

Welcome to Outlook



Welcome to the first edition of Outlook, a chronicle of member stories, news, and program resources for members, friends, and caregivers of the Kaiser Permanente Hayward-Fremont Oncology Department. Today, we find nearly everyone has

been directly or indirectly touched by cancer. *Outlook* includes stories from members about their experiences with this disease. You'll hear from people like Michelle Berntson, who challenged herself to *Swim A Mile For Women with Cancer*; and Chuck and Cindy Breeden, who had lost hope until a newly released drug treatment altered their life for the better again. Ann Gordon, our breast cancer coordinator, shares information about the new *Facing Forward Survivor Series* from the National Cancer Institute. Claudia Debus, our medical social worker, links the mind-body connection to wellness. Kathy Walker, RN, shares information about clinical trials, and Marla Bettencourt, RN, talks about her experience as a nurse.

We trust you'll find *Outlook* an informative and useful look at our ongoing work to prevent, detect, and treat cancer and a tribute to the many people who offer hope, inspiration, and support to all of us touched by this illness.

Below: back row, left to right: Michael Leung, PharmD, Jay Vallortigara, PharmD, Jenny Tri, pharmacy intern, Marla Bettencourt, RN, Ann Gordon, breast cancer coordinator, Nada Ferris, NP, Debbie Moore, NP, Teri Pillow-Noriega, RN, department manager, and Howard Kleckner, MD, chief of oncology. Front row, left to right: Gail Wagner, MD, Pamela Caraballo, medical assistant, Kathy Walker, RN, clinical trials, Lydia Trepes, medical assistant, Vikki King-Penn, RN and Noreen Marquez, RN.

For Chuck & Cindy Breeden,

the ways to fight cancer changes daily...

"When there was no hope left, we found ourselves putting a lot of faith in doctors—we turned off our home computer and did a lot of praying," says Cindy and Chuck Breeden at the discovery his metastatic colorectal cancer was affecting his liver. For Chuck Breeden, a City of Hayward equipment engineer, and his wife, Cindy, the ways and means to fight cancer changes daily.

Dr. Howard Kleckner, oncology department chief, and Debbie Moore, oncology nurse practitioner, were meeting to develop new strategies for Chuck's treatment. His first round of chemotherapy in July offered discouraging results. His colon cancer was currently inoperable. Because he was still experiencing persistent pain, bleeding, and weight loss, Chuck had to take a medical leave from the job he loves most—taking care of the city's new million dollar fleet of fire trucks. It was now August, the Food and Drug Administration had just approved the release of a new drug for treating metastatic colon cancer called oxaliplatin. Dr. Kleckner immediately called Chuck and Cindy in for consultation.

"I was ready to try anything," says Chuck sitting in the treatment area with two bags of medicine flowing down slowly through clear tubes into his port-a-cath. Chuck readily admits to never having much to do with doctors before now. Since his initial diagnosis of colon cancer in June, Chuck and Cindy have traveled to Kaiser Permanente Walnut Creek to meet with Dr. Sam Liu, who discovered the liver problems. And while oncology pharmacist, Jay Vallortigara, quickly obtained the new drug in-house Dr. Kleckner referred the Breedens to a renowned colleague at UCSF for a second opinion.

"In September, Chuck began taking the new medicine and a dramatic turn-about took place," says Dr. Kleckner. "The pain and bleeding stopped. He is getting stronger and blood tests confirm that there has been a reduction in the tumor marker. I routinely meet with Chuck and Cindy to review where we are in his treatment program. While they realize this is not a cure and that he'll continue to need treatment and may

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Berntson “Swims A Mile For Women with Cancer”



“Between chemotherapy treatments, I live life, pray, and learn to grow,” says member, Michelle Berntson. And for Michelle, who had surgery earlier this year after discovering a lump in her right breast, swimming is a vital component of her ongoing physical therapy.

“I learned how to swim in 1994 and have been swimming for breast cancer the past three years. This year was the most special— a few days after my first chemo, I took a holiday and returned home determined to begin building up my strength for the swim— once or twice each week, I swam one-third to one-half a mile.” When Michelle’s friends at work and nurses and others at Kaiser Permanente learned of her goal to “Swim A Mile,” they donated more than \$400 in sponsorship.

On October 6, just four months after surgery, Michelle met the 2002 “Swim A Mile For Women with Cancer” challenge sponsored by the Women’s Cancer Resource Center and held annually at Mills College. “It took me one hour and twenty minutes to do the 35 roundtrip laps with one rest break!” says Michelle beaming proudly at her certificate.

