If you are a cancer patient or caregiver, you’ve probably wondered how our treatment plans compare to those implemented at large, research-based cancer centers. Specifically, are you getting the best treatment available for your type of cancer? The answer is yes. WMCC measures its treatment standards against national treatment standards. Measuring treatment data is a quality indicator.

Several large cancer-based organizations, like the National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN) and the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO), have worked to develop and implement a national strategy for health care quality indicator measurement and reporting. By standardizing our treatment plans according to the NCCN standards, we are treating patients with the same doses, the same drug combinations and supportive drugs as the large centers across the country. We monitor side effects and their outcomes according to the National Cancer Institute and the Oncology Nursing Society. When a quality indicator shows an outcome of dissatisfaction, we immediately monitor that treatment plan and all of its parts to see if other cancer centers are having the same poor outcome.

In the past, we could not monitor side effects from our treatment plans easily. It took hundreds of hours, and by the time poor outcomes were identified, large problems were affecting patients. Now, with our electronic data, side effect symptoms can be easily tracked. For instance, in 2004 our outcomes for nausea were disappointing to us. Our patients were suffering unnecessarily, and we discovered that with a small change in the manner and type of nausea medication we administered during chemotherapy, things could change. Within six months of changing our way of practice, we saw improved outcomes with regard to nausea. We continue to monitor nausea, and have seen great positive outcomes for our patients.

West Michigan Cancer Center is among 36 cancer facilities in Michigan and 400 nationwide that are now submitting treatment data to the ASCO group. Such data includes appropriate treatment plan given for a particular type of cancer, symptom management for pain and nausea, and communication given to the patient and caregiver reflecting the true disease status by the physicians. This quality indicator measuring leads to constant improvements in treatment standards and better overall health and wellness for all patients.

WMCC Quality of Treatment Measured Against National Standards
Winter 2009

* (continued on back page)
2nd Annual Pink Saturdays Program a Huge Success!

The Southwest Michigan Affiliate of Susan G. Komen for the Cure provided more than 1,500 free mammograms to uninsured and underinsured women throughout Southwest Michigan during its 2nd Annual Pink Saturdays program in October. More than 7,000 women called to inquire about the program, and 1,519 scheduled free mammograms.

One of the many women helped by the program was Mary Jo Houghtlen of Kalamazoo. Houghtlen said she has only had one mammogram, about 20 years ago, despite a family history of breast cancer. “I work three jobs to get where I’m at now, and I still don’t have insurance,” Houghtlen said. “I honestly could not afford to have a mammogram done if I didn’t have this.”

It is estimated that about 34,000 women in Southwest Michigan are uninsured and, therefore, not covered for mammograms. Unfortunately, breast cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer and the second leading cause of cancer-related deaths among U.S. women, and there is currently no cure for advanced breast cancer.

Houghtlen did not participate in the first Pink Saturdays because she has no doctor and did not know what she would do if her mammogram required follow-up. When she found out that the program includes doctors to review the results and to take on any issues for follow-up, she decided to participate this year. “It was so easy,” she said. “It really was. Everybody was just great. There is help out there if we just know where to go to find it. I actually never knew there was help out there. It’s a great relief to know.”

Kalamazoo-based auto dealer Harold Zeigler has donated a pre-owned Ford Taurus to the West Michigan Cancer Center to help transport patients to the center for their appointments. Patients will receive rides from drivers who are scheduled through the American Cancer Society’s “Road to Recovery” program.

“Local Auto Dealer Donates Car to WMCC

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“We are so appreciative of the Zeigler family for their extreme generosity,” said Terry McKay, President and CEO. “This vehicle will be used for many years to come to bring hundreds of people to their treatment appointments and doctor visits—people who might not otherwise have a way to get here. What a wonderful gift to the Cancer Center and this community,” she added.

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Treatment Doesn’t Deter Marathon Runner

73-year-old Sam Hill of Kalamazoo can’t stop running—marathons, that is. “Normally I jog 15 to 20 miles per week while I’m training,” says Hill, a retired Pfizer chemist. ‘If fact, to get in optimal shape, I like to run at least a half-marathon (13.1 miles) every weekend before a big race,” he adds.

Not even a diagnosis of cancer and the prospect of weeks of radiation treatment would stop this dedicated athlete in his quest to run in the recent Bank of America Chicago Marathon.

“I learned in August that I had prostate cancer and would need to come to the Cancer Center daily for eight weeks for radiation treatments,” Hill explains. “The date of the race, October 12th, was going to occur halfway through the process,” he adds.

But Hill didn’t want to give up on the Chicago event and knew that meant one thing. In order to compete, he would have to continue his grueling training schedule while on treatment. WMCC Radiation Oncologist Dr. William Dunn gave Hill the green light. “Most of the time, patients under treatment are encouraged to exercise, especially if they have a routine already in place. This can help with the fatigue level and the overall quality of life during and after treatment. However, they are encouraged to keep their oncologist up-to-date on any changes they notice related to their exercise.”

