

BERRIEN COUNTY CANCER SERVICE NEWSLETTER

www.bccancerservice.org

In honor of the committed service of Olove Colcord, R.N.

THE MISSION OF THE BERRIEN COUNTY CANCER SERVICE:

To provide free skilled home nursing services, equipment, information and supplies at cost for cancer patients and their families in Berrien County.



September 2012

(269) 429-3281

VOLUME XXI

ISSUE IX

The **BERRIEN COUNTY CANCER SUPPORT GROUP** is a group for patients, family members and care givers. Come share successes, feelings, fears and practical methods of coping with the physical and emotional aspects of living with the diagnosis of cancer.

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IT'S SEPTEMBER

It's September, and the orchards are afire with red and gold,
And the nights with dew are heavy, and the morning's sharp with cold;
Now the garden's at its gayest with the salvia and blazing red
And the good old-fashioned asters laughing at us from their bed;
Once again in shoes and stockings are the children's little feet,
And the dog now does his snoozing on the bright side of the street
It's September, and the cornstalks are as high as they will go,
And the red cheeks of the apples everywhere begin to show;
Now the supper's scarcely over ere the darkness settles down
And the moon looms big and yellow at the edges of the town;
Oh, it's good to see the children, when their little prayers are said,
Duck beneath the patchwork covers when they tumble into bed.

Edgar A. Guest



To preserve a friend three things are necessary: to honor him present, praise him absent, and assist him in his necessities. Italian Proverb

My first fight against lung cancer

In March 1999, at the age of 51, I was diagnosed with inoperable non-small cell lung cancer, stage IIIB adenocarcinoma, in my left lung. I was shocked and terrified. I had smoked for many years but had quit in '91. I couldn't believe I had lung cancer eight years later. I immediately began to research my options and look into facilities for treatment.

When I arrived at the hospital in Tulsa, I had tests done. Thank goodness they showed the cancer had not spread anywhere else. I started treatment immediately—external beam radiation twice a day and low-dose chemo once a week to enhance the radiation. My joints hurt from the cancer, and I was so fatigued from the radiation treatment that I pretty much wanted to sleep all the time. But it was OK. I had no responsibilities other than to get well. Meals were provided and my dear husband did everything else, including laundry. All I absolutely had to do was go to meals, radiation treatments, chemo, and doctors' appointments. Optional activities I worked in between naps included going to classes on nutrition, naturopathy, stress management and humor therapy. I kept my friends and family posted via email, and at Holt's urging, kept taking my daily walks. Once I got moving, my joints felt better, and I believe staying active contributed to my recovery. Keeping up with my vitamins also helped. It was a full schedule, but all focused on my recovery. I can't imagine what life would have been like if I had stayed at home, trying to deal with meals, laundry and dogs, all in addition to traveling 60 miles round trip every day to the treatment center nearest to my home.

We were in Tulsa for seven weeks for tests and treatment. After that, we went back for chemo one week a month for five months. By my last round of chemo in October '99, my CEA tumor marker was in the normal range (1.5, down from 66 in March) and my tumor had shrunk down to 2.5 cm. Six months later, my tumor was gone! It had shrunk away to a scar. My life was returning to normal.

Returning 10 years later for another fight

My second cancer diagnosis came in September 2009, more than a decade later. At an annual checkup, doctors discovered I had a second primary lung cancer. It was a stage IA adenocarcinoma in the other lung. The tumor was small, 1.6 cm, but because of its location on the border between two lobes of my right lung, it was still inoperable.

With surgery not an option, I was offered radiation therapy. And because of my previous history with cancer, my doctors felt I should have chemotherapy again as well.

So that fall I went through seven weeks of TomoTherapy[®], a targeted form of radiation that had come along since my previous lung cancer, and which did not cause me fatigue. I also had concurrent low-dose Taxol[®] and carboplatin, the same chemo drugs I received in '99, to enhance the effects of the radiation. Overall I felt pretty good as I received treatment this time, except for a couple of times when my white blood cell count went too low and I had to wait for Neupogen[®] shots to boost it back up before I could continue treatment.

I stayed onsite in the hospital's outpatient housing for a total of 10 weeks. My husband stayed with me much of the time. When he needed to be home for work, a series of girlfriends came to stay with me for a few days at a time. We had fun during their visits, working my treatments and doctors' appointments in between trips to the mall and walks around the hospital grounds.

