

HOPE & HEALING

NORTHSIDE HOSPITAL CANCER INSTITUTE

BUILT TO BEAT CANCER

A guide to helping survivors navigate through their journey

Visit us at builttobeatcancer.com

Fall 2024 Issue

Northside Hospital Cancer Institute Call Center: 404.531.4444

Northside Hospital Cancer Institute Hosts Third Annual Patient and Caregiver Education Conference

On Saturday, August 17, 2024, the Northside Hospital Cancer Institute hosted its third annual Patient and Caregiver Education Conference at the Hotel at Avalon in Alpharetta. The conference achieved its goal of educating patients, survivors and caregivers in addition to providing helpful tips for navigating the cancer journey. The program opened with four general sessions for everyone in attendance, then proceeded to separate breakout sessions for caregivers and patients. During each session, attendees had the opportunity to ask questions and learn more about various topics, including nutrition, precision oncology, symptom management and what it means to "LEAP" (learn, educate, advocate, persevere). Several Northside Hospital Cancer Institute providers volunteered as speakers, panelists and moderators, and many more, including Network of Hope, served as event volunteers and hosts for support service information tables. Additionally, twenty-two community resource organizations were in attendance to provide information, resources and support. We look forward to hosting our fourth annual Patient and Caregiver Education Conference in 2025!

Attendee Feedback

"It is a real bolster to me as I go into year three of my recovery. I am leaving here today re-inspired! Thank you."

"I've been attending for two years and it keeps getting better!"

"The food was delicious and healthy. The vendors were so informative. I am thankful and grateful for this conference and Northside Hospital."

"It was my first time attending, and I really enjoyed the conference. Thank you so much for caring!"



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ASK AN EXPERT



Self-Esteem and Cancer

By: Kamilah Konrad, LMSW, HON-OPN-CG

Cancer and its treatment can impact how people value and perceive themselves. Some

must work hard to maintain positive self-esteem, especially in the areas of physical and mental self-esteem. Self-esteem is important because beliefs can affect how people feel, act and take care of their physical and emotional needs. Selfesteem is an important protective resource when adapting to life during and after cancer. Below are some potential impacts and helpful strategies related to both physical and mental self-esteem.

Mental Self-Esteem

Potential Impact on Mental Self-Esteem

 Chemo brain, relationship changes, work role changes, spiritual questions.

Strategies for Positive Mental Self-Esteem

- Identify irrational beliefs /thoughts and replace them with ones that are evidence-based.
- Give and receive positive self-talk, which can help calm fears and boost confidence.
- Identify a spiritual/faith resource and/or mentor.
- · Create an uplifting community of support.
- Feel empowered to advocate for yourself and to designate other trusted advocates as needed.
- Consider therapy & support groups.
- Remind yourself of your strengths and abilities.
- Be kind to and patient with yourself.

Physical Self-Esteem: Body Image

Potential Impact on Physical Self Esteem

• Scars, hair loss, nail changes, swollen appendages, skin changes, weight losses and gains, loss of limbs, loss of function, and loss of fertility.



Strategies for Positive Physical Self Esteem

- Acknowledge the changes and losses and feelings about them.
- Reframe thoughts about your body, focusing on what your body can do and what you appreciate about it.
- Accept changes and view scars and/or changes as part of metamorphosis.
- · Care for the parts of your body that are hurting or healing with prescribed creams and/or medication.
- Use body positive and gratitude affirmations:
 - "I choose to listen to my body and give it the love and respect it deserves."
 - "I acknowledge my imperfections, and am at peace with them, because they are part of the healing process."
- Find ways to use appropriate humor about changes (e.g., unnatural wig colors, shave parties).
- Stay as active as possible to help build confidence and strength.
- Continue to be physically affectionate and intimate when able and make adjustments as needed to show and receive care and love.

For additional support and guidance, email behavioralhealthservices@northside.com or call 404.851.8960 to get connected with an oncology clinical social worker.



