

Connections Quarterly

SUMMER 2018 ISSUE 66



Glens Falls Hospital
C.R. WOOD CANCER CENTER



JULY 2018

*we are
fragile.*

*but we also
are divine.*

SHERYL CROW
BREAST CANCER SURVIVOR

**cancer woke me
up to my health,
and I feel like
I've been given
a second chance.**

lorraine hutchinson
deputy fire chief, san diego fire dept
breast cancer survivor

This Issue

The C.R. Wood Cancer Center provides essential cancer services to patients from all backgrounds and experiences, making each patient's journey with cancer a uniquely personal one. June is National Cancer Survivors Month, and in this special edition of Connections, we honor our patients with the space to share their stories to offer comfort, understanding, and most importantly: *hope*.

To live is to suffer, to survive
is to find some *meaning* in
the suffering.

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE *German Philosopher*

**CANCER DIDN'T
bring me to my
KNEES
IT BROUGHT ME TO MY
FEET**

MICHAEL DOUGLAS, throat cancer survivor

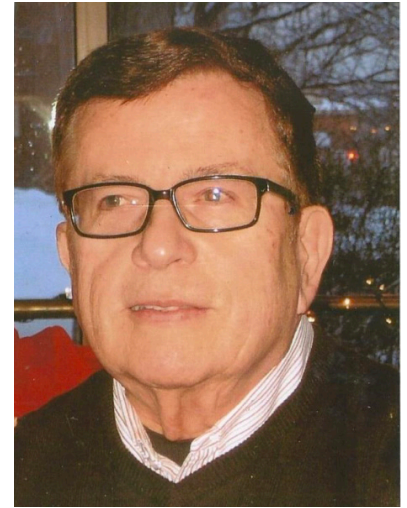
Keep Life as Normal as Possible

By Richard Besthoff

After a great vacation in Pennsylvania, my wife Ginnie and I wanted to get right back into our regular walking routine. On July 19th, we walked our usual distance on the bike path. For some reason that day, I experienced shortness of breath. I thought it was from being on vacation and away from our regular exercise routine. Once we were back in the house the shortness of breath did not go away. I asked my wife to take me to the ER. Once there, the triage nurse wasted no time checking out my heart. Once it was determined that I was not in cardiac distress, I waited a short time to be taken to an exam room. There, the emergency room doctors and nurses took blood. It was determined that I was anemic. The doctor gave me an exam and determined that I was bleeding internally. I was then admitted to the hospital and scheduled for an endoscopy the next day. I had no idea I was anemic, no idea I was bleeding. I had no signs of any health issue other than the shortness of breath. The endoscopy showed nothing, and I was released from the hospital. It was recommended that I have a colonoscopy.

On July 27th Dr. Coombes performed the procedure and it was determined that I had cancer of the secum, and would need surgery and probably additional treatment. Both my wife and I went through a series of emotions for several days while setting up consultation appointments and going for a series of scans and x-rays recommended by the doctor. After setting up an appointment with the surgeon, Dr. Joseph D'Agostino, and with our oncology team headed by Dr. Aqeel Gillani, my surgery was scheduled for September 5th. There was a lot of unknowns for both doctors taking care of me as well as my wife and I. The operation where a portion of my colon was removed proved to be successful. But six months of chemotherapy was recommended. Ginnie and I had to decide, with the help of our medical team, what the best course of action would be—a pill form of chemo, or a “shot” through the port. We decided on the shot. I was sent home from the hospital on September 10th.

On September 11th I was back in the hospital with a fever and gallbladder issues, requiring more surgery. My gallbladder was removed on September 18th. Double trouble! Dr. D'Agostino and the nurses on 4W took incredible care of me and my wife for a total of 17 days. Many of my consultations took place at the hospital bedside while I was recovering from my second surgery. Once home again on September 21st and after the post-op meeting with Dr. D'Agostino, I was set up for my port placement and started my chemotherapy treatment on October 16th.



Before starting treatment, my wife and I went to a class offered by the C.R. Wood Cancer Center giving us all kinds of information about what would be happening during the course of treatment, and provided us with booklets of information that became our “bibles” in the six months that I was treated. They also introduced the patient advocates who were more than willing to help any time we called. I stayed away from the internet and self-diagnosis. Our cancer medical doctors Dr. Gillani and Elizabeth Reinhardt, RPA-C were very reassuring and honest with us and answered all our questions, even when we asked more than once. We put as much information in our “book” as we could—but sometimes hearing them repeat an answer to us was very important. It takes special people to do this type of work. We are fortunate to have them.

During treatment, we kept life as normal as possible. The medicine (5FU) has some side effects, but I was lucky to handle them well. We had a great Christmas season and even managed a short escape to Turning

Stone for a change in scenery. Never once in the six months of treatment was I not thankful for the support of my wife, doctors, friends, family, and God for their help in getting me through this. Gratitude is helpful in getting past the low points, and some of the fear.

Cancer has changed my life. I appreciate everything more and let some of the little stuff slide. My last treatment was March 19th. My port came out April 12th—shortly after that I began a physical therapy program at the Glens Falls Hospital Wellness Center and expect to be released from that in early May. I have a goal and a reason to want to be healthy—I love my wife, and want to live a productive life.

There is an “after cancer” feeling that comes and goes—there are still follow-ups, another colonoscopy, more lab work, and the wonder of what all that will hold.

I still pray for the best, and I know my wife does as well. I fell so lucky to have caught the cancer in time—one year BEFORE my scheduled 10 year colonoscopy. God works in strange ways. The support I have is wonderful. This fall I will be 79 and going bear hunting in Maine. Shortly after I come home from that, I will be back in the local woods with my hunting buddies for another big buck. I promised my wife I would bring home the meat!

As a cancer survivor I hope to give back to those that need help, and I plan to do some volunteering as soon as possible. I trust my doctors completely and know, with the help of God, my wife and their expertise, my future is in good hands. **The medical staff at the hospital treated me like family. The Comfort and personal care that I received was outstanding.**



Phew, That Was Tough!

By Debra Dudas

Q. What type of cancer were you diagnosed with and what year was it?

A. I was diagnosed with Small Cell lung cancer in December of 2017.

Q. Did you have symptoms or was the cancer found during a screening?

A. Dr. Nevatia, my pulmonologist, sent me for a Low Dose Lung CT Screening for people who are at high risk for developing lung cancer. This screening was in July of 2017. I then had a biopsy by Dr. Decunzo.