Halfway through his course of radiation therapy, just days before the race, Hill says he “hardly felt any different” than he normally did and experienced no side effects. He was ready to take on the fast and flat 26.2-mile scenic tour of Chicago.

The big day finally arrived. Unfortunately, along with it came the kind of weather marathon runners fear: heat. Temperature soared to 60 degrees, forcing many of the 45,000 entrants to drop out of the race. Sam Hill was one of them. “I have a couple of people passed out and thought to myself, ‘I’m not going to be a casualty,’” Hill concluded. “I had just approached the 10-mile marker and saw race officials put out the danger/warning sign because of the weather. Right after that, I called it quits.”

Hill did finish the most important event on his fall calendar, radiation therapy, and feels great. In fact, he’s already starting to think about the next big marathon on his list, the 2009 Berlin Marathon in Germany. Until then, he plans to continue running three to five miles every weekday before 6 am and relaxing on Sundays after church.

West Michigan Cancer Center is pleased to announce the addition of Samantha Rowland, MSW, LMSW, as Medical Social Worker. In her new role, Rowland will coordinate all support services at the center, including support groups, crisis interventions, employment rights, counseling sessions, classes, resources with financial and community resources, referrals, transportation and child care needs.

Rowland previously served on the staff of Southeastern Rehabilitation Center in Battle Creek, where she assisted patients with neurological and orthopedic conditions, cancer and other medical issues. She received her Bachelor of Social Work and Master of Social Work from Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo.

If you have any questions or concerns, Samantha Rowland, director, can be reached at 269-372-7146, or you may email her at: socialwork@wmcc.org.

WMCC Welcomes New Social Worker

Special Class Series

Healing Moves 1

Tuesdays, Through Feb. 24
Time: 6:30 pm
Location: WMCC Lower-Level Conference Room

This class series is designed to help you get moving physically, mentally and emotionally following breast cancer diagnosis. Each class will focus on stretching, walking, exercise tips and a wealth of healing information, including true stories of a healthy lifestyle that may reduce your risk of recurrence.

Healing Moves 2

Tuesdays, Through Feb. 24
Time: 1:00 pm – 2:00 pm
Location: WMCC Lower-Level Conference Room

These classes are in conjunction with Healing Moves 1. Each class is designed specifically for breast cancer survivors interested in finding healthier ways to live. Classes will include stretching, strengthening exercises, walking and relaxation techniques to further enhance healing.

Wellness Program

Weight Loss Class

Tuesdays, Jan. 20 – March 24
Time: 11:00 am – 12:30 pm
Location: WMCC Lower-Level Conference Room

Class lead by: Julia Ridenhour, Registered Dietician

Class registration is required. To sign up, contact Julia Ridenhour at 269-384-8624 or email lemons@wmcc.org.

Work and Masters of Social Work from Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo.

local Auto Dealership in Kalamazoo.
Visit Our New Fitness Room

Our fully-equipped Fitness Room, located in the lower level of the Cancer Center, is now open to current and former patients. The room has cardiovascular exercise machines and free weights for training. No matter your ability or fitness level, there’s something for everyone in the new Fitness Room. An orientation is required. Call Maureen Brown at 269-373-7476 to schedule an appointment.

Fitness Room Hours:
9 am - 7 pm

Express Yourself Creatively

This is a new group that will explore a variety of styles of creative expression as a way to cope with emotions connected with the treatment of cancer. It is believed that having an outlet for emotions can boost the immune system. Absolutely no talent is required, just a willingness to try.

Some of the projects will include creative journaling, art therapy, writing and poetry, drumming (playing a wooden, opened glass medicine bottle to make music), and putting the pieces of your life back together. A variety of art materials will be introduced such as music, drumming and art—according to the interests of the group.

There is no charge. All materials will be supplied. This is drop-in or group, and you can plan at any time.

RSVP to Jessica Hermann-Wilmarth at 269-373-6100 or email jwilmarth@wmcc.org.

Doris Miller
Artist/Facilitator
Blood Cancers Support Group
Date: Last Tuesday of each month
Time: 5:00 pm – 6:30 pm
Location: Lower-Level Conference Room
This support group is for people diagnosed with any blood cancer, including leukemia or lymphoma.

Cooking Class
Date: 1st Thursday of each month
Time: 4:30 pm – 6:00 pm
Location: WMCC 3rd Floor Multi-Purpose Room
Monthly classes led by WMCC Nutritional Review Team member. Recipes are varied and sample recipes will be served.

