A Nurses Guide to Pancreatic Cancer From Diagnosis to Treatment

We are dedicated to supporting our pancreatic cancer community, particularly as we all try to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic. We have launched a series of free webinars to provide virtual patient support and resources to our patients and their caregivers. We are pleased to share information about the third in our series which took place on Friday, May 1, 2020.

There are a multitude of concerns and emotions that a person experiences when diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. Patients and family members are immediately thrust into a world they often know little about while having to make important health care decisions in a timely manner. Having a road map to understanding what happens from pancreatic cancer diagnosis to treatment is ideal. We asked Lauren Damato, Nurse Practitioner of the UCLA Agi Hirshberg Center for Pancreatic Diseases and Megan Price, Oncology Nurse Practitioner with the UCLA Jonsson Comprehensive Cancer Center, to discuss how pancreatic cancer is diagnosed, surgical resection and chemotherapy options. They discuss the benefits of patient care in an integrated practice unit utilizing a multidisciplinary approach as well as factors to consider when choosing a treatment plan.

Megan also shared valuable tips and resources, including the booklet by the National Cancer Institute (NCI) titled, Chemotherapy and You. This is a great guide to refer to during chemotherapy treatments, including information on how chemotherapy affects cancer cells, potential side effects and helpful questions for your doctor or nurse.

Watch Webinar

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A very special thanks to our Sponsors & Supporters for helping ensure that these vital patient resources can be offered free-of-charge in place of our Annual Symposium.

California Community Foundation, Caroline Dockrell, Fineberg Foundation, Dr. Robert

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Virtual Volunteers Needed for #GivingTuesdayNow

Become a Virtual Volunteer for #GivingTuesdayNow, a global day of giving and unity on Tuesday, May 5, 2020. This international campaign is aimed at driving an influx of grassroots generosity and action to support nonprofits, like ours, around the world. We can really use your help!

What does it mean to be a Virtual Volunteer? Here is a list of simple ways that you can make a difference on May 5th from the comfort of your home. Your support on #GivingTuesdayNow can be as simple as advocating for us on social media or by email, sharing our mission with a family member or friend. You can also make a small gift and encourage others to join you!

Raise Awareness on Social Media and in your community

- Encourage your community to support the Hirshberg Foundation on #GivingTuesdayNow, by emailing your friends & family and sharing why you support the Hirshberg Foundation.
- Post a purple picture on social media and share why you support our mission, make sure to tag us, so we can share.
- Add our Facebook photo frame to your profile pic from now through May 5th.

- Download our #GivingTuesdayNow poster to help spread the word. You can print it and display it at home, perhaps on a window for your neighbors to see. You can also take a photo and post it on social media to help us spread awareness.

Fundraise on Social Media

- On **Facebook**, create a #GivingTuesdayNow Facebook Fundraiser to benefit the Hirshberg Foundation. Use this link to get it set up in seconds.
- **On Instagram,** use the Instagram Donation Sticker to help us raise money for our patient support programs. Create an Instagram Story, add a donation sticker and share with your friends. We've created a simple video to show you how.
- **On Twitter,** you can temporarily change your twitter display name for the day to show that you are supporting us #GivingTuesdayNow. Here's an example.

If you have any questions, please contact our Volunteer Coordinator at info@pancreatic.org.

Without volunteers who give their time and energy, we would not be able to continue with our mission to cure pancreatic cancer. Thank you in advance for your help!

Key Protein for Pancreatic

Cancer Cell Growth Discovered, May Provide Therapeutic Target

Pancreatic cancer is particularly deadly because it is often found in advanced stages when the tumor has grown too large and spread from the pancreas making removal impossible. In order to grow, cancer cells require molecular food – Dr. Wantong Yao's Seed Grant research investigated mechanisms to starve those cells as a therapeutic intervention for pancreatic cancer.

Almost 95% of human pancreatic cancers contain oncogenic mutations of the KRAS gene which drives the initiation, development, and progression of the disease. There is currently an effort to pharmacologically target genetic mutations in the KRAS gene and inhibit tumor growth, but that research is in early stages and may not be effective for all KRAS mutations.

It was previous shown that mutations in KRAS in pancreatic cancer initiates the cellular process of macropinocytosis, in which the cell surface membrane engulfs extracellular fluid and prioritizes signaling pathways that support their uncontrolled growth. By interrupting those pathways and blocking the food supply, there is the opportunity to target and prevent cancer cells from growing.

