

# TAHOE CANCER NEWS

ISSUE 3: SPRING/SUMMER 2017



GENE UPSHAW MEMORIAL  
TAHOE FOREST CANCER CENTER

The Varian True Beam at Gene Upshaw Memorial Tahoe Forest Cancer Center

## Radiation Oncology: What Goes on Behind the Scenes

**Daphne Palmer, MD, FACRO**

*Radiation Oncology Medical Director*

When a patient is referred to the cancer center, he or she will frequently consult with a radiation oncologist to determine if radiation should play a role in the treatment. This begins a series of back and forth consultations and discussions to design the best possible personalized program of care that may involve surgery, drug therapy and radiation therapy.

The doctors assess the stage of the tumor, age of the patient, and general medical status of the patient. They also work with the patient to determine the patient's goals, how well the treatment process is comprehended, and the "social history". Those considerations include family concerns, the patient's ability to get to a series of treatments, pre-existing conditions, lifestyle and level

of anxiety. All those factors enable the radiation oncologist to determine if the patient is a good candidate for radiation. The patient's family or close friend is encouraged to attend these discussions to help the patient understand, remember facts, and ask questions.

A common next step is to present the case at Tumor Board. Tumor Board is a patient-focused multidisciplinary conference with surgeons, medical oncologists, radiation oncologists, geneticists, nutritionists, pathologists, radiologists, and primary care physicians designed to assist in creating a treatment plan.

*Continued on page 3*



## WHAT'S INSIDE

<b>From Our Medical Director</b> .....	<b>Pg 2</b>
<b>Radiation Oncology</b> <i>Continued</i> .....	<b>Pg 3</b>
<b>Couples Counseling</b> .....	<b>Pg 4</b>
<b>Eat Well: Eat for Defense</b> .....	<b>Pg 5</b>

<b>Keep Moving</b> .....	<b>Pg 6</b>
<b>ASCO's CancerLinQ™</b> .....	<b>Pg 7</b>
<b>Smiles: Smile for Your Health</b> .....	<b>Pg 7</b>
<b>Advice From Your Nurse Navigator</b> .....	<b>Pg 8</b>



**SUBSCRIBE ONLINE**

**TO THE FULL E-NEWSLETTER**

Visit [tahocancercenter.com](http://tahocancercenter.com) to sign up!

# FROM *our* MEDICAL DIRECTOR

## Laurence J Heifetz, MD, FACP

Welcome to our 2017 Spring/Summer edition of Tahoe Cancer News. This issue contains an overview of useful programs available here at the Gene Upshaw Memorial Tahoe Forest Cancer Center. Keep it for your reference.

### Radiation Oncology

Many of you may require radiation oncology as a significant component of your therapy. Dr. Daphne Palmer, MD, FACRO, our Medical Director of Radiation Oncology, has explained the entire process of how these decisions are made, how your treatment is designed, and how the therapy is delivered. It is a clear example of functional multidisciplinary discussions within the cancer center as well as with our colleagues at UC Davis. Dr. Palmer is also my wife, but don't hold that against her.

### Couples Counseling

For the majority of my career, oncologists tended to expect the family to just "suck it up and deal." Recognizing this as a behavior issue for oncologists, we have developed caregiver programs for our patients. Kirk Ditterich, PsyD, Clinical Psychologist, has written a helpful piece on couples counseling that addresses many of the experiences you might be going through.

### Eat for Defense

Conflicting volumes have been written on nutrition and your immune system. Heather Lutz, MS, RD, CSO, our Medical Nutritional Therapist, has addressed this confusion and refined it down for you so you can understand how to help yourselves by eating smarter.

### Keep Moving

We've all become more aware of the value of mobility for numerous medical conditions; cancer is one of them.

Michele Larson, PT, CLT-LANA, presents the data that makes this absolutely clear that we all should be exercising and staying mobile. Her suggestions are easy to carry out, so just do it. Our "Exercise for Energy" program is available to you at Gene Upshaw Memorial Tahoe Forest Cancer Center as well as Incline Village Community Hospital.

### CancerLinQ™

"Big Data" is a current buzzword in healthcare along with almost every other academic, scientific and social discipline. We have been honored to have our program accepted into the American Society of Clinical Oncology's CancerLinQ™ project, and you can read the full story in this issue.

### Smiles

Nikki Dean, E-RYT 500, CES, BS, our totally cool yoga instructor, has given you some easy to use instructions that will keep you smiling. What a nice way to recharge your batteries any time you need to!