Northside Hospital Cancer Institute Radiation Oncology Survivorship **Program Prepares and Supports Patients**

By: Brooke P. Balun, MSN, ANP-BC, AOCNP

Northside Hospital Cancer Institute continues to deliver exceptional care by providing screenings for patients, as well as treatment options for individuals with a cancer diagnosis. As part of the continuum of care, Northside is committed to providing education and support to individuals who have completed cancer treatment. The survivorship program at Northside engages patients who have undergone treatment for various cancer diagnoses and provides valuable information and education on surveillance, potential late or long term-effects from treatment and ways to maintain or improve health moving forward.

The Northside Hospital Cancer Institute Radiation Oncology team has designed a survivorship program to meet the needs of patients who have undergone definitive radiation treatment for various cancers (including breast, prostate, cervical and endometrial), with hopes of adding more disease sites in the future. Our program provides these patients with information that addresses the consequences of cancer and treatment, including both medical and psychological late effects. Our aim is to improve coordination of care and communication between all (continued on page 3)

Northside Hospital Cancer Institute Radiation Oncology Survivorship Program (continued from page 2)

providers and ensure that our patients understand what to expect in the months to years following their treatment.

Survivorship starts with education. We provide education at the beginning of treatment to discuss the role and process of radiation therapy as well as acute or short-term effects of treatment and ways to minimize them. Once treatment has concluded, our nurses give patients a treatment summary that lists the dates of treatment and possible late effects. This information is often a valuable resource for patients who may not be returning to see their physician or nurse practitioner for up to four to six more weeks.

At the first follow-up appointment after completion of radiation therapy, the nurse or nurse practitioner gives patients a survivorship care plan that provides information on surveillance, components of a healthy lifestyle, and resources available to address any ongoing or new issues (including late effects of treatment), which may impact quality of life. These follow-up visits allow patients to voice their fears and define their needs as they enter the next phase of life. As needs are identified, providers answer questions patients have and provide referrals as needed. We collaborate with many community resource organizations, including Cancer Support Community Atlanta, to provide exciting opportunities for our patients

and their families to learn and grow.

As the medical community continues to make advances in genetic testing, early cancer diagnosis, effective therapy and progressive supportive care, survivorship has become increasingly



vital.¹ Cancer survivors will continue to grow in number as a cancer diagnosis becomes more of a chronic condition. Northside is committed to supporting our patients throughout their lives. Through the Survivorship Program, we hope to prepare our patients for what lies ahead after a cancer diagnosis. We aim to empower patients to feel confident when facing future challenges, but also emphasize the importance of enjoying life to the fullest!

To learn more about the NHCI Radiation Oncology Survivorship Program, please call 404.851.8850.

Reference



BOOST YOUR HEALTH & WELLNESS

Prebiotics, Probiotics, Postbiotics and Your Gut

Your gut is home to trillions of microorganisms, including bacteria. The ecosystem of these microorganisms is your gut microbiome. The gut microbiome plays a key role in your body's overall function, impacting everything from digestion and brain health to hormone balance, immune response, inflammation control and the regulation of vitamins and lipids. Everyone's gut microbiome is unique and is the result of many factors, including foods we eat.

How can I improve my gut health/microbiome?

Eating a diverse diet can promote a healthy balance of microorganisms in your gut.

Aim for 30 different plant foods each week, including whole grains, beans, legumes, fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds and herbs to improve microbiome diversity.^{1,2} It is best to consume probiotics and prebiotics in your diet regularly, rather than consuming them only occasionally.

What are probiotics, prebiotics and postbiotics?

 Probiotics are good bacteria. They are living microorganisms that provide health benefits if adequate quantities are consumed. Probiotics are classified into strains (i.e., lactobacillus); each strain has different health benefits.

