



GOSHEN
CENTER FOR CANCER CARE

200 High Park Avenue, Goshen, Indiana 46526

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The Link for Hope

A newsletter of the Goshen Cancer Survivor Network December 2009

photo by Tony McNair



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Reunion Dinner to be held January 29

Goshen Cancer Survivor Network members are invited to attend a *Survivor Reunion*, Friday, January 29, 2010 to be held at Goshen General Hospital's Arbor Conference Center beginning at 6 p.m. Dinner will be served at 6:30 p.m..

Douglas J. Schwartzenruber, MD, FACS, medical director of the Goshen Center for Cancer Care will speak about his role as lead author and principal investigator of the eight year nationwide clinical trial to show the effectiveness of vaccine in conjunction with Interleukin II against metastatic melanoma cancer. Schwartzenruber will also speak to the importance of clinical trials in cancer treatment and the role of the Goshen Center for Cancer Care research department.

There is no charge to attend: however, reservations are required by January 15th and early response is encouraged. For reservations or to join the Goshen Cancer Survivor Network, call 574.535.2922 or email scarbone@goshenhealth.com. ■

SAVE THE DATE!

True Celebration
 May 16, 2010
 Sauder Hall, Goshen College



Guests enjoy the 2009 Network dinner.

SURVIVING the Medicare Donut Hole

by Carol Westbrook, MD, PhD



Autumn is the time for candy apples, cider, donuts, and the dreaded “Donut Hole” also known as the Medicare Coverage Gap. This is the point where the Medicare Part D prescription drug benefit has reached its limit and you have to pay 100% of the cost of your prescriptions. You will be in the Donut Hole until January 1, or until you pay an additional \$1,650 in prescription costs, whichever comes first.

There are many ways to stay out of the Donut Hole (see below). But if you are a cancer patient, you may end up in the Donut Hole due to unanticipated cancer treatments. One of the most common situations I see is when a patient is prescribed a new oral medication (pill) which costs thousands of dollars, but has no generic equivalent. Often when you encounter the Donut Hole you just don’t have the money and must choose between daily necessities or filling your prescriptions. What do you do? Here are my recommendations:

Speak to your doctor and be frank about your predicament.

Don’t expect that your doctor knows how much your medicine costs. The doctor often doesn’t. If necessary, make an extra appointment to discuss it, and ask the following questions:

1. Are there free samples or drug assistance programs? The pharmaceutical companies do not want to lose your business!

2. Can you change my oral medication to a different class of drug? It might be possible. Your doctor will weigh the risks and benefits of changing drugs with you. Some of my breast cancer patients in the Donut Hole want to change their pricey Arimidex to generic Tamoxifen. But these are very different medications, and Tamoxifen is wrong for some patients. So your doctor will have to weigh the consequences carefully. You shouldn’t switch between medications every few months, or you will not get the anti-cancer effect you need. So make the choice and stick to it.

3. Can you substitute a less expensive medication that does the same thing? Many of the medicines used to treat cancer symptoms have inexpensive generics. Some oral medications are equivalent to an intravenous treatment. Whereas intravenous medications (IV’s) are covered by Medicare, you

have to pay out of pocket for oral medications. Your doctor can decide whether the change to IV’s can be made. If you are already being treated with an oral medication and it’s working, it’s risky to switch to something that may not have the identical effect. But if your doctor is planning a new treatment and you are in the Donut Hole, by all means mention it.

4. Are there any other medicines that I can stop until January 1? Some medications are necessary for your health, such as heart pills and insulin. Others are for prevention, and might be stopped for a month or two. Be careful, as some medications might “rebound” if stopped abruptly. You will need your doctor’s input to taper these medications. Your doctor should be willing to review your medications, prescription by prescription, and see what you might stop, and counsel whether it is worth the cost savings.

Ask for a prescription for the minimum supply you need to reach Jan 1. Don’t order a 3-month supply when you are only in the Donut Hole for one month.

Ask your other doctors to review your medications, too. Many seniors see multiple specialists for problems such as diabetes, arthritis, and heart conditions, and each prescribes different medications. Your oncologist won’t make changes in medicines that s/he didn’t prescribe. Have your other doctors review your prescriptions using the above questions.

Finally, if you absolutely must stop your medicines for financial reasons, be honest about it and tell your doctor.

By all means, don’t avoid your clinic visits because you feel guilty and can’t face your doctor. At a time like this, when you are stopping treatment, you will need support more than ever due to unexpected consequences.