When Michelle enters Oncology wearing hot pink earrings shaped like the breast cancer ribbon, everyone of her caregivers breaks into a ready smile. Michelle says, “I find everyone here to be very responsive and caring. Debbie Moore, my nurse practitioner, helps give me the whole picture. She breaks everything down into steps so I know what to do next. My nurses, Vickki and Marla, are patient and caring. They call me by my first name and make me feel like a real person.”

Besides praying and staying active, Michelle offers a few tips for others who may be diagnosed with cancer and undergoing treatment. She says, “Be persistent. Get two or three opinions if you feel you need to early on and make sure the doctors explain things in layperson’s terms.”

The mind-body connection to wellness

by Claudia Debus, medical social worker

Did you know that your oncology department team has a medical social worker? Today in the United States, people more readily accept the fact that wellness includes social, emotional, and psychological elements as well as the physiological one. It was the social work profession that introduced the idea of the mind-body connection to medicine in this country. Since its introduction into the mainstream of medical care way back in 1905, medical social work is now the oldest of all U.S. health care professions to promote and address the mind-body connection through individual counseling and support groups.

Until now, you may have never needed the services of a social worker. You may still feel that you don’t want to share your private concerns with an outsider. But cancer brings extraordinary challenges to patients and their families. Too often, patients’ social and emotional needs are overlooked as they go through the health care system. People feel that by hiding their distress they are being ‘strong’ or are being ‘good patients.’ But when you are told you have cancer, you need all the energy you can muster just to get through your treatments and

your everyday activities. Using what little energy you have to hold in negative feelings diminishes the energy you have for fighting your disease. Talking about your questions and concerns with an objective, knowledgeable third party can be the first step toward easing your stress.

Oncology social workers have experience working with patients and families facing the crisis of cancer. We understand the feelings and problems you are going through. As trained counselors, we can help you with the emotional whirlwind brought on by the diagnosis. We can refer you to practical resources available within Kaiser Permanente and in the community and talk with you about how to get involved with them.

If you believe that the services of a social worker might benefit you, your family, or your caregiver, please contact me for an appointment. My office is located next to the medical assistants’ room in the Oncology Department.

And as always, if you’d like to just drop by and my door is open, please stop in to introduce yourself. Or you can call me at 784-4820. I look forward to assisting you.

Meet Marla Bettencourt, RN

“I am constantly inspired by the strength of the human spirit—this determination has never been more apparent than in the Oncology unit.”

I’ve had the privilege of working in Oncology here at Kaiser Permanente Hayward Medical Center for the last four years. Since becoming a registered nurse in 1976, I’ve worked in a number of hospital units including critical care, labor and delivery, medical-surgical and the emergency room. Throughout the years, I’ve been amazed by the ability of individuals to triumph over difficult situations and I am constantly inspired by the strength of the human spirit—this determination has never been more apparent than in the Oncology unit.

Often, new patients arrive for chemotherapy fearful and discouraged. The initial diagnosis alone throws many people into a panic. Preconceived notions of cancer and chemotherapy consume their thoughts as does an association with the end of life. And sometimes, well-meaning folks tell scary stories which add to this anxiety. As a nurse, the greatest challenge for myself is to help patients



transform these fears and anxieties into productive, life-affirming energy.

From our first meeting, I strive to provide the support that’s necessary to help each person transition to a sense of confidence and strength. Mentally, emotionally, spiritually, physically, and socially, I encourage them to gain the strength

and momentum they need so they can embrace the daily challenges placed before them.

Over the years, I’ve found that people ultimately learn more about themselves and grow in ways they otherwise would never have dreamed about. Weeks and months of treatment—planning, testing, and many changes—all contribute to a greater appreciation of life.

We come to realize that every day is a gift and it’s really all we have. Here is where I’m allowed to experience and share in big and small victories - we shed tears and laugh together—I feel blessed to work in Oncology.

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face surgery in the future, we are all pleased with these recent outcomes.”

Now back at work four hours a day, Chuck proudly shows off Hayward’s new fire trucks. Shocked and dismayed by the initial news of his illness, his colleagues are returning to a sense of normalcy because he’s back. “He’s the best fire truck mechanic I’ve ever met in my life,” says Carl Baker-Madsen, his equipment department manager. “Everyone in the fire department—people who know him in the police department and those who know him and work throughout the City of Hayward—they all love him. Everyone admires Chuck.”