### Nurse Navigation

We are very proud of our nurse navigation program. Under the leadership of Karen Aaron, RN, BSN, OCN, BNCN, coordination of visits with all of their physicians is much more functional for our patients. She has given you very useful advice that will help you gain more control over this experience. Be sure to use the helpful checklist she has included on the back of this newsletter.

I hope this newsletter continues to be helpful to you. Your feedback is greatly appreciated, so please feel free to reach out to us with any useful suggestions.



## Radiation Oncology: What Goes on Behind the Scenes *Continued from page 1*

As founding members in the UC Davis Cancer Care Network, we participate with their specialists in virtual tumor boards almost daily.

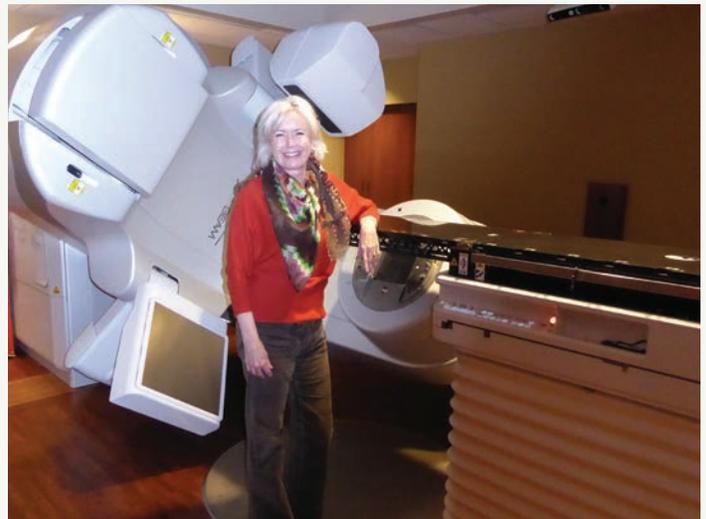
Once the decision to proceed with radiation has been made, a simulation is scheduled. This starts with a half body cast that is molded to help keep the patient stationary but comfortable during treatment. The mapping and measuring of the treatment area is done with a CT scan, generating a three-dimensional view of the patient's anatomy. The radiation oncologist works with a medical physicist to fuse this planning scan with all other scans (PET/CT, MRI, etc.) that the patient may have received so far to create the most comprehensive image of the tumor. The radiation oncologist then contours the area that needs to be treated as well as all the critical structures that need to be avoided on every CT slice.

This is then sent back to the medical physicist who creates the formal treatment plan that will drive the radiation machine, a linear accelerator. The plan is designed to balance the radiation dose delivered to the tumor with the necessary trade-offs needed to protect nearby critical structures as outlined by the radiation oncologist. There is usually a good deal of back and forth discussion and fine tuning of the treatment plan.

As a final check, the radiation treatment plan is then presented to the radiation oncology department at UC Davis for their review. Both the UC Davis physicians and physicists input their suggestions and the final modifications are made before the plan is approved by the radiation oncologist.

After this complex and collaborative process of creating and fine-tuning the treatment plan, treatment can begin. The radiation therapists operate the machine and deliver the treatment in 5 minutes or less. Images are taken at least weekly and sometimes daily during treatment to ensure the patient's anatomy has not changed. This image-guided radiation is possible because the treatment machine has a CT scanner built right into it.

*Daphne Palmer, MD, FACRO, is the Radiation Oncology Medical Director at Gene Upshaw Memorial Tahoe Forest Cancer Center. She is skilled in treating a wide range of tumors and has completed comprehensive training with experience in stereotactic radiosurgery, including SBRT, and IMRT. She and her team are most excited about the center's Varian True Beam accelerator, which allows for 4D treatments with respiratory gating. Dr. Palmer is board certified by the American College of Radiology.*



*Daphne Palmer, MD, FACRO and the Varian True Beam at Gene Upshaw Memorial Tahoe Forest Cancer Center.*

### Your Radiation Oncology Treatment Plan: *A Collaborative Effort*

#### Patient

**Primary Care Physician**

**Medical Oncologist**

**Radiation Oncologist**

**Tumor Board**

*Surgeons*

*Medical Oncologists*

*Radiation Oncologists*

*Geneticists*

*Nutritionists*

*Pathologists*

*Radiologists*

*Primary Care Physicians*

**Medical Physicist**

**UC Davis Radiation Physicians  
& Physicists**

**Radiation Therapists**

**Radiation Nurse**

# Couples Counseling

**Kirk Ditterich, PsyD**

*Clinical Psychologist*

A diagnosis of cancer may elicit feelings of worry and stress in both the patient and the caregiver. Both partners may wonder, "how is this going to change my life? Am I going to miss work? Can we still go out to dinner together?" This is where couples counseling can be so helpful.



nowhere near due to the disease, death may be in the back of the mind, affecting everyday behavior. "I can't imagine what it would be like without my partner. I'm scared. But I don't want to talk to my partner about it." Again, both individuals are frightened that the other person will be affected in a negative way.

