Phone Guide

Farewell to Dr. Radha Vemuri
We recently lost sweet farewell to our founding medical director, Dr. Radha Vemuri, during a retirement celebration attended by nearly 300 people.

Dr. Vemuri, who joined WMCC when it opened in 1998, cared for cancer patients in Kalamazoo for 16 years. His compassion and dedication was truly unparalleled. One of his patients, Royce Bland, summed it up this way:

"Dr. Vemuri’s treatment and guidance through my cancer proved to be a personal miracle for which I can never thank him enough."

The WMCC Board of Directors conferred upon Dr. Vemuri the distinction of Master Medical Director Emeritus in honor of his outstanding contributions to the Center and his continued contributions improved cancer care for all the patients whose lives he touched.

Recently WMCC was a proud sponsor of the Relay for Life event, held on the water at Galesi Field. The event was attended by over 12,000 people and raised over $220,000.

WMCC’s Annual Patient Picnic will be held on Saturday, July 30th from 9am to 3pm. The event will be held on the WMCC campus and will feature a buffet lunch, live music, and fun activities for the whole family."
Fighting Nail Cancer: My father’s subungual acral lentiginous melanoma story

On New Year’s Day, 2000, my dad told me that his brown toenail had become thicker and harder than usual. We thought it was just a fungus infection. As time passed, the toenail continued to thicken and get darker, so we decided to consult a podiatrist. Despite the diagnosis of melanoma, he refused surgery and attempted to treat it with medications. However, the melanoma spread and eventually resulted in the amputation of his left leg. I’m glad I was there to support him, but it was a difficult decision for him to make.

When I think of my dad, I think of a strong, independent man who never gave up. He passed away in 2010, and I still miss him dearly. I hope people will learn from his story and take action to prevent and treat nail cancer.

Patient Benefits from Meeting of the Minds

As a daughter of two medical hospital employees, 30-year-old Melissa has worked hard to be the lowest cancer diagnosis possible and treats. As a medical professional, one of the greatest challenges in her medical practice is the emotional impact of a cancer diagnosis. Melissa has helped many patients adjust to the diagnosis of a terminal illness, and she often finds that patients need the support of their family and friends.

Melissa’s career in healthcare began five years ago when she graduated from medical school. She currently works as a nurse practitioner at the Children’s Cancer Center and helps patients manage their treatment plans. She says that her job is very rewarding, and she enjoys helping patients through their treatment journey.

Melissa is a member of the International Association of Healthcare Information Management and is an active member of the American Society of Medical Oncology.

Planned Giving Makes it Possible for Everyone to Win

As a cancer patient who seeks every opportunity to make a difference in the lives of others, I see the need for planned giving as a wonderful way to support West Michigan Cancer Center. The Center is a non-profit organization that relies on donations to provide free services to cancer patients and their families. By making a planned gift, I can ensure that my legacy will live on and continue to help others who are facing the same challenges that I have.

Planned giving offers many benefits, including tax savings, increased income, and the ability to pass on a legacy. By making a planned gift, I can make a meaningful impact on the lives of others.

I encourage everyone to consider the possibility of making a planned gift. Whether it is through your will, trust, or retirement accounts, there are many ways to give back to the cancer community. By making a planned gift, we can all work together to make a difference in the fight against cancer.

Art As Healing

This 2-hour class provides an opportunity to create and explore a new medium: art. The class is designed for all levels, and no art experience is necessary. It is an opportunity to explore the healing power of art and to connect with others who are dealing with cancer.

Stress Reduction Workshop

This workshop is designed to help cancer patients reduce stress and improve their quality of life. The workshop includes exercises to help participants develop effective coping strategies and to learn how to manage stress in a healthy way.

Cancer and Nutrition

This workshop provides information about the importance of nutrition in managing cancer. The workshop includes information on meal planning, cooking, and recipe ideas that can help cancer patients maintain their weight and energy levels.

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Fighting Nail Cancer: My father’s subungual acral lentiginous melanoma story

Eleanor Street
Water Street

On New Year’s Day, 2000, my dad told me that his brown toenail was growing in and he was worried about any possible signs of problems. He did this every year as his toenails started out as a clinical experience, using a stethoscope to hear any abnormalities and assess the health of the toenail. He also did this for his fingernails and encouraged me to do the same. The answer to your question was yes! It was not something my dad noticed until he was looking at his toenails. He and a colleague, now both survivors of nail cancer, did the same for me.

A few years earlier, my dad’s brown toenail developed a new growth. He had always been concerned about the toenails in his family, and I knew it could be an aggressive disease if not caught early. My dad and I had started discussing the possibility of a nail cancer story. The first thing he did was rename the disease. He transformed the word "melanoma" to "nailcancer." Now, when you mention "nailcancer," you are usually talking about a disease of the nails. Participating in this group has given me a sense of control over my own life, knowing that I can make a difference in the lives of others who are fighting nail cancer.

