You may have noticed in recent months that our name appears to have grown: West Michigan Cancer Center & Institute for Blood Disorders. The reality is that the name has been our official moniker all along—ever since we began caring for patients more than 20 years ago. Over the past two decades and through a couple of logo changes, the name was shortened—to West Michigan Cancer Center. We realized that removing those extra words was a disservice to all of our patients who do not have cancer—those with non-malignant blood disorders. In fact, they represent one-third of our new patient consults.

We have eight physicians on staff that specialize in hematology as well as medical oncology. Hematology is the branch of medicine concerned with the study, diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of diseases related to the blood.

Hematology incorporates many different kinds of medical problems and diseases. Fortunately, rapid advances have been made in our understanding and treatment of most of these diseases and most patients have a good prognosis.

Hematology does incorporate some cancers; the most common ones that are identified are the leukemias including: acute myeloblastic leukemia, acute lymphoblastic leukemia, chronic myeloblastic leukemia, and chronic lymphocytic leukemia. These types of leukemias are named for their cells of origin within the blood system. Lymphomas or also types of cancers derived from blood forming elements. These diseases arise in lymph nodes from lymphocytes that become malignant. There are many types of lymphomas and rapid advances have made these diseases much more amendable to our treatment. Multiple myeloma is another common type of cancer derived from blood forming cells. In the case of multiple myeloma, the cell of origin is a plasma cell which normally makes immunoglobulins which protect us from infection. There are been tremendous advances in the treatment of multiple myeloma over the past five years. There are also very rare diseases called myelodysplastic syndromes. These may have too many or too few cells in the blood. These diseases are not considered cancer but often include treatment or may progress. Common diagnoses include essential thrombocytosis, polycythemia vera, or refractory anemias. Each of these disorders has a unique course. Basic biology has revealed many of the causes and over the next 5 to 10 years, there should be many more treatments available for these disorders.

Benign hematology usually refers to common diseases that can be easily treated. These include anemias as a result of iron deficiency, vitamin B 12, etc., or high or low blood counts which have many etiologies. These diseases are usually a result of causes that are not commonly associated with blood forming cells.

Finally, there is a large group of clotting disorders. Our blood circulates in a fluid form but if we are cut, it coagulates to prevent us from bleeding. There are many disorders that result in increased clotting that have significant complications such as deep vein thrombophlebitis or pulmonary embolus. Likewise, there are many disorders that result in excess bleeding. Blood disorders also include abnormalities in clotting. For patients with this diagnosis, we offer a Hemophilia Clinic. The clinic team treats patients with inherited bleeding disorders like hemophilia, von Willebrand disease and other clotting factor deficiencies. These patients are either missing a specific clotting protein or the protein isn’t functioning appropriately. The team also helps evaluate people with abnormal bleeding.

The West Michigan Cancer Center and Institute for Blood Disorders has extensive experience and medical expertise in diagnosing and treating these hematologic disorders. The malignant disorders described above require very intensive treatment and supportive care. Likewise, some of the clotting and bleeding disorders require lifetime treatment. However, most benign hematologic diseases can be quickly diagnosed and treated and have an excellent prognosis.
Mazen Mislmani, MD, has joined our radiation oncology team in Kalamazoo. Dr. Mislmani earned his medical degree from the Wayne State University School of Medicine in Detroit. He completed an internship at Crittenton Hospital Medical Center in Rochester, MI, and a residency in radiation oncology at Case Western Reserve University’s Seidman Cancer Center in Cleveland, OH, where he was chief resident. Dr. Mislmani is board eligible in radiation oncology.

Gitonga Munene, MD, joins WMCC as a surgical oncologist. In addition, Dr. Munene has academic responsibilities at the Western Michigan University Homer Stryker M.D. School of Medicine where he is Assistant Professor of Surgery.

Dr. Munene earned his medical degree from the Northwestern University School of Medicine in Chicago and completed his surgical residency at Georgetown University Hospital in Washington, D.C. Dr. Munene received fellowship training in surgical oncology from Tom Baker Cancer Center in Calgary, Alberta, Canada and in gastrointestinal research at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston. Most recently, he was Assistant Professor of Surgery in the Division of Surgical Oncology at the University of Tennessee Health Science Center in Memphis. He is board certified in general surgery.

Girl Scouts Remember WMCC Patients

Not everyone who buys Girl Scout cookies takes them home. What happens to all those donated Do-si-dos, Thin Mints and Trefoils? They are given to organizations like WMCC as part of the Hometown Heroes program through Girl Scout Hearts of Michigan. We recently received 60 boxes of cookies which we added to our coffee cart and handed out to patients and their caregivers. Thank you, Girl Scouts Hearts of Michigan!

UPCOMING WELLNESS DATES

Available at no charge to patients newly-diagnosed, in treatment and up to three years’ post-treatment. Check wmcc.org for specific dates and times.

