Ronald L. Larkin
Mrs. Mary Ellen Lasich
Mr. and Mrs. Phillip M. Lazarus
Ms. Marta Leroy
Mrs. Janet Livers
Ms. Marilyn Lorentz
Mr. and Mrs. Ronald M. Lowe
Mr. Tom Lynch
Ms. Christine Lyster Ryan
Tim and Ruth Manclina
Mrs. Annette Markovich
Marian Matheny
Durward and Sydelle McCleary
Ms. Elizabeth McCracklin
Mr. and Mrs. Carl L. McEwen
Mr. and Mrs. Melvin J. McFadden
Mr. Philip L. Mendham
Mrs. and Ms. Charles D. Miller
Mr. and Mrs. Fred Miller
Geanne Miller
Ms. Julia Miller
Mrs. Linda L. Miller
Verlan and Sandra Miller
Julius and Judith Millers
Ms. Barbara Mohney
Mrs. Margaret S. Money
Mr. Ronald Moore
Richard and Corda Moss
John and Suzanne Moyer
Mr. Larry R. Moyer
Dr. Dale R. Mutch
Richard and Delores Neely
Mr. and Mrs. Jerald & Susan Newton
Ms. Carol L. Nezamis
Ms. Stella Niedzieski
Ms. Patsy J. Noe
Mr. Jim Nolan
Ms. Paula Novess
Mrs. Cynthia Nunn
Bob and Penny Ogrin
Mrs. Judith Oliver
Mrs. Esther I. Olmstead
William and Sally Paletto
Ella and Allen Palmer
Mrs. Bernice Parker
Ms. Sammie M. Paul
John and Joyce Petro
Mr. and Mrs. Gerald Phelps
Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Piechocki
Ms. Darlene Pierce
Ms. Marilyn K. Pierce
Mr. and Mrs. Tobin Ploehn
Ms. Karen M. Powell
Mr. August Radtke
Mr. Jay Rantz
Mrs. Joyce A. Rapson
Mrs. Julie Reinholt
Mrs. Theresa Remucha
Mr. Williams R. Riggan
Mr. and Mrs. Barbara J. Ringler
Terry and Candice Ringler
Mr. and Mrs. Jack Robbins
Don and Fran Roddamer
Mrs. Shirley A. Rodgers
Mr. and Mrs. David F. Root
Mr. William Roseboom, Sr.
Mr. and Mrs. Gerald & Karen Rosenbaum
Mr. Barnard J. Ross
Leslie E. Ross
Mrs. Margaret Rowe
Ms. Sharon Royle Mihalek
Ms. Nancy Ruggles
Mr. Joseph L. Razanca
Mr. Richard E. Sanderson
Lawrence and Betty Jane Sarhatt
Mr. Steven Schreuder
Mr. Bruce Schultz
Ms. Wilma Seckel
Mr. and Mrs. Alvin M. Seeback
Mr. and Mrs. Karle Sherman
Mr. and Mrs. Oren R. Shoemaker
Mr. Thomas J. Simon
Mr. Edwin M. Smith
Mrs. Reta M. Smith
Mr. and Mrs. Robert C. Smith
Mr. and Mrs. Herb & Annette Smith
Mr. Daniel Smodic
Mrs. Carol L. Sopjes
Fred and Marcella Soukup
Kassondra Soulier
Ms. Bonnie M. Sparacino
Mr. Richard P. Speece
Mr. Robert K. Springer
Mr. Roger Staley
Mr. and Mrs. John E. Starr
Ms. Margaret Stickel
Eugene Stittler
Mr. and Mrs. William R. Stoneburner
Mr. and Mrs. Meil E. Stoyanoff
Mr. and Mrs. G. & Astrida Strautnieks
Mr. David Sturgis
Mr. Gerald Sunlin
Mr. Edward W. Talbot
Mr. William L. Taylor
Ms. Linda Teare
Mrs. Ruth Thomas
Mr. John Tibbetts
Duane and Joyce Triemstra
Mr. and Mrs. Joseph O. Trudeau
Mrs. Madalyn Trimble
Mrs. Bonnie Valkiner
Bernie and Bev Vallier
John and Jean Vanburen
Mrs. Coleen VanderHurst
Mr. Russ VanderWell
Mr. Paul VanderWouwer
Mrs. Flora VanWeelden
Help For Treatment Side Effects

Cancer treatment can make eating and drinking adequate amounts a chore. If you experience these side effects please let your physician know. It is important to try to eat well and stay hydrated during treatment. Common side effects of treatment include taste change, nausea, decreased appetite, constipation, and diarrhea. Below are suggestions to help manage these side effects.

Taste changes:
• Keep your mouth clean by brushing your teeth often and using a baking soda rinse.
• Avoid canned foods and use plastic silverware if you have a metallic taste.
• Let foods cool off to room temperature or eat cold foods to decrease the food odor.
• Avoid the kitchen while food is cooking.
• Try new flavors and spices as tastes can change throughout treatment.