Fortunately, January 1 is not too far away and you will soon be out of the Donut Hole. This is a good time to begin to prepare for next year to control your costs. Check out the AARP web site for tips <http://www.aarp.org> and a Donut Hole calculator <http://doughnuthole.aarp.org>. And, since it is Medicare Open Enrollment time, you might be able to find a Part D Supplement that is best for your needs. ■

Cindy Fisel: Walking the Journey

I found it... the lump, one spring morning in 2008 when I was getting dressed. I thought 'Oh my gosh, could it be?' I had heard people say that breast cancer felt like a lump, but no one else in my family ever had cancer, so it couldn't be that. I quickly tried to talk myself out of it.

My doubt turned into reality when I went to The Women's Retreat for a mammogram. The mammogram was quickly followed by a needle biopsy which confirmed cancer of the breast. The process went so quickly, I wanted to run out of Dr. Morris's office the whole time she was telling me about treatment options. The decision was made for surgery on Good Friday. Surgery was soon followed by the insertion of a port to receive chemotherapy. I think the port is the greatest invention ever! Eventually I went to see the fine folks downstairs in radiation. I learned I had Stage 2 breast cancer, but not in the lymph nodes. I was overwhelmed with the seriousness of it all.

When I started this cancer journey, I knew nothing. No one in my family had been through anything like this before. I was learning everything from the ground up and it was a lot to learn. But at the cancer center, they made me feel welcomed and cared for. Emily Moore, my naturopathic doctor and the chemo nurses would sit and talk with me. The radiation nurses and staff wanted to make me comfortable and help solve whatever problem I had.

My husband was supportive and encouraging throughout treatment. My mom usually came with me for my infusion treatments and we found friends in the infusion room. There were three of us women who would come with our moms. We supported one another.

I work at a small company in Ligonier called Superior Sample. I pretty much worked throughout treatment and missed very little work. There was a lady I worked with, Glenna, who gave me a card of encouragement every week. Sometimes it would have a funny story, sometimes a spiritual thought, but she never forgot me. It meant a lot to me to have all the support that I did. Sometimes you just need someone outside the family to talk with, to tell you 'you can do this.' And that's what Glenna did for me; she walked the journey with me.

I think that's why I decided to become a Survivor Buddy, to help someone else through the process. I had so many

wonderful people supporting and encouraging me, I wanted to offer that to a new patient. My relationship with Louella has been a blessing to both of us. By supporting Louella through her treatment, I was able to say 'thank you' in a very practical way to all the people who supported me. I can't imagine not being a Survivor Buddy. I feel blessed to have met Louella, the most courageous, awesome, God-loving woman I have ever known. ■



Buddies: Cindy & Louella, celebrating life.



Please accept our invitation to the
Goshen Center for Cancer Care
Cancer Survivor Network

Holiday Reception

11 am - 2 pm
Friday, December 18, 2009
at the
Arbor Conference Center,
Goshen General Hospital

Refreshments will be provided

Please RSVP to 574-535-2668 by
December 11

- 11 am: Social Time
Special Musical Presentation: Becky Eickhoff, RN, Research Nurse
- 12 pm: Welcome and Introduction of
Goshen Hospital & Health Care Foundation
Carol Ebersole
- 12:15 pm: Announcement of new Goshen Center for Cancer Care Lung Institute
Douglas Schwartzentruber, MD, FACS, Medical Director
Goshen Center for Cancer Care
Ebenezer Kio, MD, Director
Goshen Center for Cancer Care Lung Institute
Yatin Patel, MD, MBA, FCCP, Director of Pulmonary Medicine
Goshen Center for Cancer Care Lung Institute
- 12:45 pm: A Cancer Caregiver's Experience: Tony McNair
- 1 pm: Special Musical Presentation: Family of James Wheeler, MD
Director, Radiation Oncology, Goshen Center for Cancer Care

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The Book Corner

By Rita Gingrich, LCSW, PNI Counselor

While the holidays are joyous, they are also stressful and exhausting. In the flurry of activity, relaxation is often the first thing we give up at a time when we need it most!

In *The Book of Comforts*, Patricia Alexander and Michael Burgos provide thoughtful ideas to incorporate relaxation and comfort in ways that are meaningful and healthy.

Divided into three sections, spirit, body, and soul, the authors inspire with creative yet common sense suggestions such as:

- Go for a starlit stroll in the snow
- Watch a comedy
- Revive an old friendship

