

# AURORA CANCER CARE NEWS & VIEWS

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This edition of News and Views is produced during the world-wide pandemic of Coronavirus-19 (COVID-19). Our great respect, thoughts and prayers go out to our patients, and our 70,000 Heroic Team Members who are providing selfless care to those affected patients under our care. We look forward to the future to get past this trying time.

## Message from the Vice President, Aurora Cancer Care

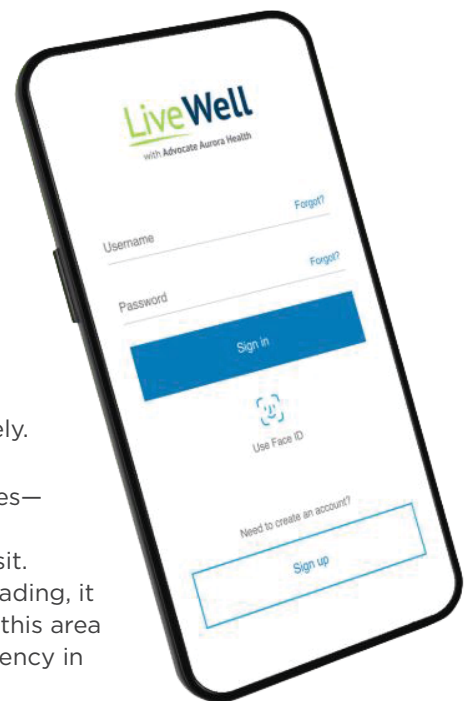


**James Weese, MD, FACS**  
Vice President,  
Aurora Cancer Care

**T**ransparency is a word commonly used in health care today. We've come a long way from when I was asked by a patient's family not to use the word "Cancer" when talking to their mother, father or grandparent, although I'm told this still comes up in discussions. In some of my prior positions I remember trying to tell them that when the patient would see my business card, being a Surgical Oncologist was hard to conceal, and when they would come to see me at a Cancer Center, it was hard to hide the truth. My response in those days was to remind the family that my obligation was to be honest with the patient and that required being able to discuss their diagnosis and treatment plans openly and accurately.

As of February 1, 2020, our medical group physicians participate in Open Notes—available through the **Advocate Aurora Health LiveWell app**—where a patient can access their medical records and review what a doctor reports on their visit. Although this should encourage physicians to be more careful in their proofreading, it should enhance an open relationship between the patient and their doctor. In this area I am particularly proud of the system Aurora Cancer Care is following. Consistency in making recommendations continues to be important.

Our Oncologists use VIA Oncology Pathways (now known as ClinicalPath Oncology) in recommending treatment for patients after they are diagnosed and cancer staging is done. VIA Pathways are evidence-based and determined by a large number of Academic and Community based oncologists located throughout the nation. The pathways are reviewed at least every quarter at



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Did you Know?

# Researchers Provide Evidence of Potential Treatment for Drug-Resistant Breast Cancer

*Aurora Research Institute Laboratory Scientist Publishes Findings from Study in International Medical Journal*

*By: Nickolas Bullock, Scientific Writer and Editor, Advocate Aurora Health Research Institute*

**A** study recently **published in Cancer Letters** found that a known anticancer drug was effective in treating a common type of breast cancer that is often resistant to traditional treatment.

The project, led by Aurora Research Institute Discovery Laboratory scientist Jun Yin, PhD, focused on human epidermal growth factor receptor 2 (HER2)-positive breast cancer cells. Traditional first-line treatment for this type of breast cancer involves the drug trastuzumab, which is a formulated protein that binds to the HER2 proteins to slow or stop cancer growth.

"Trastuzumab has been shown to improve survival of patients with HER2-positive breast cancer, however, nearly a quarter of patients treated with trastuzumab demonstrate resistance to the drug and experience cancer recurrence within 10 years," Dr. Yin said.



In the study, Dr. Yin and her research team found that AZD1775, a potent anticancer agent that has been studied as a treatment for a range of cancer types, specifically and effectively targets trastuzumab-resistant cancer cells, both inhibiting their growth and killing them.

