

Cancer Creates...

STRENGTH • COURAGE • HOPE



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Palliative Care: An Integral Part of Cancer Care



Ayelet Spitzer, D.O., Supportive Care Specialist, is Valley-Mount Sinai Comprehensive Cancer Care's new palliative care physician.

Valley-Mount Sinai Comprehensive Cancer Care recognizes that all cancer patients who are receiving treatment, and/or are living with cancer, can benefit from the support of palliative care at any point in their cancer journey. Therefore, we are excited that Ayelet Spitzer, D.O., Supportive Care Specialist, a palliative care physician who specializes in palliative care for cancer patients, has joined our cancer care team. As a Supportive Care Specialist, Dr. Spitzer supports all of our patients with a wide range of palliative care services from the time of diagnosis to improve their ability to manage their symptoms and live a better quality of life.

All cancer patients can benefit from palliative care at any time in their cancer diagnosis, no matter their age or the stage or level of aggressiveness of their cancer. Palliative care is a continuous extra layer of support that guides patients and families in both the earlier and later phases of their cancer journey. Palliative care includes: symptom management; support for complex decision managing; goal setting; advance care planning; social and caregiver assessment and support; spiritual care; care coordination/transition management and self-management techniques. Contrary to popular belief, hospice is only the very last of several services that palliative care provides — most palliative care services are offered while patients are receiving cancer treatment.

Dr. Spitzer, who completed a fellowship in hospice and palliative medicine at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, helps patients address symptoms that are side effects of their treatment or are provoked by receiving a cancer diagnosis. Many cancer patients find themselves with symptoms of pain, nausea, anxiety and depression, some of which are caused by the cancer itself or the emotional turmoil that comes with receiving a cancer diagnosis, but nonetheless, are normal, natural reactions for any person to have. As a palliative care physician, Dr. Spitzer assesses how each patient's cancer diagnosis is impacting them on a physical and emotional level and finds ways of helping them cope with those symptoms through both medicinal and

holistic approaches, depending on the patient's circumstances.

Dr. Spitzer learns about her patients and what they were like during and before their diagnosis so she can help them to live life to the most normal and comfortable extent possible. "I strive to get to know each patient individually by encouraging them to talk about their cancer journey and by learning what is important to them. Many patients find this to be very helpful and therapeutic," she says. "By getting to know patients and finding ways to help them manage their symptoms, I help them to live in a way where their cancer diagnosis isn't on their mind 24/7."

"We are working on making palliative care an integral part of cancer care," says Puneeta Sharma, M.D., Director of Palliative Care, Valley-Mount Sinai Comprehensive Cancer Care. "Given all of the services that palliative care can offer patients, it is important to have a palliative care specialist like Dr. Spitzer on board. Dr. Spitzer is educating both cancer patients and providers about all the services and benefits that palliative care can offer in the hope that patients will take advantage of these services sooner."

"There is a preconceived notion by some that palliative care is the same thing as hospice care, and that accepting these services is a means of giving up on fighting cancer, and that simply isn't true," says Dr. Spitzer. "Palliative care is not about dying; it is all about living life to the fullest."



COMPREHENSIVE CANCER CARE

Clinical Trials at Valley

Valley-Mount Sinai Comprehensive Cancer Care is committed to providing patients with access to leading edge research studies. At a time when the field of cancer therapy is shifting toward immunotherapy and targeted treatments, our program offers an extensive selection of clinical trials exploring these new treatment modalities.

We collaborate with investigators from many organizations, including the National Cancer Institute and the National Clinical Trials Network, as well as with pharmaceutical partners and foundations. In addition, The Valley Hospital supports several investigator-initiated studies exploring the relationship between genomics and cancer, and seeking biomarkers of response to therapy and prognosis.

The Oncology Clinical Trials team is readily available to assist our patients, their families and the community with their questions and concerns. For more information about Valley's clinical trials, please visit www.valleyhealthcancercenter.com. If you are interested in our clinical trials, speak with your oncologist or contact us at **201-634-5792** or oncologyclinicaltrials@valleyhealth.com.

Giving Back as a Cancer Survivor



By Karen Mitchell

After I retired from teaching elementary school for twenty-six years, I decided to volunteer at The Valley Hospital. I worked in Kurth Cottage for several years and loved interacting with people I met from this experience.

And then the shoe dropped – I was diagnosed with breast cancer in January 2012. I went through four rounds of chemotherapy and 34 radiation treatments. Everyone at Luckow was just so supportive. From the moment I met the doctors and staff, I knew I was in good hands.

After a year, I felt like my old self again. That's when I made the decision to volunteer again, only this time I wanted to do something at Luckow. As it turned out, I was asked to serve on a Patient Family Advisory Council (PFAC) committee for oncology. We meet once a month and discuss ways to make the cancer center even better than it is. Many of the committee members are also cancer survivors. We work with nurses, doctors and all walks of people connected with the hospital.

I was so happy to be on this committee that I asked if I could volunteer in one of the cancer care departments at Luckow. On Wednesdays, I volunteer in the Gamma Knife department, where I transport patients, clean and help out as needed. Sometimes I just talk to people to reassure them that there is a light at the end of the tunnel.

Giving back to Valley as a volunteer makes me appreciate all that was done for me while I was going through treatment. I now see all the good that is done from another perspective. I am proud to be both a survivor of five years and a volunteer.

Holiday Recipe: Coconut Macaroons

Ingredients

- 1 14-oz bag sweetened shredded coconut (about 5-1/3 cups)
- 7/8 cup sweetened condensed milk (3/4 cup plus 2 tablespoons)
- 4 ounces semi-sweet chocolate, chopped (optional)
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 2 large egg whites
- 1/4 teaspoon salt

Instructions

1. Preheat the oven to 325°F. Set two oven racks near the center of the oven. Line two baking sheets with parchment paper (not wax paper).
2. In a medium bowl, mix together the shredded coconut, sweetened condensed milk and vanilla extract. Set aside.
3. With an electric mixer, beat the egg whites and salt until stiff peaks form. Use a large rubber spatula to fold the egg whites into the coconut mixture. Using two spoons, form heaping tablespoons of the mixture into mounds on the prepared baking sheets, spacing about 1 inch apart. Bake for 23 to 25 minutes, rotating the pans, until the tops and edges are golden. Let it cool for a few minutes, then transfer to a wire rack to cook completely.
4. If dipping the macaroons in chocolate, melt the chocolate in a bowl in the microwave at medium power, stopping to stir until just smooth and creamy. Dip the bottoms of the macaroons in the chocolate, letting any excess drip back into the bowl, and return to the baking sheets. Place the macaroons in the fridge for about 10 minutes to allow the chocolate to set.



We Want to Hear from You!

Have an inspiring story or helpful tip to share? Let us know, and it may appear in our next edition of *Cancer Creates!* Email submissions to jforlen@valleyhealth.com.

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