The Breedens want others to know how thorough Chuck’s medical care and treatment has been at Kaiser Permanente. It’s a delicate balance treating him for both the colon and liver while monitoring the effect of this treatment on his diabetes. “You know, a lot of people don’t realize that if you belong to Kaiser Permanente, you can be (and are) referred out to other medical doctors and facilities both within and outside Kaiser Permanente. Dr. Liu ordered more tests because he saw something abnormal in Chuck’s liver functions. And although we appreciated Dr. Kleckner’s wanting to make sure we had as much information as possible, we heard nothing new at UCSF. We’re happy to be back here where we’re all on the same page,” says Cindy.



“He’s the best fire truck mechanic I’ve ever met in my life...”

– Carl Baker-Madsen Equipment Manager, City of Hayward

“This whole Oncology Department is special. Even when a patient is cranky, they always connect personally,” says Chuck watching medical assistant, Lydia Trepes at work. “Lydia is fantastic, she always makes sure everything is ready if you need paperwork or whatever it is. And Debbie Moore is very good.”

Cindy adds, “I’m impressed with every single one of these nurses. If there’s a problem, they’re right on the phone calling you or right here with you. They are totally professional, always explain everything, and are very gentle.” Cindy looks at Chuck and says, “Being able to try this drug has been a

turning point for us. We feel blessed for being at the right place at the right time when it became available.”

Postscript: “Wednesday night before Thanksgiving, Dr. Kleckner called us at home to let us know Chuck’s latest test results continue to show improvement. He wanted us to not worry over the long holiday weekend. It’s a special place,” says Cindy.

Chuck & Cindy’s Caregiving Tips:

- Seek medical attention if you ever experience abnormal bleeding or other symptoms “I thought my bleeding was from hemorrhoids,” says Chuck
- Make sure you get an annual physical
- Talk with your children about what is going on and encourage them to talk with you or ask questions about anything. We’ve been upfront with our teenage children and each are choosing to deal with this illness in their own way. Early on we spoke with a counselor at our daughter’s high school and she decided to go to an on-site support group at school
- Cancer care and treatment changes daily, we’ve quit reading too much into anything now because of this constant change
- It’s really important to have a loved one be part of this process. You need someone to be with you. It’s okay to rely on someone else and important that they know when to back-off; and
- Care-takers need to be cared for, too. “I’ve just joined a stress management program offered through Kaiser Permanente Health Education. I encourage everyone to take advantage of the many resources available through Kaiser,” says Cindy.

Frequently asked questions about clinical trials

by Kathy Walker, RN, clinical research nurse



Many of today’s most effective standard treatments are based on results of previous clinical trial studies. Because of progress made through these past studies, some cancers can be cured and many people treated for cancer are now living longer. Clinical trials research contributes to our knowledge and progress to help us find better ways to improve cancer care and our health. Below are some of the most frequently asked questions about clinical trials.

Q: What is a clinical trial?

Clinical trials are research studies conducted to answer specific questions about a new treatment or a new way of using an old treatment. A study may test new drugs, approaches to surgery, radiation therapy and other cancer therapies, or a combination of treatments. Each study tries to find a better way to prevent, diagnose, and treat cancer. Studies are conducted with cancer patients. The goal of all

clinical trial studies is to find new treatments which are safe and more effective than the current standard therapy. We compare the best current therapy for a specific type of cancer with a new therapy.

Q: What are the phases of clinical trials?

Clinical trials are usually conducted in a series of steps called phases. They are classified into one of three phases in order for researchers to obtain reliable results about the treatment. Each phase ensures patients are protected. Phase I trials usually involve a small number of patients and help determine how a new drug should be given, how often, and what amount is safe. Phase II trials often focus on a particular type of cancer, continue to test the safety of the drug and how effective it is in treating the cancer. Phase III trials involve hundreds of patients at sites all over the country. This phase tests new drugs, a new combination of therapies or new surgical procedures in comparison to the current standard treatment. Patients are assigned at random to receive either the new or standard therapy.

Q: What are some of the benefits and risks?

Clinical trials offer high quality care with participants receiving at least the current best therapy and the possibility of receiving a new treatment. You could be one of the first patients to receive a new treatment which may be more effective than the current standard. Having a chance to help others and improve cancer treatment is an important benefit for

some patients who choose to enroll in a clinical trial. Risks include those associated with the unknown outcome. New treatments may not be better than the current standard and the patient may experience unexpected side effects. Some clinical trial plans may include additional protocols during the trial. These protocols may include more tests for the patients such as lab work and x-rays. Individuals who wish to participate should weigh the benefits and risks carefully before making an informed consent to participate.

Q: How do I participate in a clinical trial?

