

CHOA CHATTER Newsletter

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Inaugural Edition

The CHOA Chatter newsletter is dedicated to our patients and their families. We hope you find this information helpful and that it brings a smile to your face. The newsletter is published quarterly by Carolinas Hematology-Oncology Associates (CHOA). Enjoy!

The Birth of CHOA Chatter

Many of our patients and their families have asked if our practice has a newsletter where they can receive and share information. We invited patients, their families and staff members to enter their choice of a name for the newsletter. In June, our physicians and management team reviewed the names and CHOA Chatter was declared the winner.

The winning name was submitted by Robin Bumgardner. Many of you know Robin who works in our lab at our main location. We asked Robin how she came up with the name *CHOA Chatter* and Robin said she thought the name was catchy and would get people's attention. Robin told us she was excited for CHOA to publish a newsletter as there are many great things happening here as well as great people.

On a personal note Robin has been employed at CHOA since 2004. She has two grandchildren. Robin loves her job at CHOA and says "Our patients are the best!" Congratulations to Robin and a BIG thanks to all those who entered a name.

Where We Have Been and Where We Are Going

By Michael Livingston, MD, President, Carolinas Hematology-Oncology

It is almost as if the call comes from within--with a sense of loss, of feeling powerless, defeated before the contest begins. It touches all families at some point. We have all shared in this message. "You have cancer." My family has heard it twice in the past five years. A cancer diagnosis engenders one thing above all; it sows fear, a deep foreboding of the unknown, or our own mortality.

It is different from day to day. It will cause the most indifferent to pause. It is relentless and will stay close, day and night like a constant beating on your brain. How to beat it? How to win? Those answers are not easy. We do not pretend they are. We provide some of the tools for the battle--the chemo, the trials, the nursing. Most of the battle lies with the patient, and it begins with facing the monster of fear in the heart. That is our first goal; to bring, as strange as it seems to say, a sense of peace to a very lonely time.

Thank you very much for the trust and confidence you have expressed in choosing Carolinas Hematology-Oncology Associates for your medical needs.

Recipes

Banana Milkshake

- 1 whole ripe banana, sliced
- Vanilla extract (few drops)
- 1 cup milk

Mix in blender at high speed until smooth. Recommended for loss of appetite.

Strawberry-Banana Frosty

- 3 cups vanilla soymilk
- 1 ripe banana
- 1 cup strawberries

Blend until smooth.

Article- “Courage”

By Dianne Barnes, MBA, MHA, Manager, Main

Each of us has a story to tell about someone who has made a lasting impression on us. Here is my story about a great friend. I hope you enjoy it.

My husband and I had just moved into our first house. We were both working hard and I was going to school at night. Money was very tight. I remember the excitement of buying our first home and dreaming of new matching furniture instead of the old sofa left from college days; the TV sitting on a second hand table; or the small kitchen table sitting in the big beautiful dining room.

My husband and I moved to Gastonia when we got married and like many young married couples attended church whenever we found time. The church we were attending decided to build a family living center and to do so, started a “Together We Build Program.” Members of our church were selected to be part of a committee that would go out and visit each church member to be sure they were aware of this program; and hopefully to pledge money to the cause. I never thought about getting a visit—after all we were just young adults, had only recently attended the church and we did not have any extra money.

My husband and I were in the middle of cooking dinner. The house was a mess as I had been working on a term paper, so books and the first draft of the paper were everywhere. I heard our door bell ring and before I could yell for my husband not to answer the door, he had opened the door and invited our guest inside. When I entered the room and saw the lady standing there, I could have crawled under the table. You see, the lady standing in the middle of the mess was someone who on first impression could be described as very mature. She and her husband owned several very successful businesses. The only thing that I could remember about her from church was she sang in the choir, was well known and respected by everyone and drove a brand new Mercedes.

My husband was in the dog house. He was offering her dinner and a TV tray to sit in the living room and eat on. I thought to myself, “Here is a wealthy stranger in my house eating hamburgers off a TV tray.”

The evening was the beginning of many memories. This special lady quickly became a true and lasting friend. She shared with us stories about being a young bride and how she and her husband had worked hard to build their first company. Over the years our friendship grew. Many times she would share the story with others about coming to visit our home for the first time and how she ended up staying for several hours rather than the planned 15 minutes; she never did go to any of the other homes assigned to her that evening.