About a month after I completed radiation, I went back to Tulsa to begin my full-dose chemo treatments. That was a different story. I had four cycles of Taxol/cisplatin, once every three weeks, followed by one cycle of Alimta[®] for maintenance. The treatments wiped me out. I would see my doctors one day, have chemo for six hours the next day, and fly home the day after that. The next day I would wake up at home feeling the full effects of the chemo—exhaustion, headache, some nausea (but no vomiting). This was by far the hardest part of both my fights against lung cancer. But by the second day at home, I would feel a little better, and I would just be tired and rest for about another week. After that I felt pretty much back to normal—able to shop, cook, clean and walk dogs—until I went back a couple of weeks later to repeat the cycle.

Dealing with side effects of treatment

As expected, I lost my hair (again!) about two weeks after I started full-dose chemo. I talked to Jackie in the onsite TLC Salon at CTCA when I went back for my next chemo treatment about a week later, and she showed me the perfect wig. It looked a lot like my hair color (gray) and style, only much nicer. So I got it. Jackie trimmed it a little to suit my face. Just putting it on really did make me feel better.

I developed peripheral neuropathy in my feet from my second bout with cancer treatment. It still bothers me a bit, but it's manageable. The naturopathic medicine team recommended a number of supplements to prevent and reduce the neuropathy, and I'm currently taking one called N-acetyl cysteine, which helps a lot. I also worked with the hospital's physical therapy team, which used a device called the ReBuilder® on my feet to stimulate nerves, and I had acupuncture treatments at the hospital too.

The most difficult side effect of cancer treatment my second time around was emotional. I was terrified of being switched from the familiar carboplatin, which I had become allergic to, to the unfamiliar cisplatin, which is supposed to have much harsher side effects. My medical oncologist helped me address some of my fears by starting the cisplatin at a lower dose and increasing it a little with each subsequent cycle. He also gave me six days of the anti-nausea medicine Emend® instead of the usual three. Both Emend and the gradually increased dose of cisplatin seem to help lessen the side effects. I was also helped tremendously by one of the psychologists in the Mind-Body Medicine Department at the hospital, who has been with me since '99. The only time I cried with either lung cancer was on my way to the Infusion Center for the first round of cisplatin. That was the emotional low of my journey and my doctor helped me deal with it using, in part, visualization based on Psalm 91.

I finished treatment in March of 2010 and went on a three-month checkup schedule. Everything has been stable since then, thank goodness, and in November of 2011, I graduated to six-month checkups.

Of course my husband was and is my main support. He has been by my side at almost every doctor's appointment, scan and treatment. His care, love and concern mean everything to me. And the doctors and staff at CTCA also treat him as a very important member of my team. He goes with me everywhere, except when radiation is involved.

My life today

I am blessed to have had a complete recovery from both of my lung cancers, due in part, I believe, to the reasonably healthy lifestyle I try to follow. I eat a mostly plant-based, mostly organic diet with an emphasis on vegetables. I typically make veggie smoothies twice a day. And I try to stay active, walking dogs, going on hikes and exercising regularly.

My life returned to normal, only better and fuller, both times after cancer treatment. I started doing watercolor painting, taking singing lessons and getting involved in my church as a direct result of my first lung cancer. things, even though I was diagnosed with a paralyzed vocal cord in '09, which makes it difficult for me to sing. But I'm still a member of the Spanish choir in my church, only now I play percussion instruments.

A few of the milestones I've reached in recent years include traveling to Costa Rica in '09 before my second cancer diagnosis and to Italy in '06 with girlfriends. These girlfriends visited me during my treatment, and celebrating our enduring friendships since junior high school and all of our 60th birthdays together was very special.

I've spoken with several hundred cancer patients over the years through my volunteer activities with various support groups and initiatives, including the Bloch Cancer Hotline, the Lung Cancer Alliance and the CTCA Patient-to-Patient Network. It's been very rewarding. I also volunteer a few days a month with the American Cancer Society at the local cancer treatment facility in Gallup. I am able to offer cost-free wigs, breast prostheses, scarves, literature, support and encouragement to others who are going through cancer treatment.

I think over the years I have learned to appreciate more. Having shared these cancer experiences and going through the recoveries has made us stronger and more grateful for the love and compassion we have for each other.

Trivia

How many sides does a rhombus have?

- a. 2
- b. 4
- c. 6
- d. 8

Answer on page 7

Test May Reduce the Need for Surgery to Diagnose Thyroid Cancer

A new test may spare some patients with suspicious thyroid nodules from diagnostic surgery. Researchers analyzed thyroid nodule samples collected via fine-needle aspiration (FNA) for the expression of a panel of 167 genes and found that the test accurately identified whether nodules were cancerous.

About 15 to 30 percent of patients undergoing FNA for suspicious thyroid nodules have indeterminate findings on standard cytology tests—that is, the tests show cellular changes that indicate a possible cancer but the findings are inconclusive. Although the majority of those with inconclusive cytology results have a benign condition, most have thyroid surgery to determine whether cancer is present.