Participation in a clinical trial is voluntary. Because the safety and well-being of trial participants is the primary concern throughout these studies, participants must sign an informed consent prior to enrolling in a clinical trial. Potential participants are given information about the purpose, potential risks and benefits, treatment schedule, required tests, and known side effects of all study drugs. Prior to signing the informed consent, you have an opportunity to talk with your physician and research nurse about the trial and have your questions answered. Also, there are strict guidelines established by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the local Institutional Review Board (IRB). These guidelines reflect the highest ethical standards to insure the rights and safety of participants are protected.

For more information about clinical trials, please contact me on 784-4533 or stop by my office in the Oncology Department.

“Facing Forward” – NCI addresses concerns of cancer survivors

by Ann Gordon, breast cancer coordinator



The National Cancer Institute (NCI) has created a new series for cancer survivors, their families and health professionals. Many resources help patients undergoing treatment, but few publications address what happens after cancer treatment. The *Facing Forward Survivor Series* fills this gap, combining scientific information from health professionals with coping tips from cancer survivors.

Survivors are confronted by various questions about recovery and side effects after cancer treatment. Many are left wondering: How do I get my life back to normal? What if my cancer comes back? *Life After Cancer Treatment* addresses these concerns as well as issues related to medical care, potential physical and emotional changes, social relationships and life in the workplace.

Cancer survivors who have read *Life After Cancer Treatment* have said that reading the book made them feel that others had been there and

understood their experience. As one survivor said, “The book put many of my fears to rest. I wish that I had this when I finished treatment. . . It’s good to know that things are not just in your head.”

A Spanish version of *Life After Cancer Treatment* is also available. Along with the same content as the English version, it highlights issues relevant to Latinos such as effective communication during follow up care and the use of alternative medicines.

Another book in the series, *Ways You Can Make a Difference in Cancer*, discusses the benefits and ways of becoming involved in cancer-related activities that give back to the community.

To order books in the *Facing Forward Survivor Series*, call 1-800-4-CANCER or visit the NCI Web site at www.cancer.gov/publications. The Kaiser Permanente Hayward Oncology Department has copies of *Life After Cancer Treatment*. You’re welcome to pick up one next time you’re in for a visit.



Move over Marlon Brando and all of you “Easy Riders” out there! **Mable Artley** celebrated her 87th birthday on November 11th riding in full leather on a HAWG, (that’s Harley Davidson to the uninitiated!) Mable is currently undergoing treatment for breast cancer. According to her many fans in oncology, Mable is one feisty, independent spirit! Happy Birthday, Mable!

*** LifeLines ***

LOCAL CANCER CLASSES & SUPPORT GROUPS

Cancer Support Groups call for more information, we have numerous groups available

Prostate Cancer Support Group a monthly support group for patients & family members

I Can Cope a 7-session class for newly diagnosed patients and their families

Chemotherapy Overview a one-session class on side effect management for patients undergoing chemotherapy is held the first Thursday of every month

Look Good, Feel Better a one-session class on self-care and beauty tips for women undergoing chemotherapy is held every other month on Mondays

Breast Cancer Education & Support Program 6-week class for newly diagnosed breast cancer patients

Mind Body Medicine Program 8-session workshop for those interested in improving their health & managing stress

Kaiser Permanente Health Education:
Hayward and Union City: 510-784-4531
Fremont: 510-248-3455

WEB SITE RESOURCES:

www.kaiserpermanente.org
www.permanente.net/doctor
<http://hayward.kp.org>
<http://fremont.kp.org>
www.cancer.gov
www.cancer.org

Note: Web site links are provided as an educational tool. Any medical content that you feel may be important to your health should always be discussed with your Kaiser Permanente physician.

OUTLOOK EDITORIAL STAFF

Editorial Director: Howard Kleckner, MD
Contributors: Marla Bettencourt, RN, Claudia DeBus, MSW, Ann Gordon, Kathy Walker, RN, members and friends

We want to hear from you! Comments, ideas, stories – contact us at the Oncology Department, Kaiser Permanente Hayward Medical Center, 27400 Hesperian Blvd, Hayward CA 94545 or send and email to: Howard.Kleckner@kp.org.



Finishing chemotherapy gives **Bonnie Butorovich** a chance to celebrate with members of the oncology team! While she may have suffered nausea, fatigue, hair loss, and many bruises, Bonnie, like everyone undergoing therapy in Hayward, receives a certificate of bravery.

Standing, left to right: Nenita Dimaranan, Noreen Marquez, RN, Glenda Lumpkin, receptionist, Marla Bettencourt, RN, and Angie de la Cruz, RN. Center: Bonnie Butorovich; Kneeling, Lydia Trepes, medical assistant.