More information can be obtained at www.nailcancerawareness.com.

Patient Benefits from Meeting of the Minds

Patient Benefits from Meeting of the Minds: The importance of education and support in caring for patients with cancer has been recognized by the American Cancer Society. According to the American Cancer Society, patients with cancer benefit from meeting of the minds in the following ways:

1. Improved understanding of the disease and its treatment options
2. Increased communication with healthcare providers
3. Reduced stress and anxiety
4. Increased hope and confidence
5. Improved quality of life

If you'd like more information about WMCC's Patient Benefits from Meeting of the Minds events, please contact Jessica Kosinski at 269.373.0129 or email jk3046@wmcc.org.

WMCC Parking Options Expand

Recent growth of WMCC tax-exempt parking facilities in the area around our downtown center, Kalamazoo, has been noticed by many who have come to recognize the frustration these create and are taking steps very recently. Plans are underway to add additional parking to the north of our building by utilizing existing space. This is due to the limited availability of space. Specific "parking only" parking spots are available to women battling cancer. This training includes hands-on instruction on makeup, skin care, wigs, turbans, scarves and nails. For more information, contact medical social work at 269.384.8629 or email socialwork@wmcc.org.
Pink Saturdays returning this fall

We are extremely pleased to announce that a very important program which provides free screening mammograms to uninsured women in Southwest Michigan will continue this fall. The program, known as Pink Saturdays, has received a significant grant from the Southwest Michigan Affiliate of Susan G. Komen for the Cure.

More than three thousand uninsured women aged 40 to 64 have received free mammograms to screen for breast cancer since 2002 when Pink Saturdays was launched. During that time, no woman was diagnosed by the screening mammograms earlier than she would have been treated, thus improving their chance of cure.

Pink Saturdays will return in October, supported by 27 area organizations including hospitals, cancer centers, radiology groups, non-profit groups, foundations and corporations. The goal is to provide a record 1,500 mammograms.

If you or someone you know is uninsured, between the ages of 40 and 64, and has never had breast cancer, please plan to set aside a few hours on a Saturday in October for a free screening mammogram. It’s relatively painless, doesn’t cost a thing and just may be a life of saver. For more info, call +1-269-672-0648 for more information.

Farewell to Dr. Radha Vemuri

We recently said farewell to our founding medical director, Dr. Radha Vemuri, during a retirement celebration attended by nearly 300 people.

Dr. Vemuri, who joined WMCC when it opened in 1994, cared for cancer patients in Kalamazoo for 35 years. His compassion and dedication was truly unparalleled. One of his patients, Royce Bland, summed it up this way: “Dr. Vemuri’s treatment and guidance through my treatment proved to be a personal masterpiece for which I’ll not be forever in our debt.”

The WMCC Board of Directors conferred upon Dr. Vemuri the distinction of ‘Medallion of Distinction’ in recognition of his outstanding service at the Center and his contributions toward excellence in serving cancer patients across WMCC’s strong foundation and reputation for clinical excellence in cancer care. Frank Sardone, Chairman of WMCC’s Board of Directors, presented to Dr. Vemuri the Medallion and congratulated him on a career well spent. WMCC and the entire cancer community in the Midwest were looking to collaborate on a new cancer center and welcomed someone to build it. I answered the call and said ‘yes.’

Today, two decades later in cancer care I consider the most gratifying career ‘calling’ to keep you grounded and thankful for everything I have ever had. Nothing like working in a cancer facility with your incredible courage, heart and determination to beat cancer that touched me the most. Nothing like working in a cancer facility to keep you grounded and thankful for every precious day of life.

Author Anais Nin said, “Dreams are necessary to life.” Even though I am saying goodbye to West Michigan Cancer Center, I will never stop dreaming and praying for a career to cancer care. I wish each and every one of you good health and much happiness. Terry McKay

Message from Terry McKay

It was almost 20 years ago that I received a call while working in my hometown of Philadelphia that two hospitalists in the Midwest were looking to collaborate on a new cancer center and needed someone to build it. I answered the call and said ‘yes.’ Today, two decades later in cancer care I consider the most gratifying career imaginable, I am honored to have worked with such a caring, talented staff to better the lives of cancer patients. Most of all, though, it’s all of you—our patients—your incredible courage, heart and determination to beat cancer that touched me the most. There is no more ‘working in a cancer facility to keep you grounded and thankful for every precious day of life. WMCC’s strong foundation and reputation for excellence in saving cancer patients’ lives.