New research from Dr. Yao, conducted at MD Anderson Cancer Center, sought to identify ways to starve and kill cancer cells by understanding the mechanisms responsible for how mutations in KRAS drives macropinocytosis. This research focused on the proteins expressed at the surface of the cell, where macropinocytosis takes place. By studying changes in the proteins expressed at the cell surface when mutant KRAS was expressed in cancer cells, Dr. Yao's research was able to identify a link between mutant KRAS and activation of

macropinocytosis.

Through funding from a 2017 Seed Grant, Wantong Yao, MD, PhD, identified SDC1, a protein that was more abundant when mutant KRAS was expressed than in cells where there was no mutant KRAS. Their research confirmed that while SDC1 may be present in the cell, it is only when mutant KRAS is expressed that SDC1 is shuttled to the cell surface to drive macropinocytosis. Understanding that SDC1 acts under the control of mutant KRAS to fuel cell growth provides an opportunity to target SDC1 and inhibit tumor cell growth. Since SDC1 drives growth when it is on the surface of the cell, it may be more vulnerable to intervention. There is research underway targeting SDC1 using monoclonal antibodies in multiple myeloma patients, which may open the doors for similar therapies for pancreatic cancer.

An Inherited Predisposition to Pancreatic Cancer

This month, as part of National Minority Health Month, we are highlighting those communities at high-risk for pancreatic cancer. The Ashkenazi Jewish community, like African Americans, have been disproportionately impacted by pancreatic cancer. Increasing awareness in these communities includes sharing information and providing resources. These tools empower not only high-risk communities but the pancreatic cancer community as a whole. **When pancreatic cancer impacts one group, it impacts us all.**

For decades scientists have investigated the BRCA1 & BRCA2 gene

mutations and their connection to cancer. The Johns Hopkins National Familial Pancreas Tumor Registry (NFPTR) has gained a better understanding of how BRCA1 & BRCA2 gene mutations account for a *portion* of the increased risk for pancreatic cancer for Ashkenazi Jews. According to their research, *"The increased risk of pancreatic cancer associated with inherited BRCA1 mutations is estimated to be about two-fold (about the same increased risk associated with cigarette smoking)".* In addition, carriers of the *BRCA2* gene mutations also have a ten-fold increased risk of developing pancreatic cancer.

The National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN) recommends genetic counselling for all individuals diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. The Hirshberg Foundation provides resources to encourage families, especially those with a high-risk ancestry, to learn more about how genetics play a role. Watch this Hirshberg Symposium video "Why Should I See A Genetic Counselor?", presented by Wendy Conlon, MS, a genetic counselor at UCLA. Whether you are of Ashkenazi Jewish ancestry or not, genetic testing unlocks some answers to pancreatic cancer and is a resource worth exploring.

Coping Skills for the Pancreatic Cancer Community: Tools and Tips During COVID-19

We are dedicated to supporting our pancreatic cancer community, particularly as we all try to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic. We

have launched a series of free webinars to provide virtual patient support and resources for our community. We are pleased to share information about the second in our series which took place on Friday, April 17th.

During this time of uncertainty, stress levels can sky rocket. It is critical, especially for pancreatic cancer patients and their caregivers, to find tools to manage stress and find balance. Emotional well-being is a critical piece of the healing process, so now, more than ever, it is essential to have coping skills. We turned to Elizabeth Cleary, PhD, Licensed Clinical Psychologist at the Simms/Mann UCLA Center for Integrative Oncology, to lead an interactive webinar, **Coping Skills for the Pancreatic Cancer Community: Tools and Tips During COVID-19.**

Watch Webinar

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How to Eat and Live Well During Coronavirus: Vital Tips for our Pancreatic Cancer

Community

On March 19, 2020, California Governor Gavin Newsom ordered a statewide order to stay at home. The Hirshberg Foundation is dedicated to supporting our pancreatic cancer community while we observe California's 'shelter in place' rules to mitigate the spread of the coronavirus COVID-19. We are committed to providing virtual patient support and resources to our patients and their caregivers.

We know that cancer patients currently receiving treatments or recovering from surgery are considered at a higher risk for having a weakened immune system. Amid the COVID-19 crisis, patient well-being is more important than ever. We have asked our resident expert, Zhaoping Li, MD, PhD, Director of the UCLA Center for Human Nutrition, to provide our pancreatic cancer community with tools to eat well and live well during the coronavirus.

This is a video recording of the Zoom webinar that took place on Friday, April 3rd at 1:00 (PST). Entitled "How to Eat and Live Well During Coronavirus: Vital Tips for our Pancreatic Cancer Community," patients, caregivers, family and friends joined Dr. Li for an interactive conversation as she provides important information to boost the immune system. Beyond nutrition she discusses stress eating, sleeping, cooking and best practices for food delivered to your home.

Watch Webinar

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