- Sources of probiotics
 - Foods: yogurt, kefir and fermented foods such as kimchi, kombucha, miso and sauerkraut. All fermented foods may not be considered probiotics.
 - Supplements: lactobacillus and bifidobacterium are the most common strains. Colony forming units (CFU) refers to the amount of viable microorganisms in the product.
 - Supplements can contain 100 million up to billions of CFUs.
 - A higher CFU number is not always more effective.
- Prebiotics are food for probiotics. They are mostly fibers and are fermented in the colon.
 - Sources of prebiotics include asparagus, avocado, banana, garlic, onions, Jerusalem artichokes and legumes. Prebiotics may also be added to beverages and foods (e.g., inulin, chicory or chicory root fiber).
 - Prebiotics may cause gas and bloating. Start with small portions and gradually increase to give your gut time to adapt and decrease the risk of side effects.
- Postbiotics are beneficial bioactive compounds produced from digestion and fermentation of prebiotics and probiotics. They have health benefits related to gut

(continued on page 4)

^{1.} Jacobs LA, Shulman LN. Lancet Oncol. 2017;18(1):e19-e29.

Prebiotics, Probiotics, Postbiotics and Your Gut (continued from page 3)

health, inflammation, bowel regularity, immunity, nutrient absorption, insulin resistance and blood lipids.

- Examples of postbiotics are short chain fatty acids,
 B vitamins and amino acids.
- You can increase postbiotic production by consuming more prebiotics and probiotics.

What can affect my gut health and gut microbiome?

Diet, stress, disease, exercise, hormones and use of antibiotics can alter the balance of good bacteria in your gut.

Is there any connection with cancer and treatment?

Consuming probiotics during cancer treatment may help reduce side effects from chemotherapy and radiation including diarrhea, infection and inflammation of mucosal membranes. Research is ongoing to determine if there is a connection between gut microbiome composition and the risk of certain cancers.

If you are immunocompromised or actively receiving anticancer treatments, consult your health care provider before starting a probiotic due to possible safety concerns. To learn more about the Northside Hospital Oncology Nutrition Program or to connect with a dietician, visit the <u>Nutrition</u> <u>Services</u> webpage.

References:

Directions

- Gut Healthy Nutrition Tips. Dietitian Connection. December 22, 2022. Accessed September 19, 2024. https://dietitianconnection.com/patient-resources/gut-healthy-nutrition-tips/
- Aim for 30+ Plants Each Week. Dietitian Connection. December 22, 2022. Accessed September 19, 2024. https://dietitianconnection.com/patient-resources/aim-for-30-plants-each-week/

Recipe Corner: Mango Lassi

Ingredients

1 cup plain yogurt

34 cup unsweetened coconut milk

1 medium mango, flesh scooped out

Salt or sugar (optional)

Nutrition facts per serving: 342 calories, 23 grams of fat, 19 grams of saturated Fat, 1 gram of Polyunsaturated Fat, 2 grams of monounsaturated Fat, 34 grams of carbohydrates, 29 grams of sugar, 3 grams of fiber, 8 grams of protein, 873 mg of sodium

Recipe and photo from **Cook for Your Life**



Prep Time: 15 minutes Yield: 2 servings



STORIES OF HOPE & HEALING*

Survivor Story: Meet Andy



What are the events that led to your cancer diagnosis?

In November 2022, I experienced a cluster of symptoms. I assumed the dark urine was due to inadequate water intake while working as a poll watcher during the mid-term elections and diarrhea was from eating a grotesquely

large meal of fried fish and grease-soaked fries. But my itchy skin had no explanation, because there was no rash. When the symptoms persisted for a couple of weeks, I went to my primary care physician (PCP). He noticed that I was jaundiced—yellow skin and eyes—and blood test results revealed that my liver was out of whack. An ultrasound and magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) ultimately showed a tumor the size of a quarter on my pancreas was pressing on my liver. If the tumor had been in a different place, it might not have triggered the symptoms.

What treatment did you receive?

Combine all ingredients in a blender. Serve over ice.

Cancer treatment was on hold until my liver function was restored with the placement of a stent. My PCP referred me to cancer surgeon Dr. Eddie Abdalla at Northside Hospital and oncologist Dr. Nishan Fernando of Georgia Cancer Specialists also in the Northside network. My treatment protocol was to start with six chemotherapy infusions (FOLFIRINOX, a cocktail of four medications) to shrink the tumor, followed by surgery (the Whipple procedure) to resect the tumor, and then six more chemotherapy sessions to kill any stray cancerous cells.