Q. How did you feel when you were told that you had cancer?

A. Phew, that is a tough question. I was devastated. I was numb. It was a hard thing for me to accept. I struggled with the word cancer and the diagnosis. I relied on Vickie Yattaw, Nurse Navigator, to help get me through all of my appointments. She took notes and was there for me whenever I had a question, concern, or fear. My daughters were also a big source of support for me. They went to as many appointments as they could, listened to my concerns, and helped to keep me sane. When I was told the cancer was contained to just my lung, I was so relieved.

Q. What type of treatment did you have?

A. I underwent radiation twice a day for three weeks, Monday through Friday. Phew, that was tough. I would come in the morning for my first treatment, go home and eat a little and sleep until I had to be back for my second treatment at 2:30. I chose to do the twice a day treatment so that I would be done quicker. I could have done once a day for six weeks but wanted it over soon.

Then I underwent chemotherapy with cisplatin and etoposide that was given three days in a row once every three weeks for four treatments. Chemo was not all that bad. Radiation took a toll on me mentally and physically. The staff in the treatment center helped me get through each and every day

that I was there. They are wonderful and helped me feel at ease, especially Beth and Angel. They knew how nervous I was and helped calm me down. The whole staff was wonderful.

The worst part of chemotherapy was when I lost my hair. I knew it was going to happen but one morning that I woke up and combed my hair and on one half of my head all the hair fell out. That was devastating.

Q. Did you use any support services at the Cancer Center?

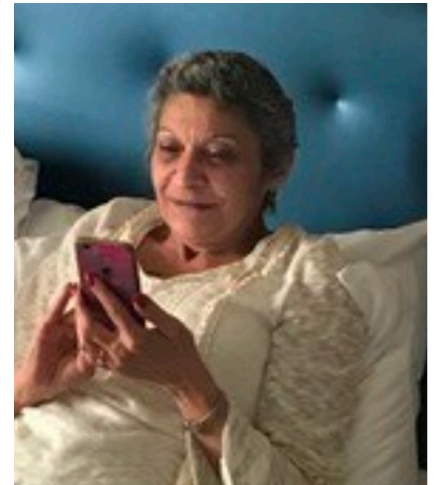
A. I would recommend to anyone that has to go through this cancer diagnosis to reach out to the staff and support services at the C.R. Wood Cancer Center. They are there to help so use it.

Q. Do you think that cancer has changed your life in any way?

A. Cancer has only changed my life in the fact that I have to continue to go to appointments and scans every few months. This is something I will have to live with for the rest of my life. I have accepted this more now than I did when I was diagnosed in December of 2017.

Q. What plans do you have for your future as a cancer survivor?

A. At this time I do not like to plan too much, as I am still feeling a little off from the treatments. I take each day at a time. I hope in the future that I will feel more energetic and can plan to do more.



This is MY Cancer, MY Way!

By Brooke Benson

I was diagnosed with invasive and non-invasive breast cancer and I am HER2 positive. I was diagnosed on May 1st, 2017. I had no symptoms other than I found a pea-sized lump in my right breast, however the lump I found was NOT cancer. Everything underneath and around that lump was though. When I found out that I had cancer, I was so far beyond scared, I was petrified, because scared isn't a big enough word to describe what I felt, honestly. I literally hit my knees and sobbed. But at the same time I had to be determined! I had to fight, so I decided that no matter what, I knew I was going to "hit the ground running, come out swinging and fight like a girl!" Even on days I would hurt I reminded myself that I was alive to feel the pain. That was an amazing thing.

I started my journey with a double mastectomy on May 31st, 2017, then from July 19th, 2017 through December 6th, 2017, I had chemotherapy with Adriamycin, Cytoxan, then Taxol, Herceptin and Perjeta. Though the chemotherapy infusions are done, I will have the Herceptin and Perjeta until October of 2018. I also had 25 hits of radiation therapy, the hardest part of my treatments so far. I will also have to take another injection called Lupron for two years. But it won't end there; I will have to be on an anti-hormonal pill for 10-15 years and anything else they want to throw at me to keep me kicking.

On a good note though, my experience here at the C.R. Wood Cancer Center has been nothing short of amazing. I can't thank my team of doctors and nurses enough. They have laughed with me, cried with me, celebrated with me, and helped me accept any defeats along the way. I made the best of my journey with jokes, costumes, laughs to tears, and everything in between. I even celebrated with my pink boxing gloves, full of signatures from my supporters, my rocks, and my team! They helped keep me fighting and I am grateful.

Through this amazing place I was lucky enough to attend Cindy's Retreat and walked away with great friends, amazing memories, and a strength I did not realize I had. Also my children were lucky enough to attend Cindy's Comfort Camp and find a support

we didn't realize we longed for. These programs have been both a god send for our sanity through this journey, and a place to not feel so lonely.

I will say through it all, cancer has definitely changed me and my life and I wouldn't have wanted to do it anywhere else. With cancer I have learned to see things in a new light. I see the strength in myself that so many saw in me before. I didn't allow cancer to take anything mentally or emotionally away from me. It was MY cancer! MY way! I did however allow cancer to teach me. Cancer for me was a long road; it wasn't always easy, but it was worth it. My battle was worth it. I won't say that I'm glad for the journey, but I am glad I was able to take something away from the cancer journey. I was able to face it and beat it. I won! I learned what it truly meant to live and be alive.

As a survivor my plans are to give back in any way I can. To be a breath of fresh air to those who need it. I also plan to live life, to take it all in, and enjoy it and all that life has to offer. I plan to see things for the beauty they possess, and the beauty they have to offer. If it is raining I plan to dance in the rain. I plan to step back and live. I refuse to rush through life from here on out simply because each day that I get is one more day with my kids. This journey has taught me that life is meant to be cherished and that is what I plan to do. From here on out I plan to get busy living.

I beat cancer, cancer didn't beat me.



FACTS AND FIGURES

The C.R. Wood Cancer Center is a nationally accredited community cancer program by the American College of Surgeons (ACOS), and the Commission on Cancer (CoC). Every three years we undergo a survey of our program to make sure we are meeting, or exceeding, the standards set forth by the ACOS. During our survey this past September, the surveyor compiled a report that highlights some of the statistics comparing the C.R. Wood Cancer Center with all other CoC accredited community cancer programs. In this article we will highlight a few of the statistics of the cancer program at the C.R. Wood Cancer Center from 2011-2015.