Conditioning for Life
Tuesdays 4:00 pm – 5:00 pm
Wednesdays 10:00 am – 11:00 am
Location: WMCC 2nd Floor Conference Room
Strength, balance and cardiovascular conditioning can cause dramatic improvements in quality of life. When done correctly, conditioning can help participants reduce pain, increase energy and improve overall health. The class is led by an exercise physiologist who will help participants safely and effectively adjust the exercises. Additional classes are held on Thursdays. For more information, contact Jessica Hermann-Wilmarth at 269-373-0129 or email jwilmarth@wmcc.org.

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Gentle and Restorative Yoga
Dates: Twice weekly
Mondays 5:30 pm – 6:45 pm
Thursdays 11:30 am – 12:45 pm
Location: WMCC 3rd Floor Multi-Purpose Room
This ongoing yoga exercise program increases general health and wellness, reducing stress and improving strength and balance of all parts of the body. Call 269-373-7446 for more information.

Look Good, Feel Better
Date: 4th Monday of each month
Time: 5:00 pm – 7:00 pm
Location: WMCC Lower-Level Conference Room
This program provides information and cosmetic advice to women battling cancer. This training includes hands-on instruction on makeup, skin care, wigs, turbans, scarves and nail care. Cosmetics are provided for your personal use. Call 269-373-7446 to register. This class is sponsored by the American Cancer Society.

My Time Meditation/Relaxation
Dates: Thursdays
Time: 5:30 pm – 6:30 pm
Location: WMCC Lower-Level Conference Room
This class is open to beginners, as well as to those with more experience. Ongoing weekly guided meditation and hands-on instruction in meditation practices. Space is limited, so please call 269-373-0109 to register.

Patient Support Group
Date: Wednesdays
Time: 10:00 am – 11:00 am
Location: Lower-Level Conference Room
This group is for people diagnosed with any type of cancer. It includes group therapy and social interactions. Professionals and volunteers, led by Dr. Mary Edwards, WMCC social worker, this group can help foster a sense of self-worth and courage to help them face the challenges they face each day.

Pilates Ball Class
Date: Wednesdays
Time: 4:00 pm – 5:00 pm
Drop-in Location: WMCC 3rd Floor Multi-Purpose Room
Participants will need to bring their own ball. Using a ball in just an effective way to train the core, helping participants move in a pain-free and efficient way.

Prostate Cancer Support Group
Date: 1st Wednesday of each month
Time: 5:30 pm – 6:30 pm
Location: Lower-Level Conference Room
This group meets for support and information regarding prostate cancer. For more information, call Dr. Cotton Edwards, Ph.D., at 269-373-0109 or WMCC at 269-373-7446 to register.

Tai Chi
Beginner: Wednesdays 5:30 pm – 6:45 pm
Advanced: Wednesdays 5:30 pm – 6:45 pm
Location: WMCC 3rd Floor Multi-Purpose Room
Tai Chi is an ancient Chinese form of exercise it is designed to promote general health and well-being. Call 269-373-7446 for more information.

For more information on any of the classes listed, call 269-373-7446 or send an email to socialwork@wmcc.org. For all classes at West Michigan Cancer Center, please park in the Radisson ramp, and we will validate your ticket.
**Visit Our New Fitness Room**

Our fully-equipped Fitness Room, located on the 3rd Floor of the Cancer Center, is open to current and former patients. The room contains state-of-the-art equipment and new weights for flexibility. In addition, new exercise machines and new weights for flexibility. To maximize your ability to use your Fitness Room, there's something for everyone in the new Fitness Room. As a reminder, you must register. Call Main Office at 269-373-0129 or email jwilmarth@wmcc.org.

**Good Nutrition During Treatment**

By Renee VanWormer, Registered Dietician, WMCC Nutritionist

Drink liquids between meals, rather than with meals. Drink just enough of a beverage to neutralize your food immediately. Avoid drinking too much water and caffeine, and your meals, which can make you feel full.

During treatment, some people find that foods no longer taste as good as they have in the past. This may be temporary. Remember that after you have completed your treatments, you will feel better and taste better.

Even with a poor appetite, you can pack a lot of nutrition into your daily diet. Instead of large meals, try to have several small snacks. It is important to choose foods high in calories and protein, such as fruits, dried fruits, nuts, pasta, oatmeal, and soups that have about 200 calories. This is a lot of nutrition for a small amount of food, and the fat helps absorb the vitamins and minerals.

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**Fatigue Assessment**

This is a new group that will explore a variety of styles of creative expression as a way to cope with emotions connected with the experience of cancer. It is known that having the experience of cancer is traumatic for many people. Absolutely no talent is required, just a willingness to express.

Some of the projects will include creative journaling, art therapy, writing and poetry, sharing music, sharing movement (putting the pieces of your life back together), and Student into patient talks, aka Patient into Student Talks. It is about being introduced to new music, drumming, and sharing experiences—accounting for the age group of the patients.

There is no charge. Materials will be supplied. This group is for group can join at any time.

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