How and where did you receive support during your treatment and recovery?

From day one, there was abundant support during and after surgery at Northside Hospital. Everyone was there for me – the doctors, physician assistants, nurses, physical therapists, dieticians, lab technicians, housekeepers, food

(continued on page 5)

Survivor Story: Meet Andy (continued from page 4)



service workers and security guards. During chemotherapy, the nurses who administered the infusions were remarkable. I always felt like I was the most important patient of the day. At home, in addition to my wife of 40 years, a network of

friends offered unwavering support with meals, phone calls and good vibes.

What advice do you have for someone navigating their treatment and recovery journey?

- 1. Before treatment, get as much exercise as possible. Build up your strength and stamina.
- 2. Beware of dehydration; it sneaks up on you. Your body gets so weak and confused that you might not have an urge to drink even though that's what you need most.
- 3. Eat. If you've lost your appetite, think of food as a form of medicine. It may not taste good, but it's necessary.

How far out are you from treatment or is treatment ongoing?

My last chemotherapy infusion was in August 2023. Active surveillance that includes a computed tomography (CT) scan and a blood test every three months will continue for the first two years after treatment.

So far, so good.

Closing Thoughts:

I was initially reluctant to tell anyone but my inner circle about my diagnosis. Before long, however, I felt that not telling our friends was dishonest, and as my wife and I began to tell more people, we realized just how important having their support was for both of us. Finally, in consultation with your dietician, indulge yourself with generous servings of ice cream.

*Patients' stories are based on individual experiences. The process from diagnosis through treatment may vary as well as symptoms, side effects and provider recommendations.



COMMUNITY SUPPORT & RESOURCES

Cancer Support Community Atlanta: Discussing Cancer with Children & Teens

Initiating a conversation about cancer is always hard and can be especially difficult to talk to children and teenagers about diagnoses that affect their families. Cancer Support Community Atlanta is helping make this discussion a bit easier for your family with a new virtual program, "Communicating With Children: A Guide to Discussing Cancer with Kids & Teens."

Led by licensed Child Life Specialist, Becca Schuetz, "Communicating with Children" is an hour-long session for parents, grandparents and anyone who needs to start this delicate discussion. Conveniently held virtually during the lunchtime hour, the program covers effective language suitable for different age groups, insight into children's

evolving understanding at various developmental stages and strategies to offer emotional support.

This program will be held November 7, 2024 from noon-1 p.m. To learn more about this and all of Cancer Support Community Atlanta's programs, visit <u>cscatlanta</u>. <u>org</u> or register through <u>cscatl</u>. <u>gnosishosting.net/Events/</u> <u>Calendar</u>.





Elohee Metastatic Breast Cancer Retreat 2024

Northside Hospital Cancer Institute's third annual Metastatic Breast Cancer (MBC) Retreat took place September 13-15 at Elohee, a serene retreat center in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains, that was founded as a place of respite and restoration by Eve Cook–a cancer survivor. The annual retreat is offered at no cost to participants, thanks to the generosity of the Northside Hospital Foundation, and is facilitated by staff from Northside Hospital Cancer Institute and its affiliate, Cancer Support Community Atlanta.

The retreat is all-inclusive, providing lodging in Elohee's cozy cottages and delicious chef-prepared meals shared together each evening. Nightly campfire gatherings under the starry

sky allow for deeper connections and friendships to form. By the end of the weekend, participants leave not only with valuable knowledge, but also with a renewed sense of hope and resilience. According to Emily Beard, RN, OCN, CBCN, program coordinator for The Breast Cancer Program at Northside Hospital and the creator and a facilitator of the retreat, "Our annual MBC Retreat is more than just an event; it's a unique opportunity for healing, empowerment and community. Living with the uncertainty of this diagnosis is very isolating for our patients and their caregivers, so for one weekend we strive to provide support and connections that prosper."