**Couples counseling encourages listening, acknowledgement and validation. Patients and caregivers report, "my partner is with me in a way I haven't experienced in a while."**

Each is worried for the other, yet may have difficulties talking about their concerns for fear of "bringing him down" or "making her nervous." The underlying concern is the same: am I going to put too much stress on my partner if I talk about my concerns? Both want to care for the other person, but also have their own needs that they are afraid to bring up. Couples counseling encourages simple communications that are helpful to both parties.

*For more information about couples counseling, contact Dr. Kirk Ditterich at 530.582.8207.*

Some may think a cancer patient can't do a lot, but often times they can help the caregiver and they are relieved that they can finally give back. The patient can ask, "what can I do for you? I feel good today." Sometimes it is just listening to the caregiver's needs, and even if the response is simply, "yeah, I understand. It has been a tough day," just being heard can validate one's feelings. There may be nothing more to do to ease the struggle than to give each other a hug.

It may seem counterintuitive, but one way the caregiver can help the patient is to stop doing so much helping. One may be doing too much or assisting in ways the patient really doesn't need, leading to a feeling of helplessness. Sometimes the caregiver just doesn't know what to do. Caregivers may be more helpful by asking, "what do you need?"

Food can be an issue. Consider how you feel when someone tells you, "you need to eat more of this or less of that." It can be difficult *not* to tell the patient what he or she likes or *not* to order for the patient at a restaurant. In many cases the patient could be eating whatever they want or can. Similar issues can arise about exercise, medications, money. Couples counseling explores the unspoken concerns—perhaps it is uneasiness that the patient isn't eating or moving enough, or uncertainty of how to help.

Mortality is another concern that can be addressed in couples counseling. Even though death may be



# Eat Well: Eat for Defense

Heather Lutz, MS, RD, CSO

Medical Nutritional Therapist

Boost your immune system by eating foods that increase the good bacteria in your gut. Fifty percent of the body's immune system is located in the intestines. A significant focus of nutrition research today is on the amount, type, and variety of good bacteria in the digestive system.

## Researchers are finding that there are many benefits to a healthy gut, including:

- *Reduced risk of colon cancer*
- *Improved digestion and absorption of nutrients*
- *Controlled appetite and reduced risk for obesity*
- *Improved ability to fight upper respiratory infection*

## Good vs. Bad Bacteria

Good bacteria are also known as beneficial bacteria, or any bacteria that enhances health. Some of the good bacteria are called *L.acidophilus*, *L.casei*, and *S.boulaardii*. Bad bacteria are harmful and can cause illnesses such as pneumonia, strep throat, diarrhea, and food poisoning.

Foods that alter the balance of gut bacteria include convenience foods, refined sugars, and artificial sweeteners because they promote a less diverse presence of good bacteria. Other factors that inhibit good bacteria include antibiotics, stress, and advanced age. In people who consume healthy diets high in soluble fiber and fermented foods, the good bacteria can replenish.

## How to Increase Your Good Bacteria

Start by increasing your intake of whole grains, fresh fruits, vegetables, plant proteins, cultured dairy, and fermented foods.

Grains and other plant foods provide a significant source of soluble fiber. Specific foods high in soluble fiber include: oats and oat bran, beans, peas, carrots, barley, citrus fruits, strawberries and apples. Plant proteins are also good sources of soluble fiber. Plant proteins include beans, peas, nuts, seeds, soy, and lentils. Substituting plant proteins for animal proteins several times a week can benefit your health.

How does fiber help the immune system? As fiber is digested and fermented, it produces Butyrate. Butyrate boosts the production of interleukin-4, which stimulates the body's infection fighting T-cells.

Fermented foods date back to ancient civilizations. Fermentation is a process of preserving food by introducing

lactobacilli bacteria that converts the sugars and starches into lactic acid. Common fermented foods include: sauerkraut, kimchi, miso, tempeh, kefir, kombucha drinks, sourdough bread, buttermilk, fish sauce, sour cream, crème fraiche, Tabasco sauce, Worcestershire sauce, Yakult, and yogurt.