Overview

Table 1 shows the total case volume by cancer type. Over the years the top two cancers treated at the Cancer Center are breast and non small cell lung cancer. The others vary in volume year-by-year, but we will also highlight melanoma and colon cancers within this article.

Every positive cancer diagnosis is followed and input into a national database by the Oncology Data Management team at the C.R. Wood Cancer Center. Each cancer program has similar certified tumor registrars whom are held to strict guidelines on reporting cancer cases to the American College of Surgeons. This information is then compiled and shared with each program.

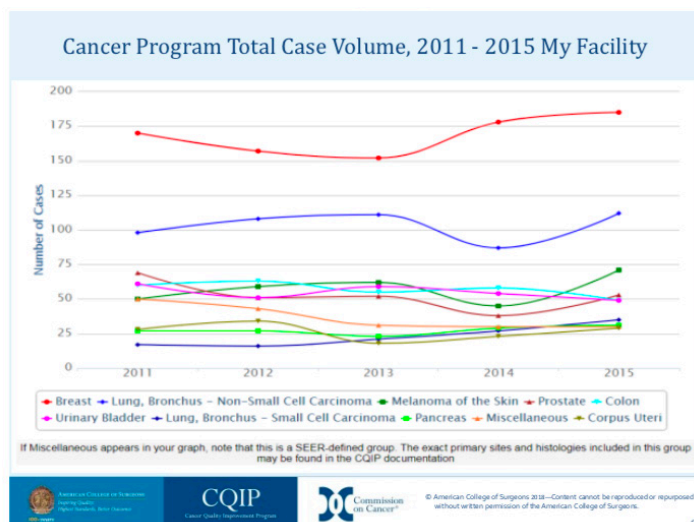


Table 1

Breast Cancer

The breast cancer total case volume for 2011—2015 shows that the C.R. Wood Cancer Center sees a higher percentage of early stage breast cancers than all CoC centers. This is due to the early screening programs and initiatives that are available to our community. The C.R. Wood Cancer Center holds the NYS DOH grant for the Cancer Services Program to offer free screenings for people who are uninsured. They can be reached at **518.926.6570** for more information.

The Breast Center at Glens Falls Hospital now has Tomography services for cancer screenings, which is a 3D imaging that can see cancers at earlier stages. The Breast Center also offers evening hours to allow for people to get their screenings without having to take time off from work. For more information on the Breast Center, please give them a call at **518.926.6588**.

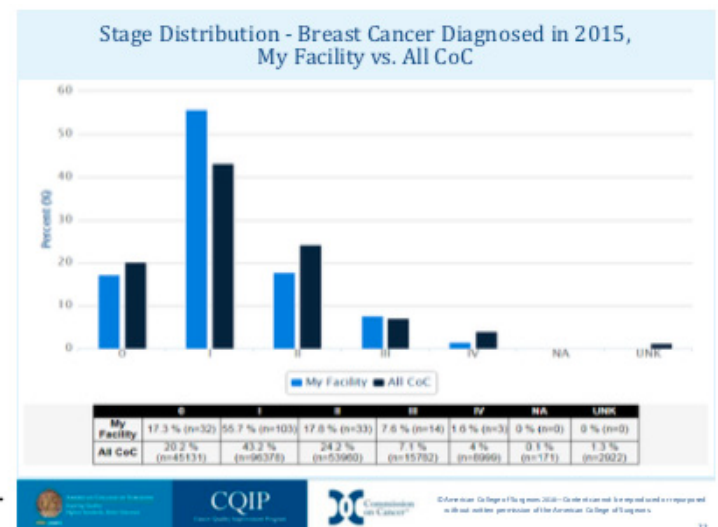


Table 2

Lung Cancer

The numbers for the stage of lung cancer diagnosed here at Glens Falls Hospital shows that we had to make some changes to screening services available for our community to help diagnose cancers at an earlier stage. Studies show that cancers that are found earlier have a much better chance for cure and survival.

In 2014, Glens Falls Hospital started a Low Dose Lung Cancer Screening Program based on the USPTF (United States Preventative Task Force) Guidelines. This program has been well received and utilized.

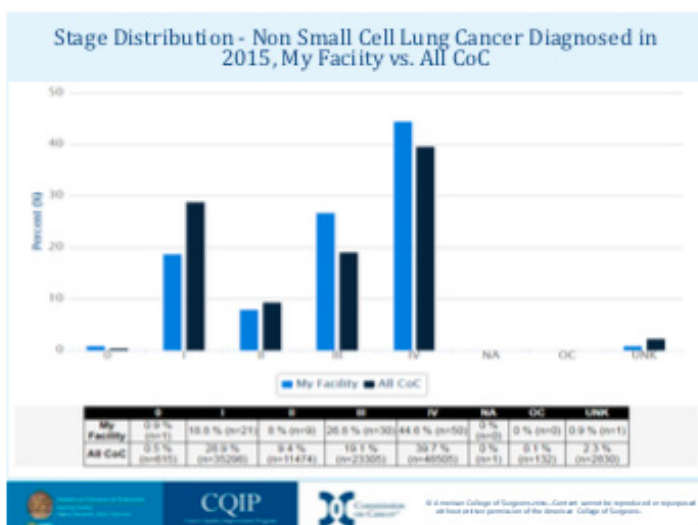


Table 3

The Lung Cancer Screening program is a low dose chest CT for patients ages 55–74, that are current smokers, have a 30 pack per year smoking history, that have quit within the last 15 years, or who have other risk factors like environmental exposures, family history, or a personal history of lung cancer. In 2017 there were 690 high-risk individuals who were screened through this program. 15 people were found to have a