Elohee Metastatic Breast Cancer Retreat 2024 (continued from page 5)

The program is designed for individuals living with metastatic (stage 4) breast cancer and a companion of their choosing. Each patient attendee is required to bring along a family member or friend because we recognize the caregiver's vital role in the patient journey. Inclusion of family members allows us the opportunity to offer support to both people, with sessions to address unique caregiver challenges and tools to support their loved ones, while also caring for their own well-being.

The retreat features a variety of informational programming, spa services, peer support and engaging indoor and outdoor activities tailored to the specific needs of attendees. For the third year, we partnered with the nonprofit A New Daily Beginning to offer relaxing spa services to attendees. For the first time, we welcomed

The Momento Foundation who provided free photography mini-sessions for interested participants. The retreat provided a supportive environment where participants could explore nature, connect with others facing similar challenges, share personal experiences and foster a sense of community.





Community Partner Spotlight: American Lung Association



Please share the name and purpose of the organization.

Founded 120 years ago, the American Lung Association's mission is to save lives by improving lung health and preventing lung disease. We do this through education, advocacy and research. Our goals are big: defeat lung cancer, create a tobacco-free future, champion clean air for all and improve the quality of life for those living with lung disease. Because when you can't breathe, nothing else matters.

Describe the population that the American Lung Association serves.

The American Lung Association serves patients with lung disease, their families and their caregivers.

What resources does the American Lung Association provide to patients, survivors and/or caregivers?

The American Lung Association has a lot to offer our patients, caregivers and community. We provide access to different helplines, assistance programs, support groups and more. Examples of our offerings include, but are not limited to Lung Helpline and Tobacco Quitline, patient and caregiver network, financial assistance programs, corporate wellness, "Talk about Vaping" initiative, State of the Air annual report, and online support groups.

What outreach programs does the American Lung Association sponsor in the community?

Community outreach programs are important to the American Lung Association. Spreading awareness and educating our communities about lung health and lung disease is vital in today's world. We strive to continue adapting and evolving to ensure our outreach programs remain relevant and beneficial.

What type of volunteer opportunities does the American Lung Association offer, and what is the best way to get involved?

Volunteer opportunities are available at events such as the Fight For Air Climb and the LUNG FORCE 5K. Other volunteer opportunities include local advocacy efforts – lending a voice to our critical efforts to reduce lung disease, champion clean air for all and, ultimately, save lives.

Please address the partnership between the American Lung Association and Northside Hospital Cancer Institute.

The American Lung Association and Northside Hospital Cancer Institute work together at two annual events: Fight for Air Climb and LUNG FORCE Run/Walk.

Through this sponsorship, the American Lung Association

offers Northside Hospital a valuable opportunity to engage the community by showcasing the resources available to patients with lung cancer and their families – both through event marketing and at the event itself. These events create a space for attendees to come together and celebrate a common goal: to end lung cancer. Between the support for Freedom from Smoking classes for over a decade, participation in previous community education opportunities on a state and national platform and the continued willingness of both organizations to explore future collaborations, we feel that our relationship is so much more than just these events!

Upcoming Cancer Awareness Months

October: Breast Cancer and Liver Cancer

November: Lung Cancer, Pancreatic Cancer, Stomach Cancer,

Carcinoid Cancer, Honoring Caregivers

Do you have a question you would like answered by an expert or a story to share in a future issue of Hope & Healing? If so, please send your questions or stories to survivornewsletter@northside.com.



GET INVOLVED



Unconditional Compassion

By: Dave Parlier

For the past 14 years, I have been volunteering at Northside Hospital Atlanta, serving in the surgical waiting area, the main information desk, ambassador

service and transport service. My goal is to help others as they encounter the daunting environment of a hospital. I have served in several leadership positions on the Auxiliary Board and Executive Committee. I am extremely proud to say that I became president of the Auxiliary at Northside Hospital Atlanta in October.