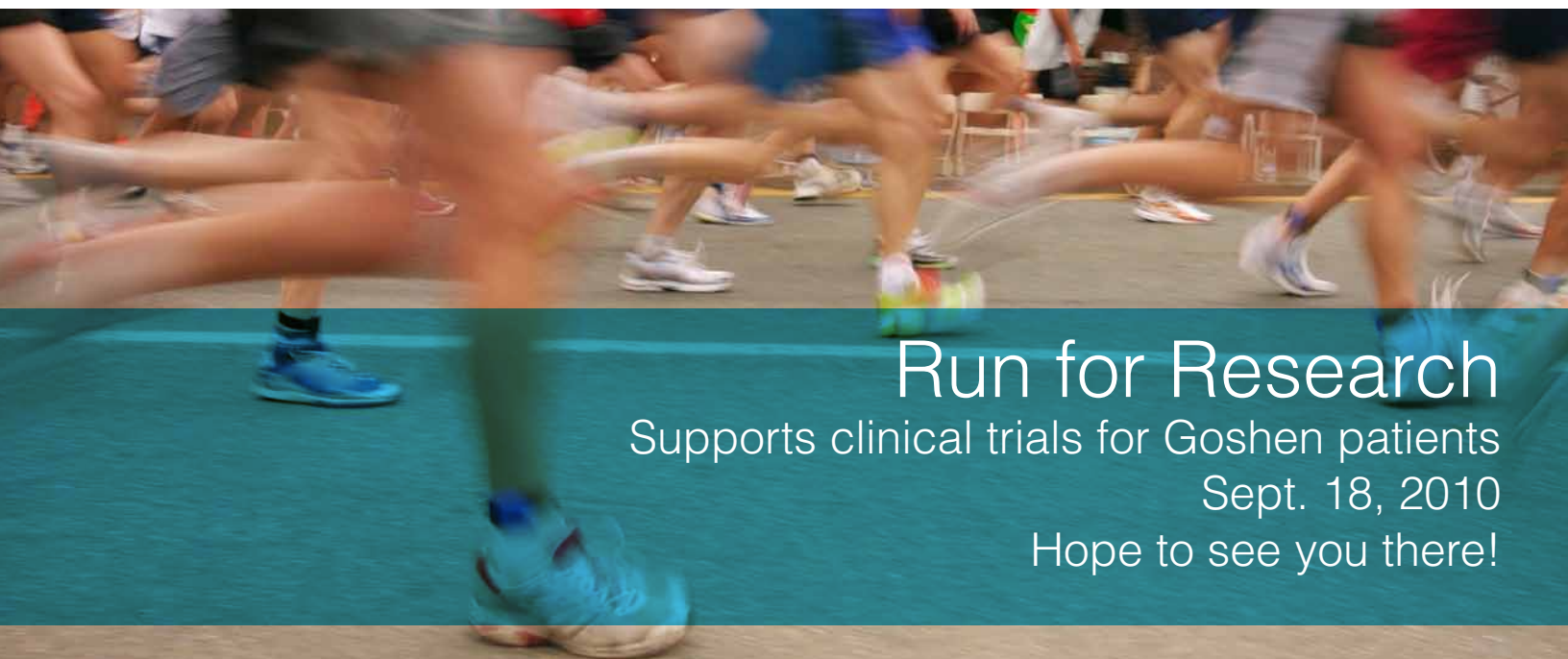
The Book of Comforts; Simple, Powerful Ways to Comfort Your Spirit, Body and Soul

By Patricia Alexander & Michael Burgos, Artwork and Design by Dean Andrews (2005, Blue Epiphany, Templeton, CA)

Other contributors challenge us to soothe ourselves by sharing their own personal tried and true comfort measures. Quotes and illustrations of "little slices of sky" add to the intrigue and calming capacity of this book.

If you are interested in borrowing a copy, please contact Rita Gingrich at 574-535-2888. For additional reviews of this book and purchasing information, see www.bookofcomforts.com.

Have any suggestions for educational, inspiring, or encouraging books? If you would like to submit an idea for a book review, please contact Rita Gingrich at 574-535-2888. ■



Run for Research

Supports clinical trials for Goshen patients

Sept. 18, 2010

Hope to see you there!



Coordinator's Corner

Hello survivors:

Wow! This issue of *The Link for Hope* newsletter completes our first year of publication! There's not much else to say except it has been a very busy first year for the new Goshen Cancer Survivor Network.

For those of you who know me well, and for those who don't, I want to say THANK YOU! Thank you because this past year you have allowed me to come into your lives during some of your most difficult moments. Thank you because you have trusted me with your survivor story. And thank you for coming to Goshen Center for Cancer Care, because I know it is the best place to be if you have a diagnosis of cancer.

Before I came to work for Goshen Center for Cancer Care, I feared the word cancer. I know it is human nature to fear the unknown, but with cancer we fear many things, both known and unknown. But now with little more than a year of being your Cancer Survivorship Coordinator, I have found that the word 'cancer' can bring good things into our lives too. It causes us to look around at the people we love and value the most and to realize how very important they are to us. It also allows us to appreciate all the good in our lives and to put the illness into perspective. You may have cancer, but cancer does not have you, nor define who you are.

I hope your holiday season is filled with all good memories and your new year bright with hope.

Blessings, Sandy ■

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