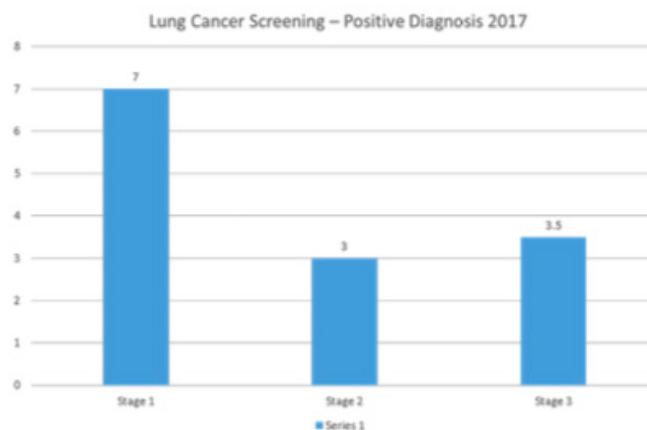


Table 4

positive diagnosis of lung cancer. Seven were found at a stage one, three were a stage two, and three were stage three. Many others have nodules that will need to be followed to ensure stability. Lung cancer screening needs to be ordered by your primary care physician and most insurance companies cover the cost of the screening program as long as you meet screening guidelines. If you would like more information regarding the Lung Cancer Screening Program please call **Vickie Yattaw**, RN, OCN® at **518.926.6639**. Part of the lung cancer screening program is to offer smoking cessation counseling for those who are interested in quitting.

The C.R. Wood Cancer Center hosts four four-week smoking cessation group sessions per year through the Quite for Life program. The Quit for Life program is free to the community, but pre-registration is required. The next session will be held July 10th–July 31st, 2018 at 6pm in the Cancer Center Library. To register, or for more information, please call Lisa Haase, RN, OCN® at **518.926.6563**.

Colon Cancer

Colon cancer continues to be a top contender in the volume of cancer cases seen at the C.R. Wood Cancer Center. Table 5 shows that we do have more early stage cancers caught and treated, but also more stage four cancers diagnosed and treated than other CoC programs. Colon Cancer is one disease that has great screening tools that are also cancer preventative services. Colonoscopies can find polyps and other abnormal growths and remove them prior to turning into a cancer. Screening is recommended for anyone of average risk to be screened at the age of 50. People with higher risk, including family history, should be screened earlier and more frequently. Please talk with your primary care physician regarding your risk factors and screening recommendations. For anyone who does not have health insurance, the Cancer Services Program at Glens Falls Hospital offers free screening services to anyone who meets screening criteria. These screening services include at-home tests called the FIT Kit and physician directed screenings (colonoscopies) as needed. In 2017 the Cancer Services Program screened 79 patients for colon cancer, all of whom were negative for cancer. For more information on screening through the Cancer Services Program, please call **518.926.6570**.

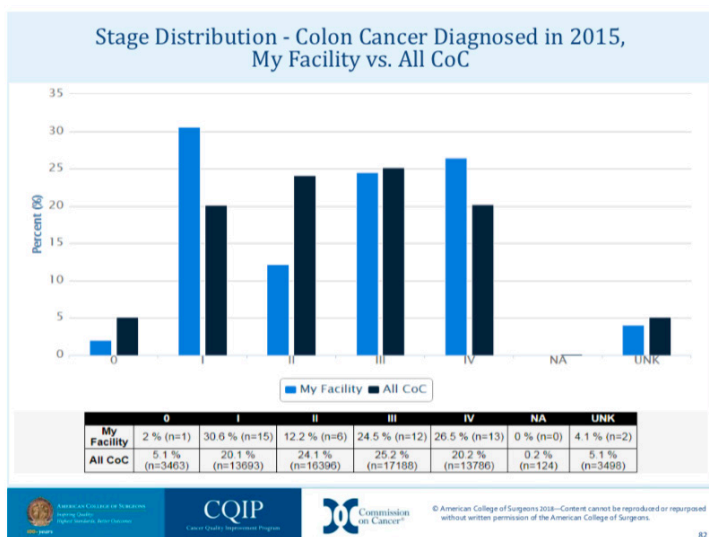


Table 5

Skin Cancer

Skin Cancer continues to be the number one cancer diagnosis. Skin cancer has different forms. There are Basal cell and Squamous cell skin cancers that can be treated within the dermatologist office and are a non-malignant type of cancers. The Malignant form of skin cancer, melanoma, is the only form of skin cancer that the Oncology Data Management team tracks and reports to the CoC. The table of melanomas diagnosed in 2015 shows that the C.R. Wood Cancer Center is seeing these patients at earlier stages than other facilities. This statistic is in part to the wonderful collaboration of community dermatologists and the medical oncologists that screen patients annually.

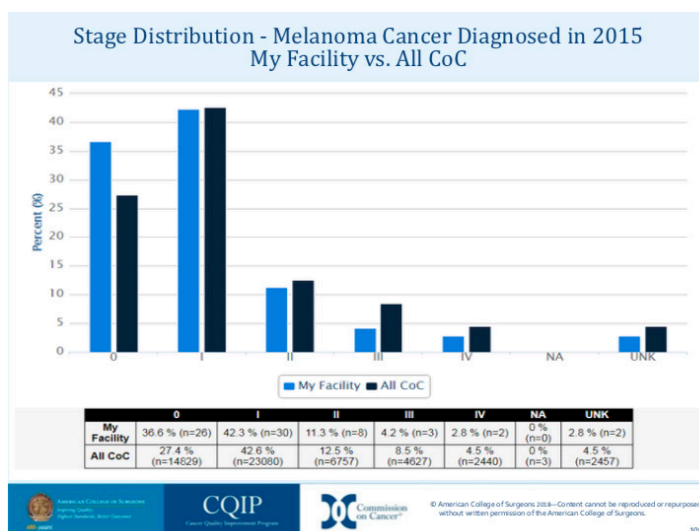


Table 6

Each year the C.R. Wood Cancer Center hosts a free skin cancer screening program for the community, regardless of insurance. This screening program is staffed by volunteer dermatologists, primary care physicians, medical oncology providers and staff, as well as medical and high school students. The C.R. Wood Cancer Center has hosted this free skin cancer screening clinic for the past 12 years, and has seen an increase in the number of people who utilize this service. In 2018 we had a record number of people