## Yogurt and Kefir

Walk into any grocery store today and see foods identified as good sources of probiotics or "live cultures". The yogurt aisle has increased in size and variety for good reason. Cultured dairy foods, such as yogurt and kefir, are excellent sources of good bacteria, protein, and calcium. Interestingly, kefir is more diverse and rich in probiotic organisms and thus can more effectively colonize the intestinal tract with the good bacteria. Therefore, kefir is a much more potent source of probiotics than yogurt.

When shopping for yogurt, look for the phrase "live & active cultures." Some brands will include the number of Colony Forming Units or CFU; quality brands will have 100 million CFU per gram. Look for products without added sugars, artificial flavors, or added color.

Dairy foods contain a natural sugar called lactose. Many people are unable to digest lactose. Fermented dairy foods contain lactic acid bacteria which break down the lactose into lactic acid. Thus, both yogurt and kefir are often tolerated by people who cannot consume milk. For more information about cultured dairy foods, visit the National Yogurt Association website: [www.aboutyogurt.com](http://www.aboutyogurt.com).

## Probiotic Supplements

If you decide to purchase a probiotic supplement, look for products that include a quality certification mark on the label; common organizations include Consumerlab.com, NSF International, and USP. The certification mark means that the product contains the ingredients on the label in the stated amounts, and that it has been tested to meet the acceptable limits of known contaminants and/or toxins. Let your physician know if you are taking a probiotic supplement.

There is no recommended daily intake level for probiotics at this time. It is recommended to increase plant foods and yogurt or kefir over taking a probiotic dietary supplement. Remember that too much of a good thing is not always better, however, adding a probiotic food or beverage will not make an unhealthy diet healthy.



# KEEP MOVING

**Michelle Larson, PT, CLT-LANA**  
*Physical Therapist and Certified Lymphedema Therapist*

Whether you have been recently diagnosed with cancer, are in the middle of treatment or have completed treatment, it is important to get exercise. Don't be afraid to move! Here are some of the benefits from exercise:

- More research is emerging about the effect of exercise on malignant tumors. The effects being studied may show exercise helps combat growth of cancer cells in different ways.
- Movement keeps you from atrophying or losing muscle mass and it helps build bone mass.
- Studies show there is a decreased incidence of lymphedema in patients who exercise.
- Exercise helps you lose weight by increasing metabolism. The more muscle mass you create with your workout, the more calories you burn.
- Cancer patients in a recent study report that exercise led to decreased nausea, vomiting and depression.
- Some studies have shown an increased survival rate with some cancers.
- Although it may seem contradictory, physical activity can actually reduce fatigue. The National Comprehensive Cancer Network reports that cancer patients who exercised regularly are less tired, less depressed and sleep better than patients who don't exercise.

And if those aren't enough reasons, consider this...it feels good to exercise! Exercise releases endorphins which makes you feel better.

If you have not exercised in a while or have concerns about physical activity during your treatment, ask your doctor for a physical therapy referral. If you're ready to get started, try to incorporate these 3 components into your exercise routine:

- **Limit inactivity**
- **Aim to do physical activity most days of the week**
- **Include muscle strengthening at least 2 days a week**

Here are some suggestions to help you get moving.

## **Aerobics**

Start walking, it's a great way to increase your heart rate for a sustained period of time.

## **Strengthening**

Lifting weights (start with soup cans!), squats and heel raises will increase your muscle strength.

## **Stretching**

Try a pectoral stretch in a doorway, then move on to rowing movements. This is the key to increasing flexibility, improving posture and alleviating some pain.

Your exercise routine is something that you can control. Take charge of your physical activity and feel better.

*Michelle Larson, MPT, CLT-LANA, CET-ACSM is a Physical Therapist and Certified Lymphedema Therapist. She can be reached at 530.582.6450.*

Visit: [tahoecancercenter.com/newsletter/issue-3-spring-2017/references](http://tahoecancercenter.com/newsletter/issue-3-spring-2017/references) for a list of the resources cited here.



# ASCO's CancerLinQ™

## The Gene Upshaw Memorial Tahoe Forest Cancer Center Joins ASCO's CancerLinQ™ Big Data Platform to Improve Quality of Cancer Care

*The Tahoe Forest Cancer Center's electronic health records are now part of growing CancerLinQ™ database to help physicians uncover patterns and trends and receive real-time quality feedback.*

The Gene Upshaw Memorial Tahoe Forest Cancer Center in Truckee, CA has joined CancerLinQ™, a big data initiative developed and led by the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) to rapidly improve the quality of care for people with cancer. Tahoe Forest Cancer Center is one of more than 93 practices that have signed agreements with a CancerLinQ LLC, a wholly owned nonprofit of ASCO dedicated to the development and operation of the CancerLinQ™ system.