Decreased appetite
• Set an alarm to remind yourself to eat something every few hours.
• Focus on high calorie and high protein foods such as nut butters, liquid nutrition supplements, eggs, or trail mix.
• Drink liquids in between meals rather than with the meal.

Nausea
• Aim for 6-8 small meals rather than 3 large meals.
• Avoid spicy or greasy foods.
• Eat soft, bland foods on treatment days.
• Avoid food odors.
• Suck on lemon or peppermint candy.

Constipation
• Drink adequate fluids, usually 8-10 cups per day.
• Add high fiber foods to your diet such as fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.

Diarrhea
• Drink plenty of liquids to remain hydrated.
• Limit milk products to 2 cups per day.
• Increase soluble fiber foods including oatmeal, white rice, bananas, and applesauce.
• Avoid sugar alcohols.
Cancer patients often endure countless hours in the confines of a small waiting room, anticipating daily radiation treatments to treat their disease. One WMCC patient has written a play with her husband, based on her experience. We were honored to have the opportunity to sponsor an extraordinary, one-of-a-kind staged reading of their play in October at Farmers Alley Theatre in downtown Kalamazoo.

Deborah Ann Percy is a breast cancer survivor who, after being diagnosed in late 2012, underwent a simple mastectomy and reconstructive surgery. That was followed by six months of chemotherapy and 33 days of radiation therapy at WMCC, a standard course of treatment. Percy and her husband, Arnold Johnston, also happen to be award-winning playwrights. They decided to create a drama highlighting hope and courage based on Percy's experiences with her fellow patients in the waiting room. It is titled, Radiation: 33 Days of Waiting.

"Arnie and I were delighted to be a part of the collaboration between WMCC, Farmers Alley Theatre, and director Terry Williams that brought our play, Radiation: 33 days of Waiting, to life", said Percy. "My experience in the radiation waiting room introduced me to many brave, cheerful, and heroic women", she added. "There was no weeping there, no whining. The women spent their time together telling their stories to each other. Arnie and I worked hard to protect their privacy—this play is a work of fiction, after all—while distilling the essence of their stories and their bravery into a piece of theatre art."

WMCC sponsored two performances of the staged reading, on Tuesday, October 14 and Wednesday, October 15 and invited survivors and their guests to attend. Approximately 175 people turned out for the performances. Following the readings, Director Terry Williams facilitated a discussion with the audience to gauge their reactions and to offer an opportunity for questions and answers.

"A diagnosis of cancer affects the entire family and not just the patient", said Joseph Mirro, MD, Chief Executive Officer and Chief Medical Officer, West Michigan Cancer Center. "Treatment is more than just a physical journey involving surgery, chemotherapy and radiation. It is an emotional rollercoaster with the patient in the front car but the entire family and loved ones along for the ride", he added.

Dr. Mirro continued, "We were intrigued by the opportunity to help our survivors and loved ones confront and share some of the emotions faced through their journey. We also hoped that for some, this might be a therapeutic process for their emotional distress. Our survivors and their loved ones completed a questionnaire before and after the play reading and we believe their input will help us plan future events and probably impact survivorship programming at other sites by publishing the results."

Playwrights Percy and Johnston are planning to send the play to other theatres in hopes that it will be staged as a full production. They would also like to see the performance used in non-profit education and in fundraising efforts directed toward patient care and research.

We wish to thank Deborah Ann Percy and Arnold Johnston for their insightful, emotion-filled script and for the opportunity to partner with them. We also want to thank the director, cast and crew: D. Terry Williams, Roger Burleigh, Sharon Williams, Michael Helms, Charlotte Guyette, Dwandra Lampkin, Miriam Bat-Ami, Karen Trout, Kitty Kachniewicz, Mitchell Harpenau, Deborah Hanley, Janet Gover, Sarah Rice, Bianca Washington, Carrie Phillips, Farmers Alley Theatre and Kalamazoo Civic Theatre.

If you would like to view the performance, it is available on our website at www.wmcc.org. Just click on the link, Radiation: 33 Days of Waiting Play.
Renovations are underway in the lower level of the cancer center which will allow us to accommodate more patients and providers. We have gone to great lengths to create a barrier between existing patient care areas and construction zones. Still, we know that projects like this can cause untidiness so we thank you for pardoning our dust!

Plans call for expanding the number of exam rooms from four to 12 which will enable us to increase the number of providers from two to four. We will create a new lobby, reception desk and refreshment station. In addition, controlled access doors—similar to those found on the 1st, 2nd and 3rd floors—will be installed. The two existing rest rooms will be renovated and a third rest room will be added. We anticipate that the project will be completed in February.