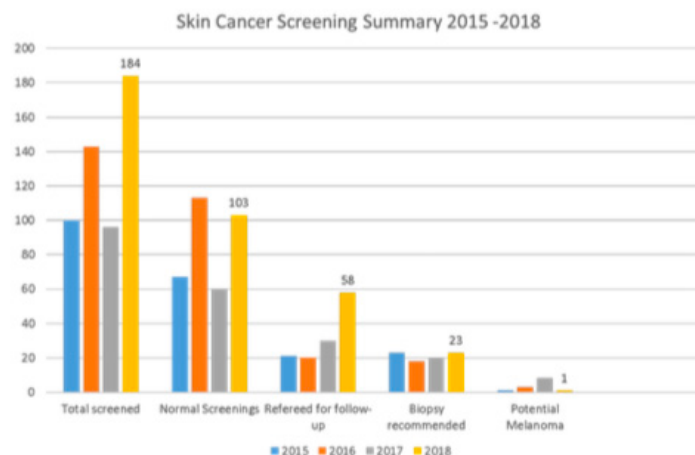


Table 7

screened in this three hour event*. Screening participants were assessed head-to-toe and if any abnormal area was found they were referred to their primary care physician or a dermatologist for follow-up. One person that had a history of melanoma was found to

potentially have a new area of concern and was fast tracked back to dermatology. Two screening participants had no insurance and were referred to the Cancer Services Program to discuss other screening services they may be eligible to receive. This screening program is usually held in April each year. For more information regarding this screening program, or other melanoma resources please call Vickie Yattaw, RN, OCN® at **518.926.6639**.

The C.R. Wood Cancer Center is proud to offer so many great screening services for the our community. These screening services allow us to catch cancers earlier, as demonstrated by the charts throughout. Please keep up on all your screenings.



*All Stage Distribution - Colon Cancer Diagnosed in 2015, My Facility vs. All CoC © American College of Surgeons 2018—Content cannot be reproduced or repurposed without written permission of the American College of Surgeons. Stage Distribution - Melanoma Cancer Diagnosed in 2015 My Facility vs. All CoC © American College of Surgeons 2018—Content cannot be reproduced or repurposed without written permission of the American College of Surgeons.

For general questions about cancer or support services available, call Nurse Navigators **Vickie** at **518.926.6639**, **Lisa** at **518.926.6563**, or Nicole at **518.926.6629**.

Services for Individuals by Appointment

Care Management

For: Continuing care needs, transportation, and financial concerns.
Info: Karen Cook, LMSW | 518.926.6619

Chemotherapy Education Class

For: Individuals & family starting chemotherapy.
Meets: Tuesdays at 4:00pm Cancer Center Library or by appointment at your convenience.
Info: Vickie Yattaw, RN, BSN, OCN® | 518.926.6639
Lisa Haase, RN, BSN, OCN® | 518.926.6563
Nicole Molinero, RN, OCN® | 518.926.6629

Clinical Research

For: Anyone interested in learning about clinical trials.
Meets: Tuesdays at 4:00pm Cancer Center Library or by appointment at your convenience.
Info: Beth Brundage, RN, OCN® | 518.926.6644

Genetics Counseling

For: Anyone concerned about their personal or family history of cancer.
Info: Rebecca Kerr, MSc, CGC | 518.926.6574

Nutrition Counseling

For: Anyone interested in dietary counseling.
Info: Andrea Chowske, RD, CD-N | 518.926.2635

Pastoral Care

For: Anyone interested in spiritual counseling.
Info: 518.926.3531

Patient Financial Assistance

For: Referrals, prior authorizations, billing, insurance questions.
Info: 518.926.6639

Psychosocial Oncology

For: Counseling for patients and/or their families.
Info: Gerry Florio, Ph.D. | 518.926.6640

Nurse Navigators

For: Individuals & family diagnosed with any cancer.
Meets: By appointment or stop by.
Info: Vickie Yattaw, RN, BSN, OCN® | 518.926.6639
Lisa Haase, RN, BSN, OCN® | 518.926.6563
Nicole Molinero RN, OCN® | 518.926.6629

Spa Services at Cindy's Healing Place *Massage Therapy*

For: Cancer patients during and after treatment.
Meets: By appointment at Cindy's Healing Place.
Info: 518.926.6640

Uniquely You® Boutique & Salon

For: Any cancer patient.
Free wigs, hats & turbans, skin & hair care.
Meets: By appointment on Tuesdays in the C. R. Wood Cancer Center.
Info: 518.926.6640

Special Programs

CG Men's Retreat

For: Men living with and beyond cancer.
Meets: One weekend each year in the Fall.
Info: Vickie Yattaw, RN, BSN, OCN® | 518.926.6639

Cindy's Comfort Camp

For: Children and teens ages 6-17 years who have experienced the death or serious illness of a parent or close relative.
Meets: One weekend each Spring and Fall at the Double H Hole in the Woods Ranch in Lake Luzerne.
Info: 518.926.6640

Cindy's Retreat

For: Women living with and beyond cancer.
Meets: One weekend each Spring and Fall at Silver Bay on Lake George.
Info: Karen Cook, LMSW | 518.926.6619

Breast Cancer Survivors Luncheon

For: Breast Cancer Survivors and a guest.
Meets: One Saturday in October.
Info: Lisa Haase, RN, OCN® | 518.926.6563

Survivor Breakfast

For: Any cancer survivor and a guest.
Meets: One Saturday in June.
Info: Vickie Yattaw, RN, OCN® | 518.926.6639

Summer Picnic

For: Any cancer survivor and their family.
Meets: One Wednesday in August.
Info: Vickie Yattaw, RN, OCN® | 518.926.6639

Holiday Party

For: Any cancer survivor and their family.
Meets: One Wednesday in December.
Info: Lisa Haase, RN, OCN® | 518.926.6563

These groups are open-ended and you may come as you wish. You may want to call if you are new or you have not come for some time to make sure that the schedule or location has not changed.

Discussion Groups

ABC Support Group After Breast Cancer

For: Individuals with breast cancer.
Meets: 4th Monday each month.
6:00pm | Cancer Center Waiting Room
Info: Lisa Haase, RN, BSN, OCN® | 518.926.6563

Blood Cancer Support Group

For: Individuals & family diagnosed with lymphoma, leukemia, or multiple myeloma.
Meets: 2nd Wednesday each month.
6:00pm | Community Learning Center, Side A
Info: Karen Cook, LMSW 518.926.6619

Prostate Cancer Awareness Group

For: Men with prostate cancer and their families.
Meets: 3rd Thursday each month.
7:00pm | Cancer Center Library
Info: Vickie Yattaw, RN, BSN, OCN® | 518.926.6639

Rays of Hope

For: Women with ovarian cancer.
Meets: 3rd Wednesday each month.
4:00pm | Cancer Center Library
Info: Mary Davis | 518.656.9321
Carol Smith | 518.793.0565

Round Table Support Group

For: Individuals with any cancer and their families.
Meets: 1st Wednesday each month.
4:00pm | Cancer Center Library
Info: Karen Cook, LMSW | 518.926.6619

Tobacco Cessation

Whether you're thinking about quitting or ready to quit, call the NYS Smokers' Quit Line for help and support.