A few years later, she developed breast cancer. Of course she had the best treatment that money would allow, and was lucky enough to enter into remission for several years. During her illness, she helped start Relay for Life in Gaston County. She also was a huge supporter of The V Foundation for Cancer Research, which was started in 1993 to honor former NC State men's basketball coach, Jim Valvano. She and her husband were true Duke fans so they were constantly asked about this. The thing that I remember most about her is that she always had a smile and her love for life was plain to see.

During her illness she would receive good news and we would all celebrate, then she would receive some bad news or have a set back, or the treatments would make her ill. It was one of our last visits together when she was talking about what may come next. She was laughing about a joke that someone had shared with her. I needed to understand how she could smile and laugh when I could only see her pain. I guess she saw the sadness and concern in my eyes because she told me she had a very special secret to share with me...she had been blessed. She had a great family, had been allowed to travel and see sites most of us would never see, and the friends she had met during her life and her illness would always be cherished.

She went on to tell me that every time she received some bad news this helped to build a little bit of character and to remind us all of the many good things we have. The last thing she shared with me during our visit was "it is not the number of breaths one takes during their lifetime, but the moments that take your breath away." She called her illness building a little character. I call it courage.

When I am having a bad day—maybe things are not going well in the office, my children are driving me nuts or maybe I am just in a bad mood—I just walk into the infusion center where I see lots of character, smiles and most of all COURAGE.

Event Happenings

Lilly Oncology Art Display- In March, our offices hosted the amazing art work created by those affected with cancer. The display was started in 2004 and today the entire exhibit would span the length of 14 football fields. If you or someone you know is interested in submitting art work for the year 2009-2010, please contact Lilly Oncology at www.lillyoncology.com. We hope to host this event annually.

Book Drive- Again this year, all three of our locations took part in the Classroom Central Book Drive. Our patients and staff worked to collect children's books for Pre-K through 12th grade. Gilly Hoare and Robin Bumgardner presented the Cookie Monster Box for employees and staff to place books in.

The Biggest Loser- 15 of our staff at the main office took the Biggest Loser Challenger and decided to band together to lose weight. Several of our physicians decided to encourage staff by adding to the winning pot. For several months, participants worked hard to loose weight. The total amount of weight lost was 172 pounds. Our first place winner was Debbie Mielke and the runner up was Pamela Harrison. Great job! And a SPECIAL thanks to our coach Sharon Alexander.

March Madness- Staff at the main location participated in March Madness. Patients and staff enjoyed picking the winning team. Special thanks to Mechelle Martin for coordinating this event.

Introduction to Patient Assistances

By Erin Wellborn- Patient Assistance Coordinator

Treatment cost is a major concern for most patients and their families. My role as the patient assistance coordinator is to work on behalf of patients to help with grants, working with foundations and organizations to obtain financial assistance. I also work to provide resources within the community that can help patients with items such as wheelchairs, wigs, support groups and other prosthesis. For more information, please call 704-446-9027.

Cancer Support Groups and Counseling

American Cancer Society
Phone: 800-227-2345 (24-hour line)
Cancer Information Line
www.cancer.org

Blumenthal Cancer Center at Carolinas Medical Center
1025 Morehead Medical Drive, Suite 600
Charlotte, NC 28204
Phone: 704-355-7283

Cancer Society
6000 Fairview Road
Charlotte, NC 28210
Phone: 800-227-8333

Carolinas Medical Center-NorthEast
920 Church St., North
Concord, NC 28025
Phone: 704-403-3000

The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society
5950 Fairview Road, Suite 250
Charlotte, NC 28210
Phone: 704-998-5012

Look Good...Feel Better (LGFB)

We are currently hosting the LGFB program at all sites. Cancer can rob a woman of her energy, appetite and strength. But it doesn't have to take away her self confidence. LGFB is a free program sponsored by the American Cancer Society that teaches beauty

techniques to women who are cancer patients in active treatment. The program helps them combat the appearance related side effects of cancer treatment. Trained volunteer cosmetologists teach women how to cope with skin changes and hair loss using cosmetics and skin care products donated by the cosmetics industry. Women also learn ways to disguise hair loss with wigs, scarves and other accessories in a supportive group environment. To register for a class or to receive more information, see the front desk.

Things that Make Us Smile!