Several researchers said the test has the potential to change clinical practice by eliminating or delaying the need for such surgery in some patients.

The researchers collected more than 4,800 aspirate samples from nearly 3,800 patients treated at 49 academic centers and community hospitals over a 19-month period. Of these, they analyzed indeterminate FNA samples from 265 nodules for which surgical samples were also available. The FNA samples were analyzed using the 167-gene panel that the researchers had developed based on earlier research.

Overall, when the results from the gene expression test were compared with diagnostic results from thyroid samples removed during surgery, the test correctly identified 92 percent of the malignant samples and 93 percent of the benign samples. But about half of the samples that the gene expression test identified as suspicious—not clearly malignant or clearly benign—were actually benign on surgical analysis.

For patients with indeterminate cytology results, the gene expression test "can be useful in making important [patient] management decisions, such as recommending watchful waiting in lieu of diagnostic surgery," wrote lead author Dr. Erik Alexander of Brigham and Women's Hospital and his colleagues.

Dr. Ann Gramza of NCI's Center for Cancer Research agreed. But she cautioned that "a negative result should not dismiss a patient from further follow-up surveillance of the nodule."

"The risk...is that 5 to 10 percent of nodules classified as benign...are likely to be malignant [false negatives], particularly those that are cytologically indeterminate but suggestive of cancer," wrote Dr. J. Larry Jameson of the University of Pennsylvania in an accompanying editorial. In such patients, he explained, "it might be reasonable" to do another FNA biopsy or perform a diagnostic surgical procedure.

One recent study, Dr. Jameson noted, suggested that the reduction in surgeries that could result from its use—about 25,000 fewer operations per year—could result in substantial cost savings," even with the added cost of the test.

Potato and Egg Casserole

6 potatoes

8 eggs

Seasoning salt to taste

1 cup margarine

1 (16 oz.) container sour cream

Methods/steps

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Add potatoes and cook until tender but still firm, about 15 minutes.

Drain, cool, peel and slice.

Place eggs in a saucepan and cover with cold water.

Bring water to a boil and immediately remove from heat.

Cover and let eggs stand in hot water for 10 to 12

minutes. Remove from hot water, cool, peel and slice.

In a 9x13 inch casserole dish layer potatoes and eggs, sprinkling each layer of eggs with seasoning salt, ending with potatoes.

In a small saucepan over low heat, melt margarine with sour cream. Pour over potatoes and sprinkle lightly with seasoning salt.

Bake in preheated oven for 30 minutes.

Additional Tips

PREP TIME 45 Min

COOK TIME 30 Min

READY IN 1 Hr 15 Min

In Loving Memory

During July 2012, Memorial Donations were generously made by and for the following people

In Memory of Clarence Lee Bartrum

Dixie Marsh, Madison IN
Carol M. Minard, Niles

In Memory of Valaura Becvar

George & Ruby Reitz, Union Pier

In Memory of Doris Freehling

Sue & Bill Batson, Stevensville
Evelyn, Charmaine Brooks & Lillian Demler, Eau Claire
Maria Cerny, Benton Harbor
Ken & Marie Dickinson, Baroda
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Mary Spoonholtz, Eau Claire
Linda Styburski, Eau Claire
Chris Sunday, Baroda
Nancy White, Kristin & Michael, Bridgman
Anonymous

In Memory Joseph Gargano

Dennis & Shirley Churchill, Watervliet

In Memory of Marvel L. Kelly

Bargarete Bruegmann, Niles
Richard & Carol Dale, LaGrange IL
Larry & Marcia Lindemann, St. Joseph

In Memory of Joseph Lamonaco

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In Memory of "Aunt" Gertie Wierzbicki

Shirley & Raymond Reichert, Benton Harbor

In Memory of Randy Yeske

Dennis & Shirley Churchill, Watervliet

Berrien County Cancer Service sends our sincere sympathy to all those who have recently lost loved ones. We thank all of our generous donors. Your donations are very much appreciated and will help cancer patients in Berrien County.

Thank you.

In Your Honor

In July 2012, donations were made by and in honor of the following:

In Honor of Randy Demler
Jacob Conklin, St. Joseph

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**Please join us for our . . .**

## **Open House**

**Thursday – October 18, 2012**

**10:00 A.M. - 6:00 P.M.**

**Berrien County Cancer Service**

7301 Red Arrow Hwy. – Stevensville – (269) 429-3281

**Come Learn About BCCS Services!**

Refreshments will be served throughout the day.