Furthermore, the researchers found that AZD1775 targets cancer stem-like cells (CSCs), which are thought to be responsible for tumor

recurrence and resistance to treatment. The researchers found that AZD1775 blocks CSC formation by suppressing the gene MUC1, which had not been previously reported in HER2-positive breast cancer.

"This is the first study to evaluate AZD1775 for treating trastuzumab-resistant HER2-positive breast cancer," said Aurora Health Care breast oncology surgeon Judy Tjoe, MD, who coauthored the study. "We hope this treatment can potentially be used to effectively target HER2-positive breast cancer and other types of cancers that have demonstrated resistance to first-line therapy."

The study was conducted in part by a tumor cell line created from tissue donated by Aurora Health Care patients to Aurora Research Institute's Biorepository and Specimen Resource Center.

"This study is a great example of how we can leverage our resources to bring scientists and clinicians together to potentially improve patient outcomes," said Amy Beres, PhD, director of cancer research for Aurora Research Institute, part of Advocate Aurora Health.

“ This study is a great example of how we can leverage our resources to bring scientists and clinicians together to potentially improve patient outcomes. ”

The project is part of Dr. Yin's ongoing research into the discovery of biomarkers that could predict drug resistance to first-line cancer treatments and offer treatment alternatives. The project was made possible thanks to a generous donation from Vince Lombardi Cancer Foundation in February 2018.

To learn more about our research, visit [aurora.org/research](https://www.aurora.org/research). ■

# Connecting Community Partnerships to Increase Cancer Screening Access for Marginalized Populations

By Jennifer Jarvey Balistreri, MS | Community Impact Coordinator Senior, Aurora Cancer Care

Nicole Hertel Meirose | Program Coordinator Cancer Screening Project, Aurora UW Medical Group, Walker's Point Community Clinic

Aurora Cancer Care collaborates with various community-based organizations to further access to cancer screening to diverse populations. This includes connecting resources and services both internally, such as Aurora Walker's Point Community Clinic, and externally, such as American Cancer Society and Wisconsin Well Woman Program.

Aurora Walker's Point Community Clinic is a place that we can refer people who have low income and do not have health insurance to help meet their health care needs. Their mission is to provide access to high quality, integrative health care for those in the Milwaukee community who are under-served or un-served by the existing health care network.

Throughout 2019 Advocate Aurora Health was fortunate to provide a venue and staff to a cancer screening pilot project at Aurora Walker's Point Community Clinic. This screening project received funding from Kohl's Healthy Families through American Cancer Society to grant team members to create community outreach navigation for cancer screenings. This program provided resources for breast, colorectal, and cervical cancer screening. Together with our community partners and the dedication of these team members, Walker's Point Community Center staff shared cancer prevention and detection information and reminders with over 2,500 people, provided one-on-one navigation to hundreds, and helped dozens of people complete cancer screenings in 2019.

“Throughout 2019 Advocate Aurora Health was fortunate to provide a venue and staff to a cancer screening pilot project at Aurora Walker's Point Community Clinic. This screening project received funding from Kohl's Healthy Families through American Cancer Society to grant team members to create community outreach navigation for cancer screenings.”

Aurora Walker's Point Community Clinic also has a strong historical and current partnership with the Wisconsin Well Woman Program (WWWP). This program specifically provides mammograms, pap tests, cervical cancer screenings and certain other non-cancer related health screening services to low-income women who are uninsured throughout Wisconsin. Additionally, participants who are eligible for the WWWP, are potentially eligible



Aurora Walker's Point community health worker, Guadalupe Osorio, discussing cancer screening with a patient.

for the Wisconsin WISEWOMAN program, which provides cardiovascular risk factor screening services. These screenings are also provided at the Aurora Walker's Point Community Clinic.

Aurora Cancer Care and the Walker's Point Community Clinic continue to partner in cancer screening and community outreach cancer education throughout 2020. Additionally, Walker's Point Community Clinic continues to be a point of entry at which we see new patients for three months and then help them establish care with a more permanent primary care provider. Their fees are donation based, with a recommended contribution of \$10 per visit and an 80% discount on lab costs. Almost all their staff are bilingual Spanish/English, and their patients have access to professional medical interpreters for dozens of other languages.