Survivorcise
Date: January 12 – March 31, 2016
on Tuesdays & Thursdays
Time: 1:00 – 2:00 pm
Place: Bronson Athletic Club
6789 Elm Valley Drive
Kalamazoo
Register: 269-373-7434 or email survivorcise@wmcc.org

Healing Yoga
Date: Every Monday – Drop In
Time: 5:00 – 6:15 pm
Place: WMCC 3rd Floor Multi Purpose Room
Information: 269-373-0109
or email nutrition@wmcc.org

Livestrong at the Y
Date: Begins January 2016
on Tuesdays & Thursdays
Time: 10:00 am
Place: YMCA
2900 W. Centre Ave.
Portage
Register: 269-324-9622, ext. 435
or email Trish Harrison at taharr@kzooymca.org

Look Good Feel Better
Date: Monday, October 26
Monday, November 23
Monday, December 28
Time: 5:30 – 7:30 pm
Place: Bronson Advanced Radiology Services
524 South Park St
Kalamazoo
Register: 800-227-2345
(American Cancer Society)

Tai Chi
Date: Every Tuesday
Time: 5:30 – 6:30 pm
Place: WMCC 3rd Floor Lobby Area
Register: 269-373-0109
or email nutrition@wmcc.org
Wellness Event Draws 250

We were absolutely delighted with the large turnout for our annual survivorship event, ‘Emotional Wellness for Cancer Survivors’ on September 15th at the Fetzer Center at Western Michigan University. 250 cancer survivors and their guests attended the dinner program featuring Michelle Riba, MD, MS, Director of the PsychOncology Program at the University of Michigan Comprehensive Cancer Center in Ann Arbor. Dr. Riba delivered the keynote address titled, “Depression & Anxiety in Cancer”. Her presentation was followed by a panel discussion featuring WMCC cancer survivors and their caregivers. Attendees filled out evaluations and offered suggestions for future programs. We received many wonderful ideas which we will review when we gather to plan our 2016 event! Thanks to everyone who attended our event and to those who shared their cancer journeys with the audience.
These gifts were given between June 11, 2015 and August 26, 2015
Meet a Pencil Pusher...Who Loves His Work

It’s amazing what you can do with a talent learned at a young age. Like the skill WMCC patient Gene Albert acquired sixty years ago when he was a 13 year old Boy Scout. Back then, it earned him a coveted merit badge. Now, it is making him lots of friends in the chemo room and elsewhere.

Albert’s hobby is wood carving. “I started whittling on sticks and found that it helped to relieve stress”, said Albert. “After I retired, I started doing it more and began carving eagle handles for canes given to war veterans”. Albert, who is a Marine veteran and a retired Kalamazoo Township police officer, has crafted and donated ten such handles through a cane project sponsored by the Michigan Wood Carvers Association. “The first one I carved went to a wounded Marine out of Afghanistan. Vets apply for the cane handles and somebody else carves the shafts with their branch of service and medals”, he added.

Albert, a husband, father of two and grandfather of six, came to our attention when we noticed him handing out intricately designed pencils to patients and staff in the chemo room. “I’ve handed out dozens of pencils—to nurses, patients, massage therapists and coffee cart volunteers”, he said.

Diagnosed with mantle cell lymphoma in July of 2014, Albert’s WMCC physician, Dr. Sree Chandana, put him on a twice a month chemotherapy regimen for six months. Now, he is on a maintenance program where he receives treatment once every two months. “The treatments can be tiring so I have to push myself to get things done”, said Albert. “We’re so glad he chooses to ‘whittle while we work’, caring for him in the chemo room.

Washington Medical Clinic Center

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These gifts were given between February 6, 2015 and August 26, 2015

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For the second consecutive year, Cassopolis-based Midwest Propane used the month of August to fundraise on behalf of WMCC. The utility provider hosted its inaugural ‘Fueling the Fight’ Family Movie Night. Hundreds of people gathered under the stars around a giant outdoor movie screen on blankets and lawn chairs to enjoy the Disney/Pixar family favorite, ‘UP’. The movie was free, and attendees were encouraged to make a donation. Additional funds were raised through tethered rides in the eight-story Touchstone Energy hot air balloon, raffle prizes and food prepared by local-favorite Smokin’ Good BBQ. More than $4,400 was raised through the Movie Night festivities.

“This was a very successful first-time event, and we’re thrilled with the results,” said Patty Nowlin, Director of Community Relations. “We raised a lot of money to support a great organization, and provided a fun venue for families to come together and create wonderful memories.”

In addition to the proceeds from the movie night, Midwest Propane also donated one penny for every gallon of gas delivered in August, the highest delivery month of the year. The total 2015 Midwest Propane Fueling the Fight donation to the West Michigan Cancer Center was $14,510.

“We’re so grateful for this continued partnership”, said Jessica Hermann-Wilmarth, MPA, WMCC Director of Development. “Midwest Propane is an exceptional example of a corporation giving back to its community. These funds will provide care and help to many cancer patients and their families”.

Midwest Propane is an unregulated subsidiary of Midwest Energy Cooperative. Midwest Energy Cooperative is a member-owned electric utility providing electric distribution and an assortment of energy-related programs and services to more than 35,000 customers in 11 counties in southern Michigan and northern Indiana and Ohio.