### QUILT RAFFLE

This year's raffle quilt is on display in our Stevensville office. The drawing will be held at 12:00 noon. Advance tickets are for sale at BCCS offices in Stevensville. Don't miss your chance to win this beautiful quilt.

Tickets - \$1.00 each or \$5:00 for six.

*Answer to Trivia Question:* In Euclidean geometry, a rhombus is a convex quadrilateral whose four sides all have the same length. The rhombus is often called a diamond, after the diamonds suit in playing cards.

## Looking Ahead

### **BCCS SUPPORT GROUP – Stevensville**

September 4 & 18 – 1:30 p.m.

October 2 & 16 – 1:30 p.m.

### **BCCS SUPPORT GROUP – Niles**

September 11 & 25 – 1:30 p.m.

October 9 & 23 – 1:30 p.m.

### **OSTOMY SUPPORT GROUP – Stevensville**

September 18 – 1:30 p.m.

October 16- 1:30 p.m.

### **RAINBOWS OF HOPE– St. Joseph**

Marie Yeager Cancer Center

September 13 – 5:30 p.m.

October 11 – 5:30 p.m.

### **Ostomy Support Group**

Lakeland Regional Medical Center

September 13 – 6:00 p.m.

October 11 – 6:00 p.m.

### **Man to Man – Prostate Support Group**

Trinity Center, St. Joseph

September 18 – 6:30 p.m.

#### **DATES TO REMEMBER IN SEPTEMBER**

September 1 – National No Rhyme No Reason Day

September 3 – Labor Day

September 5 – Be Late For Something Day

September 7 – Grandma Moses Day

September 9 – National Grandparents Day

September 11 – Patriot Day

September 13 – International Chocolate Day

September 14 – Stand Up To CANCER Day

September 16 – Mayflower Day

September 18 – Air Force Birthday

September 21 – National POW/MIA Recognition Day

September 28 – Ask a Stupid Question Day

September 29 – World Heart Day

#### **Newsletters available online**

Our newsletters are available on our website:  
[www.bccancerservice.org](http://www.bccancerservice.org). If you would like to be removed from this mailing list, please call our office at 269-429-3281 or send us an e-mail:

[staff@bccancerservice.org](mailto:staff@bccancerservice.org).

## Please Consider...

Berrien County Cancer Service, Inc., is a non-profit organization funded primarily by the United Way, private donations and fund-raisers. We receive no Medicare, Medicaid or other insurance payments. To continue our free services to Berrien County cancer patients, we need your help. Any donation is greatly appreciated.

Donations to our General Fund will help balance our current budget. Donations to our Endowment Fund will help guarantee that the Cancer Service will be available for as long as needed. Your contribution to our non-profit 501(c)(3) corporation is tax deductible – an acknowledgment and receipt for tax purposes will be sent.

Donations can be made in honor of someone or in memory of a loved one. In these instances, we would also like to send acknowledgment to the honoree or next-of-kin so please provide that information when making your donation.

\_\_\_\_\_ General Fund \_\_\_\_\_ Endowment Fund

Your Name \_\_\_\_\_

Your Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Donation Amount \$ \_\_\_\_\_

OR

In Memory of \_\_\_\_\_

Please send notification of my gift to:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

*Thank you for your generosity!*

Berrien County Cancer Service, Inc.  
7301 Red Arrow Highway  
Stevensville, MI 49127

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Claudia Brister (Office Manager)  
Henrietta Hein

**CANCER SUPPORT GROUP** – Stevensville Office

1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of each month - 1:30 p.m.

**Berrien County Cancer Service, Inc.**

7301 Red Arrow Highway  
Stevensville, MI 49127

Phone: (269) 429-3281 or (269) 465-5257

**CANCER SUPPORT GROUP** – Niles

2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of each month – 1:30 p.m.

**Niles Senior Center**

1109 Bell Road  
Niles, MI 49120

Phone: (269) 429-3281

**RAINBOWS OF HOPE GROUP-** St. Joseph

2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of each month – 5:30 p.m.

**Marie Yeager Cancer Center**

Ward and Kinney Room  
3900 Hollywood Rd.

St. Joseph, MI 49085

Phone: (269) 556-7114

**OSTOMY SUPPORT GROUP**

2nd Thursday of each month- 6:00 p.m.

**Lakeland Regional Medical Center**

Community Room  
1234 Napier Ave

St. Joseph, MI 49085

Phone: (269) 983-8804

**MAN TO MAN** – Prostate Support Group

3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of each month – 6:30 p.m.

**Trinity Center**

619 Main Street (use Main entrance)  
St. Joseph, MI 49085

Phone: (800) 465-5244