West Michigan Cancer Center announces leadership transition

As of July 17th, Dr. Frank Mirro was appointed as CEO/CMO of West Michigan Cancer Center (WMCC). He replaces founding CEO Terry McKay, who retired July 18th.

A distinguished pediatric oncologist and educator, Dr. Mirro brings to WMCC more than 30 years of experience in oncology and healthcare leadership, most recently as the President of Cancer Services at Mar社会实践, Wisconsin-based Aurora Health Care. Dr. Mirro is well regarded as a driven and collaborative leader who is developing a culture of excellence, something the WMCC Board is very excited about. In the past, Dr. Mirro has worked with WMCC employees, many of whom have dedicated their careers to the patients we serve, and are very excited to work with Dr. Mirro to make the most of this area’s superb medical talent and resources. This is an opportunity for all of us to play a role in expanding access to world-class cancer care in our community.”

Current CEO Terry McKay has led the organization for 17 years. He continues to play a key role in supporting Community Cancer Centers. Today, WMCC remains as the primary source for patients seeking access to technology usually available only at university or academic medical centers.

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Fighting Nail Cancer: My father’s subungual acral lentiginous melanoma story

On New Year’s Day, 2009, my dad told me that his doctor told him he had a melanoma on his nail. He had had a mole removed years before, but it was growing quite rapidly and they wanted to remove it. My dad did not want to believe it was cancer but had the biopsy done anyway. It was a melanoma.

Nail melanoma is a rare type of melanoma that begins in the nail bed of the fingers or toes. It is often difficult to detect because it can be mistaken for a common nail condition. The nails are made of keratin, a type of protein that is also found in hair. Melanoma can occur in the nails when cells that produce melanin, the pigment that gives skin its color, grow in an uncontrolled way.

Nail melanomas are often mistaken for fungal infections, calluses, or even cancerous growths. However, if you notice any changes in your nails, such as thickening, discoloration, or pain, it is important to see a dermatologist for a proper diagnosis.

Melanoma is a serious disease that can spread to other parts of the body if not caught early. In the early stages of melanoma, the disease can be treated with surgery and may have a good prognosis. However, if the melanoma has spread to other parts of the body, the treatment options are more limited.

My dad learned that the nail melanoma he had was actually subungual acral lentiginous melanoma. While a rare type of melanoma, subungual acral lentiginous melanomas are particularly aggressive and can be difficult to treat. The disease can be locally invasive and can also spread to other parts of the body, making it important to catch it early.

My dad received surgery to remove the nail and half of his finger. He continues to battle this disease, and we hope that with continued treatment and support, he can continue to fight this disease and improve his quality of life.
Pink Saturdays Returning this Fall

We are extremely pleased to announce that a very important program which provides free mammograms to uninsured women in Kalamazoo for 10 years. Its compassion and dedication was truly unparalleled.

Recently WMCC was a proud sponsor of the Komen Race for the Cure, the Kalama-Zoo Marathon/Borgess Run for Health, and the 10K Relay For Life. For info, Lynn Helen, Pam Tibbitts, Megan Hiscock, and Rick Siefert.

Save the Date for Summerfest

WMCC Invites Everyone to join us on Saturday, August 27th at 1pm at Kinderpark Park in Park Milton. Please RSVP to 269-373-0139.

Message from Terry McKay

It was almost 25 years ago that I received a call while working in my hometown of Philadelphia that two hospitals in the Midwest were looking to collaborate on cancer care and wanted someone to build it. I answered the call and said, “yes.”

Today, after decades in what I consider the most gratifying career of my life, I am honored to have received a call while working on the academic mission of the new medical school at Memphis, Tennessee.

It was almost 20 years ago that I answered the call to build WMCC, an organization that touched me the most. There’s nothing more rewarding than your incredible courage, to better the lives of cancer patients. I worked with such a caring, talented staff and the community has been the beneficiary of technology usually available only at university-based institutions.

Dr. Mirro’s unique combination of administrative, leadership, and academic leadership skills will enable him to make the most of this area’s superb medical resources. Terry McKay, the outgoing chief executive officer of WMCC, is a professional and a leader to engage providers, academia and the hospital in delivering world-class cancer care to our community.

Current CEO Terry McKay has led the organization for 17 years. McKay’s vision through the years has focused on the need for primary and secondary cancer care. Today, WMCC patients, 88.8% of whom have insurance, and 100% of whom are insured through Medicare, Medicaid, or other insurance, are treated by a distinguished staff of physicians.

Dr. Mirro, who retired July 17th, is an accomplished aesthetic dermatologist and will continue his leadership at St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital in Memphis, Tennessee. St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital in Memphis, Tennessee, is a world renowned children’s cancer center.

WMCC’s strong foundation and reputation for excellence in serving cancer patients across Southwest Michigan and beyond make this position at WMCC perfect."