ANNOUNCING: Survivorcise

New exercise program for cancer survivors
Open to men and women

Free 12-week program!
Next Session Begins
January 12, 2016
Tuesdays and Thursdays
1:00 – 2:00 pm

Bronson Athletic Club
6789 Elm Valley Drive | Kalamazoo, MI

If you’ve been treated for cancer in the last five years and are not currently receiving chemotherapy or radiation, Survivorcise may be right for you. It is an exhilarating exercise program that will give you a physical & emotional boost. Talk to your doctor and ask if you’re a candidate for a twice weekly exercise program. Requires physician clearance to participate.

Survivorcise participants enjoy complimentary member benefits at Bronson Athletic Club during the 12-week program cycle.

Survivorcise is a collaboration of:
Managing the Holidays

Making your emotional health and wellness a priority during the holidays can be a challenge. Holiday parties and gatherings can be overwhelming. Trying to juggle social events can be stressful. Here are some tips which you may find helpful:

Prioritize your positive social events: Positive social relationships have been proven to improve our health. Conversely, negative relationships can hinder health. When scheduling your holiday gatherings, weigh your options of if you are attending out of obligation or enjoyment. Know your limits to ensure you are able to enjoy your events, rather than worrying about your schedule.

Prioritize traditions: Holiday celebrations and culture thrives on tradition, sometimes causing more harm than good. Weigh the sentimental investment against the effort and resources, and prioritize the traditions that are most important to you.

Self-Care—Respect your routine: 30 minutes of walking or brisk exercise can be an amazing best investment in your health, especially through stressful holidays.

- Exercise improves mood by releasing chemicals called endorphins, as well as neurotransmitters such as serotonin, and other chemicals to improve mood (also known as the body’s natural antidepressant). These deplete stress causing chemicals and make us feel happier.
- Exercise boosts and combats fatigue by elevating energy (by delivering oxygen and nutrients to your body more effectively, resulting in better quality of sleep).
- Exercise improves the immune system (flushing bacteria out of the body, and increasing antibodies and white blood cell counts).

Healthy Nutrition: Healthy choices with holiday food and spirits are an important part of self-care. Some indulgence is celebratory; however it can be detrimental to not only your waist line, but your mental health. Meals lacking the recommended fiber, vitamins, and nutrients make us feel sluggish and depleted. Remember to balance your diet for optimal health.

Alone time: Make sure to take time for yourself out of the hectic schedule of the holidays. Scheduling time for reading a book, taking a bath, relaxing to enjoy a hobby, playing with a pet, or meditating is extremely important. The holiday season is full of stimulation and activity, and can be taxing on our brains and therefore our emotions. Take the time to invest in your health, and have downtime to rejuvenate.

A Legacy of Caring

“My wife Connie Foster had a passion for life. Her fight against breast cancer didn’t change that passion and we were able to live out some life-long dreams—like cruising to the cancer center in a brand new dream car. But, the expense of her cancer treatments weighed on Connie. When Connie worried about how we would pay her bills during her final days, I promised her that I would take care of them. Thankfully, the cancer center was there for us even after Connie’s death and worked out a plan for those bills.

I live modestly but I vowed to give back to WMCC in order to support the staff that so lovingly cared for Connie and to ensure future cancer patients continue to receive the caring touches that made such a positive difference to Connie. I established the Connie Foster Memorial Fund earlier this year and will make a gift each year. This fund provides support for staff education and the Patient Care Services Program and will continue the legacy of caring that Connie and I so benefitted from” –Mitch Foster

Whether you are a patient grateful for the care you received, a family member or caregiver who participated in our Patient Care Services Program, or just someone who believes in the life-changing care provided at WMCC, you can give back by making a planned gift—commonly a gift made through your retirement account, life-insurance plan, or estate—to our center.

Like Mitch Foster’s gift, your planned gift to WMCC will make a difference in the lives of cancer patients right now, and in the future by supporting innovative cancer patient care, research, education, and prevention programs right here in Southwest Michigan.

You don’t need to be rich to make a planned gift. Whatever your circumstances or financial ability, there are a variety of planned gifts, all of which will make a difference in the fight against cancer.

- By naming the West Michigan Cancer Center in your will or trust, or as beneficiary of your individual retirement account or life insurance policy—a gift which costs you nothing during your lifetime
- By creating a gift that makes fixed payments to you for your lifetime and/or to your spouse, parent, sibling, or friend
- By making a gift that may increase income, save taxes, provide a hedge against inflation, and benefit you and your family
- By creating and endowing a named fund in honor of someone special or for a specific purpose

For more information about planned gifts please contact Jessica Hermann-Wilmeth, Director of Development at 269-373-0129 or by email at jwilmeth@wmcc.org.

Gifts can be made to the Connie Foster Memorial Fund with the envelope included in this newsletter.
We are pleased to provide our WMCC patients with the Medfusion® Patient Portal, self-service online tools that let you interact with our practice where and when it fits your busy schedule.

- Request appointments
- Pay bills online
- Renew prescriptions
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To create an account, call us at 269-373-7497 or stop by our front desk.