1-866-NY-QUITS 1.866.697.8487

Activity Groups

Healthy Steps®

For: Gentle exercise for individuals with a cancer diagnosis.
Meets: Tuesdays at 10:00am | Community Learning Center (Side B).
Info: Vickie Yattaw, RN, BSN, OCN® | 518.926.6639

Tai Chi and Relaxation/Meditation

For: Anyone interested.
Meets: Monday afternoon at 3:30pm and 5:30pm
Community Learning Center (Side B).
Info: 518.926.1000

Twisted Twirlers

For: Individuals diagnosed with any cancer and caregivers who would like to join this Hall of Fame twirling group. New twirlers always welcome!
Meets: 11:30am | 1st and 3rd Tuesday each month
Community Learning Center (Side B)
Info: Barbara Ringer | 518.792.7437

Ways of Seeing - Arts and Crafts Workshop

For: Individuals & family diagnosed with any cancer who want to enjoy the life affirming pleasures of creating art.
Meets: 2nd and 4th Tuesday each month at 11:30am in the Cancer Center Library.
Info: Vickie Yattaw, RN, BSN, OC® | 518.926.6639

QUIT FOR LIFE

Stop Smoking Program

Pre-Registration Required

A four week program for anyone who would like to quit smoking.

July 10th — July 31st, 2018

Tuesday nights from 6:00pm—7:00pm

In the C.R. Wood Cancer Center Library.

For information or to register, please call

Lisa Haase, RN, BSN, OCN® | 518.926.6563.

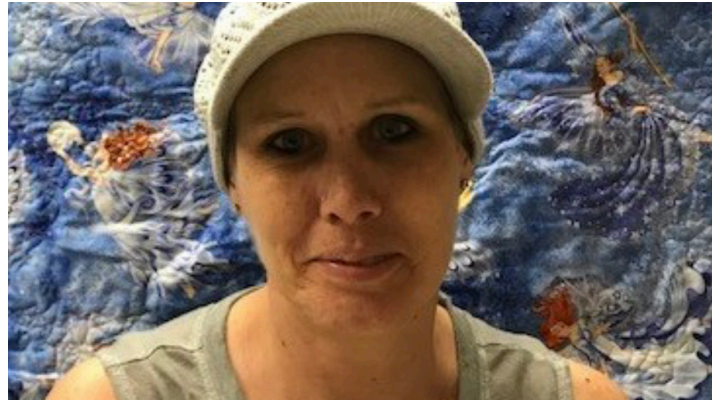
The Importance of Support

By Gina Elms

In July of 2017, I felt a lump in my breast. I immediately went to Hudson Headwaters Health Center and was referred to Glens Falls Hospital for a mammogram, which was followed by a biopsy. I knew then that it was cancer, so I was not surprised when I received the call later that afternoon confirming my fears.

I was diagnosed with Stage III invasive breast cancer. At the time of diagnosis, the cancer had already spread to four of my lymph nodes. While I was not surprised by the news, I was numb and scared. I hung up the phone and sat there for 20 minutes and then I screamed, cried, threw things, and then took a deep breath and called my husband. We talked about my diagnosis and what it meant to our family. We decided not to say anything to anyone in our family until after we had talked to Dr. Scalia and had more details. To complicate matters, my sister-in-law was also going through breast cancer and the thought of telling her and my mother was overwhelming. The next week was tough, but once we had the information and a plan, I was able to start talking to those close to me. Once the plan was in place, things moved quickly. In August, I had a mastectomy without reconstruction. Everyone told me that I would feel a loss, but honestly I felt more relief knowing the cancer was gone. One day, I looked down, saw my scars and cried. Besides that one day, I was okay with my surgery because I just wanted the cancer out of my body. My port was placed on 9/25 and I started chemo on 9/26. I really thought that I would have had another week prior to starting chemo; that was a tough adjustment for me.

Throughout this process, I have had a great support network. My husband was with me at every appointment. He was my rock, and without him I don't know that I would have made it through all of this. My husband, my family, and the staff at the C.R. Wood Cancer Center were here for me every step of the way. My treatment was much easier than expected. There were days when I did not feel well and was able to reach out to my



sister-in-law. Together we helped each other get through those days. When chemo started, I decided to make a night out of losing my hair. My niece came over and shaved my head. We shared pictures and laughter; so much laughter! It was positive and so healing. Once chemo was complete and I had time to recover, it was time for radiation. That was a piece of cake! I am so thankful that I was able to have my treatment here at the C.R. Wood Cancer Center. From the very first appointment with my oncologist, I had a navigator who took notes, answered questions, and made sure that I was aware of all of the support services offered at the cancer center. I attended chemo class which was really helpful. I have not used any other support services here, but I know they are available if I ever need them. And I know if I ever have questions, I can always call my navigator for help.

It may sound strange, but having cancer has changed my life for the better. Before I was diagnosed, I struggled with having a positive outlook on life. When I was diagnosed, I realized that I really want to live! Before cancer, I never thought of myself as having a future, but now my husband and I are planning for a vacation and really taking the time to enjoy life every day.

If I had any advice to offer others, please stay on top of your mammograms. Don't wait. Also, make sure to find a support team. Reach out to your navigator and they will take care of you.

Just Keep Going

By Colleen Cook

My name is Colleen. I'm 67 and live in Queensbury, NY on the banks of the peaceful Hudson River. After 24 years on the job, I retired on Sept 1st 2016. I had wonderful plans for my retirement. My life was going along just right, and then it was not. I wasn't feeling well, so called my doctor's office. After I got through explaining my symptoms, I was told to go the emergency room as they thought I was having a heart attack. After many hours and tests, the doctor came into my little cubical and announced that I was not having a heart attack but that I did have a mass in my breast.