With all of my volunteer experience, I thought I understood the apprehension, fear and confusion individuals felt when entering a hospital setting. I thought I knew how to exemplify our volunteer services group motto, "Make a world of difference." In February 2024, however, my thoughts changed as I heard the dreaded words, "You have cancer." For most of my existence, my family and friends lovingly classified me as a "health-freak," so I was convinced these words would never be directed toward me.

A gifted physician found the diseased tissue on the last of 14 biopsy needles. Thanks to new technology involving two invasive, but probably life-saving, procedures in which probes were used to direct high-dose radiation specifically to the cancerous tissue, my physician has released me until my follow-up in six months. In his words, we are now "chasing cancer."

This brush with mortality energized my desire to truly "make a world of difference." In the recent months following my diagnosis, I have attempted to clarify exactly which words, actions, responses, directions and body language can definitively demonstrate that "difference." I have come to the realization that I may never adequately master these traits, but I will do my best to comprehend the needs of each individual entering Northside Hospital.

Every individual entering Northside Hospital is unique. Every condition is unique. Every diagnosis is unique. Every treatment in unique. Every home environment is unique. Every financial condition is unique. Every emotional response is unique. Dealing with cancer is unique.

Consequently, I have adopted another motto to lean on during my time as president: "unconditional compassion." These words simplify my approach with patients, family members, guests and staff. Two words which have paradoxically broad and yet specific connotations. Two words which I now consciously resound in my mind before, during and after each encounter with people at Northside.

I find that attending to the message of this new motto affords me the best chance of having effective interactions. I am also confident that asserting "unconditional compassion" just might be another way of saying "make a world of difference."

If you are interested in learning more about volunteering with the Northside Auxiliary, please contact the sites below:

Atlanta: northsideatlaux.com or 404.851.8701 Cherokee: nhcherokeeauxiliary.com or 770.224.2484 Duluth: angela.hamlet@northside.com or 678.312.4318 Forsyth: northsideforysthauxiliary.com or 770.844.3430



EVENTS & CANCER CELEBRATIONS

PATIENT EDUCATION & SUPPORT EVENTS

Cancer Transitions: Moving Beyond Treatment

Next four-week virtual program begins November 1, 2024 from 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Cancer Transitions is a free four-week workshop designed to help cancer survivors make the transition from active treatment to survivorship. Each week participants will meet for a 90-minute virtual session to discuss important topics focused on health and well-being. For more information and registration, please email supportgroups@cscatlanta.org.





1000 Johnson Ferry Road NE Dept. 796 Atlanta, GA 30342

CANCER SCREENING & PREVENTION =

Skin Cancer Screenings

November 12, 2024 from 6-8 p.m. @ Georgia Cancer Specialists – Rockdale in Conyers

National Lung Cancer Screening Day

November 9, 2024 @ Northside imaging locations in Cherokee, Cobb, DeKalb, Forsyth, Gwinnett, Henry and North Fulton counties

Northside is partnering with the American Cancer Society National Lung Cancer Roundtable, American College of Radiology, Radiology Health Equity Coalition and U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to raise awareness about lung cancer screening and offer low-dose CT (LDCT) lung screening on a Saturday. A physician order is required. Call <u>404.531.4626</u> to schedule an appointment.

Built To Quit - Smoking and Tobacco Cessation Course

Next six-week session starts on: November 12, 2024

Weekly classes include the American Lung Association Freedom from Smoking curriculum and are available in person and virtually. They are conducted in a group setting, which encourages participants to learn from each other.





COMMUNITY EVENTS —

CANCER WALKS/EVENTS - SPONSORED BY NHCI

American Lung Association Lung Force Walk

November 2, 2024 from 8-11 a.m. @ Atlantic Station in Atlanta Atlanta Miles for Melanoma 5K

November 3, 2024 @ 7:30 a.m. @ Brook Run Park in Atlanta

NORTHSIDE EVENTS

Atlanta Cancer Care Foundation, Inc. Taste of Hope Casino Night
Thursday, November 7, 2024 from 7-10 p.m. @ Roswell Mill in Roswell
Great American Smokeout

November 21, 2024

Activities occurring at each Northside Hospital campus.







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