CancerLinQ™ will allow cancer care providers to improve the quality and value of care by analyzing millions of cancer patient medical records, uncovering patterns and trends, and measuring their care against that of their peers and recommended guidelines. The CancerLinQ™ platform is the only effort of its kind being driven by a non-profit, physician organization, and it leverages the combined expertise of 40,000 of the world's leading oncologists who comprise ASCO's membership and merges it with market-leading big data analytics from SAP. The platform uses SAP Connected Health built on the SAP HANA® platform, a flexible, multi-purpose data management and application platform created by SAP.

CancerLinQ™ is supported in part through the Conquer Cancer Foundation, whose generous donors have helped make the system possible. CancerLinQ™ is a project of CancerLinQ LLC. For more information, please visit [CancerLinQ.org](http://CancerLinQ.org).

# Smiles: Smile for Your Health

Did you know that smiling doesn't just make you look good, it's also good for your health?

## Smiling:

- Helps the heart recover more quickly after stressful events
- Reduces stress and anxiety
- Lowers blood pressure
- Releases endorphins, working as a natural pain reliever
- Releases serotonin, serving as an anti-depressant
- Strengthens your immune system
- Makes you more attractive to other people
- Is physiologically contagious

Smiling when you're not feeling well could help you move toward the road to recovery. But, how do you find a genuine smile in the moments when you are down?

Here's a simple exercise you can try with just a few spare minutes:

- Find a quiet place where you won't be disturbed.
- Breathe slowly into your abdomen. Feel your belly rise as you inhale and fall as you exhale.
- Recall a moment in time when you felt true joy, happiness or love, picturing it in as much detail as possible. Shift the focus of your breath into the center of chest, the heart center as you relive this feeling.
- Now turn up the corners of your mouth into a smile of any size, if you haven't already naturally done so. Continue breathing slowly, imagining or feeling the smile moving all throughout your body. Try to visualize every cell in your body smiling, or having the qualities of a smile.
- When you feel complete, take your time easing back into your day.

## Smile, it's good for you!

*Nikki Dean, E-RYT 500, CES, BS teaches a free, weekly class, Yoga for Cancer Patients and Survivors, on Thursdays at 11am at the Tahoe Center for Health & Sports Performance. She is a member of Rethink Healthy Team, a service of Tahoe Forest Health System. For more information on wellness programming and services, contact 530.582.6450.*



# Advice From the Nurse Navigator

Karen Aaron, RN, BSN, OCN, BNCN

Communication with your health care team is an important link to good care, but navigating the complex health care system is not an easy task. Here are some pointers to help you be your own advocate and gain control of this often complex process.



## Prepare for your appointments:

- Write down your questions. It is not unusual to forget your questions once you are in the appointment.
- Bring a friend or loved one with you to your appointment. There's a lot to absorb and a second set of ears can help you remember.
- Bring a list of any new or bothersome symptoms. Your doctor wants to know about them.

## Be involved in your appointments:

- Your care team is here to help you. Learn the best way to work together with them.
- Take notes. If there are terms you are unfamiliar with ask what they mean and how they are spelled.
- Ask why a test is being ordered.
- Bring those lists of questions and symptoms and be direct about asking!

## Stay organized:

- Keep a binder for your notes, brochures and appointment schedules.
- Keep a list of your medications and what they are for.
- Get to know your health care team. Take their business cards so you remember their names and have easy access to their contact information

## Gain knowledge:

- Ask for a second opinion.
- Collect information from your care providers, lab reports, imaging reports and discs with imaging.
- Go to reliable information sources. Forums are often not helpful.
- Ask if you have a nurse navigator available to you or a main point of contact who can offer guidance, insight into your care and answers to your questions.
- Learn the best way to contact your Health Care Team.

**\*Keep this checklist** and refer to it throughout your treatment.



*Karen Aaron, RN, BSN, OCN, BNCN is the Nurse Navigator at Gene Upshaw Memorial Tahoe Forest Cancer Center. She can be reached at 530.582.6450.*



## CONTACT US

(530) 582-6450 | [info@tfhd.com](mailto:info@tfhd.com)

10121 Pine Avenue  
Truckee, CA 96161

[tahoecancercenter.com](http://tahoecancercenter.com)



Receive this newsletter electronically!  
Subscribe at [www.tahoecancercenter.com](http://www.tahoecancercenter.com)