First, I looked at my friend in total shock and then proceeded to fall apart. We called my sister who showed up, made a joke, then said "you are strong, we will get through this." We met with my oncologist and went for more precise testing. The results came back, and I did indeed have stage IV breast cancer that had metastasized to my bones. As I was trying to hold myself together, my doctor said the good news was that he felt it was treatable with hormone therapy. My family and myself took that as a positive sign. This therapy worked for about eight months. I started finding it hard to breathe, which led me back to the emergency room. I ended up in the hospital for about two weeks being a puzzle to all of my doctors. Test after test came back negative. At that point, I was going to be sent home on oxygen.

My sister stepped in, and instead I went to a rehab facility for three weeks where I gained enough strength to be home. Due to the prednisone, I developed diabetes. My heart rate then went sky high. I ended up back in the hospital for another three weeks. Being the stubborn person that I am, I had to fight through another obstacle. This time, my oncologist decided he wanted to start an extensive treatment. On August 4th, 2017 I had my first chemo treatment and have been having them ever since. To date, I have had 30 treatments.

It is my determination, stubbornness, and upbeat personality that keeps me going. If you don't laugh, make other people laugh, and have a positive attitude,

life with cancer will get you down. Even on the worst day of the winter, when your driveway isn't plowed but you have a treatment appointment, you find a way to make it work. For me, that meant a quarter of a mile walk to the main road in my snowshoes! I made the trek to and from, and had my treatment with no issues!

My sister says that I just keep amazing her, I just say that one has to do what one has to do. It is that simple. People ask if cancer has changed my life, and yes it has. I no longer have the energy I used to, and I can't run the races I used to or mow my lawn, but I keep going. I draw comfort from watching the geese on the river and from my friends and family. I'm not sure where this journey is going, but I do know that with family, friends, my medical support team and the grace of God, I will get through this. My advice to others dealing with cancer is to stay positive and laugh...laugh a lot.



Initial Diagnosis of the “C” Word

By Cathy Stark Mersereau



Reflections on the time between the initial diagnosis and the treatment plan

I was looking out the window on a bright and glorious Friday afternoon in May as I dialed my cell:

“Hi, Dr. Sustar I am returning your call about my mammogram.”

“We need more testing but you have DCIS. It is cancerous.” Dr. Sustar calmly replied.

I was dead silent for 20 seconds and then I exploded. “How did that happen? I have regular checkups and I had no symptoms. I breastfed my three kids for a year each. I’ve been a vegetarian for 25 years. I never smoked or drank. I don’t even drink soda. I have been into vitamins, exercise, and health food since the sixties. I did all modern medicine said to do and I still got it?” I replied in rapid succession. I went into full panic attack mode and cried. A beautiful May afternoon turned into one of the blackest, bleakest days of my life. The “C” word had overwhelmed me. My attitude was somewhere in the subbasement.

Between my job and my family, I have experienced dealing with medical crisis. I was not prepared to be the epicenter. I am a fixer and a caretaker. What if I can’t tolerate the chemo drugs? Or they don’t work? What if I throw up all the time? How will my husband

react? My family? There is a family wedding in six weeks. I can’t tell anyone. What if I am defaced, deformed, and bald? What if this produces massive medical debt? What if I never travel to Paris? Scotland? Israel? What if I am too sick to drive? I am already on Prozac. What if the depression worsens? How can I deal with the anger I am feeling? Why did my body betray me? Why have you forsaken me, God?

When my panic attack subsided, I said to myself, “What do I do when I manage a health crisis for someone else?” I learned through experience on the job and in life that doctors run on data. The doctor does not wave his hand over you and have enough data for a medical diagnosis and treatment plan, this process requires time and testing. Only then can the doctor formulate a treatment plan. Unfortunately, this period of data collection can be nerve wracking!

I started extensive rounds of blood work, medical imaging, and cardiac testing. I had a biopsy on the initial DCIS (I did not tolerate that very well). Then midway through the testing, the doctor discovered another suspicious spot on my breast. Then I had more medical imaging and another biopsy that did not go well. The second spot was benign but it made the entire process of data collection longer.

By the end of July, I only had a tentative treatment plan. My anxiety levels soared. I knew that the doctors needed time to collect adequate data, but the uncertainty was overwhelming. Finally, on August 2nd, Dr. Scalia performed a lumpectomy. I waited a week for the results. Dr. Scalia reported, "You have clear margins, no lymph node involvement, and you are triple positive."

Finally, the initial data collection period was done. On August 30th, 2017 Dr. Yun outlined my treatment plan. I had to have a chemoport surgically implanted. Then 12 weeks of Taxol infusions, a year of Herception, 30 days of radiation and 5 years of Tamoxifen.

Yes, I had a treatment plan! My anxiety reduced by 75% immediately. My primary physician and Sloan Kettering agreed with the plan. Dr. Google even agreed!

Although I knew the plan was not written in stone, I had a place to start recovery. The plan was not always pleasant. I had profound fatigue from the Taxol. I could not drive. I lost my hair. I ended up with minor burns from radiation.

What would I have done differently in that timeframe? I would have joined a support group earlier. The people who have been through the gauntlet know how to navigate the maze of testing and uncertainty from a patient's perspective. The "cancer tribe" has some of the nicest and caring people. It is an unwritten rule of the tribe that they support the newbies in acquiring coping skills. The tribe has hidden gems of wisdom to share.

I would have gotten to know the Nurse Navigators Lisa, Vickie, and Nicole sooner. They are the interface between you and the medical establishment. I am a nurse but I had trouble understanding some of the procedures and chemo meds. Lisa went to appointments,

took notes and explained things again to my overwhelmed brain. The Nurse Navigators wear many hats. They deal in diverse problems such as billing, insurance, and finding financial resources to offset medical bills. They host support groups. They teach chemotherapy class to introduce you to the finer points of chemotherapy. If they don't know the answer, they know how to find it.

I would have been kinder to my soul and spirit. With a diagnosis of depression, I know how important it is to take care of will, mind, and emotions. I already had a psychologist to navigate depression. What is better than one psychologist? Well, two of course! Dr. Florio is a cancer specialist. I would have contacted him earlier for help coping with a new diagnosis.