Compiled by Teresa Lackey

We wanted to know what makes you smile and here is some of the feedback we received:

Worship at church
Family
Smiles from others
My dog Ginger Rogers
Dreaming of sexy soap stars
Grandkids
My spouse
Friends
Chocolate
Hugs and bigger hugs
A good doctor
Successful fertility stories after chemo
A sunny weekend
5 o'clock
Sunrise and sunset at the beach
Vacation
Dancing
Reading a good book
Helping others
Being alive
Having a job
The beach
Coffee
Babies
A massage and pedicure
Fridays
Mom's three layer chocolate cake with coconut
Clothes
Fall trees
Pay day
Hiking
Singing/Music
Good health
Birds in my garden

March Madness
Death Valley in September (football)
Myspace

Calling All Cooks!

Carolinas Hematology-Oncology Associates will be designing a cook book and would like to invite you to submit your favorite recipe for consideration. We will be collecting recipes June 1, through November 1. A box will be provided at the check out desk to collect all submissions. We plan to have the book completed before the holidays. All proceeds collected will be given to the American Cancer Society. Thank you for your participation.

The Billing Corner

By Heather Morris and Vanda Crawford

Patients sometimes ask, "Why do you ask me about my insurance at each visit?" We work hard to ensure that each of your claims gets filed and paid correctly each time the first time. If we have correct information concerning your insurance plan, we are able to verify this information and get the claim to the correct place for proper payment. Without the correct information, the claim may be denied and you may get a bill asking for full payment. If you have concerns or questions about your account, call our office or call the central billing office at 704-512-6060.

Employee Spotlight

By Samantha Barrington, Manager, Ballantyne

The Employee Spotlight Program embodies our commitment to provide meaningful recognition for the accomplishments of our employees. We would like to share the following winners from each office. You will see for yourself the wonderful things employees are doing behind the scenes at Carolinas Hematology-Oncology Associates.

Avice Bush – Main Office

Avice, nicknamed "Ace" (a name she acquired in high school), has been an exemplary employee since she joined CHOA over 9 ½ years ago. Avice chose the healthcare field because she finds it interesting, rewarding and satisfying. She likes knowing that at the end of the day she has helped make others feel a little more comfortable and at ease. Avice is the mother of two daughters ages 11 and 5, and in her spare time she enjoys reading, dancing, church activities, traveling, spending time with family and friends and writing poems. One day she hopes to have her poems published and even write a book. Many would be surprised to learn that Avice is also a fan of television wrestling, a pastime she has enjoyed since she was a child. Avice always goes the extra mile to help people and brings a serious commitment to her role at CHOA. She is a valuable member of our team.

Terri Pfeuffer – Ballantyne Office

Terri joined CHOA in 2007 and since then has become an essential member of the Ballantyne team. Terri feels the medical profession is a good fit for her because she likes the interaction with patients. Just being able to help others and having the opportunity to hopefully brighten their day makes her job as a registrar most satisfying. Terri moved from Michigan in 1988 with her husband, son, cat and cockatiel. When she is not working, she enjoys spending time with her family and friends, reading, working out at the gym and traveling. She looks forward to even more travel when she retires.

Everyone would be surprised to learn that Terri has always wanted a tattoo, but says that she has lacked the courage to actually get one. She always tries to make herself available to help others when needed and considers herself to be very dependable and trustworthy. We agree.

Kim Rippy – University Office

Kim has been an outstanding employee and an asset to the University location since she joined CHOA in 2006. Kim finds being an oncology certified nurse fulfilling. She is rewarded by helping patients and their families through difficult times. She gains enormous personal satisfaction when patients tell her she has made a difference in their lives and how much they appreciate her and the things she does for them. Kim is a Charlotte native who just gave birth to a baby boy. In her spare time she enjoys watching movies, reading, swimming and boating. Her positive attitude and willingness to make herself available to help anyone in need make her a standout.

We value your opinion

Our core values of caring, commitment, teamwork and integrity are the foundation on which we build relationships. Our practice would like to recognize our team members who provide excellent customer services.

If you would like to recognize one of our staff, please ask for a WOW card at your next visit.

Main Office

1100 South Tryon St., Suite 400
Charlotte, NC 28203
704-446-9046

University Office

101 W.T. Harris Blvd., Suite 1214
Charlotte, NC 28262
704-863-6160

Ballantyne Office

15830 John J. Delaney Drive, Suite 200
Charlotte, NC 28277
704-446-4000