I did turn to The Book. From my initial panic attack, "my God, why have you forsaken me with a C Diagnosis?" I went to Psalm 138: *"On the day I called Thou didst answer me; Thou didst make me bold with strength in my soul. Though I walk in the midst of trouble. Thou will revive me. And the Lord will accomplish what concerns me. The loving kindness is everlasting."*

As it turns out, most of my what ifs never materialized. I did not throw up once. My husband drove me when I could not. My scars are small. I am no longer on Prozac. My secret was safe until after the wedding. My family reacted well to the news. The depression and anxiety are back to pre-diagnosis levels. Paris, Scotland, and Israel are in the same place.

Until the cure, don't let the "C" word define who you are. If you are in the initial phase, know that it is ok to feel overwhelmed. Reach out to your support team and take care of yourself. Today is another brilliant and beautiful May day, but a year later.

The Grateful Heart Program

Show your appreciation by honoring someone who provided outstanding care during your time of need. Join the many who have donated with a grateful heart to honor the caregivers that make a difference every day. When you donate you are giving our community's talented physicians, nurses, and other caregivers the facilities, advanced technologies, and training necessary to save and enhance lives at Glens Falls Hospital. With your generosity, we will continue to make a difference in the lives of local families for generations to come.

Each Glens Falls Hospital caregiver honored through this program will be recognized through:

- A heart charm to be worn on their badge in recognition of their commitment to care.
- The caregiver's name displayed on the interactive donor recognition display in the Art of Healing Hallway, as well as in the Annual Report issued for the year of the donation.
- Donors may include a thank you message with their gift that will be shared with the honoree.



Ways to give

Online

**[GlensFallsHospital.org/Foundation/
Give-Glens-Falls-Hospital](https://GlensFallsHospital.org/Foundation/Give-Glens-Falls-Hospital)**

Call

518.926.5960

Cancer Survivors' Summer Picnic

Wednesday, August 1st 2018 - 5:00 to 7:30pm
Crandall Park Pavilion, Glens Falls

Cancer survivors and their guests are invited to attend. No reservations are necessary. Come for an hour or stay for the evening. Please bring a covered dish to share, a beverage for yourself and (if you like) a lawn chair (the pavilion has picnic tables).

Barbeque food and bottled water will be provided.

Crandall Park is located next to the YMCA on Glen Street. Enter Crandall Park next to the pond and follow the road around toward the back. The pavilion is near the playground (you can't miss us).



For more information, please call:

Nicole at **518.926.6629**, Lisa at **518.926.6563**
 or Vickie at **518.926.6639**.

Clinical Research at the C.R. Wood Cancer Center at Glens Falls Hospital

If you have been diagnosed with cancer, you may want to talk to your physician about taking part in a clinical trial. Clinical trials may offer treatment options for patients with cancer that are not otherwise available.

- If you have just found out that you have cancer, the time to think about a clinical trial is before you make a treatment decision. Talk with your doctor about all your options, including a clinical trial.

Other clinical trials are looking for people who have already been treated for their cancer.

- If you have already had one or more forms of cancer treatment and are looking for a new treatment option, there may still be a clinical trial for you to think about.

Please call our research office at **518.926.6644** or **518.926.6701** for more information about clinical trials available at Glens Falls Hospital or visit our website at:

www.glensfallshospital.org/CRWood-Cancer-Center/clinical-research/clinical-research.cfm

You may also want to visit the National Cancer Institute website for other clinical trials at **www.cancer.gov/clinicaltrials**.

Cancer Services Program (CSP)

Men and women who are uninsured, meet eligibility criteria and are in need of treatment for breast, cervical, colorectal or prostate cancer screening, may be eligible for full Medicaid coverage through the Medicaid Cancer Treatment Program. Coverage is arranged through the Cancer Services Program Case Manager and will last for the entire treatment period.

Glens Falls Hospital provides a New York State Department of Health Cancer Services Program grant that funds breast, cervical and colorectal cancer screenings and follow-up testing at no cost for uninsured women and men. If you or someone you love is without health insurance, call today at: **1.800.882.0121** or **518.926.6570**.

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Connections is published quarterly by the Charles R. Wood Cancer Center at Glens Falls Hospital, 102 Park Street, Glens Falls, NY 12801. Phone: **518.926.6640**, Fax: **518.926.6643**

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Medical Oncology

When you call during clinic hours (8:30am to 4:30pm weekdays) you will reach the telephone triage nurse at **518.926.6620**.

If it is an emergency, please call 911.

When you call you will very likely need to leave a message. Please try to speak clearly (without rushing) with the following information in the message to help them assist you efficiently:

- Your name, or the name of the person you are calling about. *Please spell the last name.*
- Date of birth.
- Your doctor's name.
Not the PA because they work with multiple doctors.
- Your phone number.
- The reason why you are calling.

If you are calling for a medication refill, please include:

- The name and location of the pharmacy you use.
- The medication and the dose.

You will need to allow 48 hours to have the medications refilled. Most prescriptions will be sent to your pharmacy by e-mail (e-scribed). If it is a medication that cannot be sent electronically, we will call you back with instructions.

If you are having a medical problem, we will try to call you back within two hours. Please be patient as sometimes many calls come in within a short period of time.

My Health Record <https://glensfalls.iqhealth.com>

Allow 48 hours for a response. If you are having a medical problem that needs prompt attention, it is better to call us and leave a message. My Health Record is designed to provide a brief summary of your most recent visit with your doctor. Unfortunately, it is not an efficient forum for a detailed discussion with your care team. It is better to call with questions or, if appropriate, wait to discuss them at your next visit.

Many doctors return their calls (especially test and lab results) at the end of their clinic or at lunch time, so it may be a few hours before they get back to you. When you call, you can let us know if it is okay for them to leave a message with the results on your answering machine.

If you call after hours and need a response, (evenings, nights, or weekends) please tell the answering service to page the on-call doctor. No one is available to check messages during off hours so it will not be received until the next business day.

Medical Oncology

Patients receiving radiation therapy who have questions during clinic hours (8:00am – 4:00pm weekdays) should call the Radiation Therapy Department at **518.926.6670** and ask to speak to a nurse. You will be directed to Kelle Engel RN, BSN, OCN or Kit Howard, RN, OCN. If they are not available to speak with you, please leave a brief message with a call back number. You should expect a call back within 20 to 30 minutes.

If it is an emergency, please call **911**. If you have questions or concerns after the department closes or on the weekend, please call the same number, **518.926.6670**. An answering service will take your information along with a phone number and a radiation oncologist will return your call. Please do not wait with a problem. The radiation oncologists are on call to address any of your concerns.