For more information about Aurora **Walker's Point Community Clinic** or to refer a patient, please call 414-384-1400. ■

# QOPI® Gives Aurora Cancer Care a Perfect Score!

By Susan Doll MM, BSN, RN, System Quality Improvement Coordinator Sr., Aurora Cancer Care

**A**urora Cancer Care (ACC) has always strived to provide each patient with the best and highest quality of care. This is proven through our participation in national quality certification programs such as QOPI. The Quality Oncology Practice Initiative (QOPI) Certification Program through the American Society of Clinical Oncology, Inc. (ASCO) provides a three-year certification for outpatient hematology-oncology practices that meet nationally recognized standards for quality cancer care.

Aurora Cancer Care (ACC) has successfully received QOPI (Quality Oncology Practice Initiative) re-certification with a perfect score! Our QOPI surveyor highlighted ACC's impressive caregiver and physician engagement, excellent patient teaching provided, collaborative and interdisciplinary approach to patient care, our standardized approach in pharmacy processes using a system approach, and use of SMART PHRASES in the



“Aurora Cancer Care (ACC) has successfully received QOPI (Quality Oncology Practice Initiative) re-certification with a perfect score!”

electronic medical record to standardize documentation throughout the Oncology Clinics.

James Weese MD, FACS, Vice President Cancer Service Line commented, “I am extremely pleased that Aurora Cancer Care Medical Oncology had a very successful re-certification. This accomplishment is particularly notable as our group is one of the largest, if not the largest group, in the country certified by QOPI®.” This certification reinforces the extremely high-quality care provided to all our cancer patients.

QOPI® analyzes individual practice data and compares these to more than 170 evidence-based and consensus quality measures. The information is then provided in reports to participating practices. Individual practices are also able to compare their performance to data from other practices across the country. Based on this feedback, doctors and practices can identify areas for improvement.

“ASCO’s QOPI certification is voluntary, so a practice that undertakes this process is demonstrating its commitment to providing patients with high quality care,” said ASCO President Howard A. “Skip” Burris III, MD, FACP, FASCO. “A practice that achieves Certification has evaluated its processes, benchmarked its performance against other top-performing practices, and can be confident in its dedication to quality and safety excellence, as well as continuous quality improvement.”

More than 750 oncology practices have registered for QOPI. ACC is one of fewer than 300 practices currently certified in the United States. This certification for outpatient oncology practices is the first program of its kind for oncology in the US, and the program was expanded internationally in 2016.

To become certified, oncology practices have to submit to a practice-wide evaluation of their documentation standards. The QOPI Certification Program staff and steering group members verify, through on-site inspection, that the evaluation and documents are correct and that the practices met core standards in areas of treatment. It was evident throughout ACC’s recent survey that standards were met and we demonstrate a commitment to proving high quality patient care which showcases Aurora Cancer Care as leaders in the Medical Oncology practice.

QOPI® and the QOPI® Certification Program are projects dedicated to innovative quality improvement programs. For more information, please visit: <https://practice.asco.org/quality-improvement/quality-programs>. ■



**QOPI® Certification Program**

Quality Cancer Care: Recognizing Excellence



# Aurora Cancer Care's Lead in Diversity and Inclusion Throughout Our Communities

By Jennifer Jarvey Balistreri, MS, ACC Community Impact Coordinator Senior

**W**ithin the last five years, Aurora Cancer Care (ACC) was one of the first service lines to connect to a more diverse approach in community outreach and has increased our activities in the community with a lens of diversity and inclusion in many ways. We have increased diversity representation at community events by identifying the needs of the community while aligning them with team members of various rural and urban neighborhoods, cultures, faith groups, races, gender spectrum and skill sets. This approach aids in cultivating purposeful relationships and trust on many levels with numerous community members and community-based organizations. ACC has also gained new community outreach support from internal team members across various disease site specialties which has encouraged not only a more connected network internally, but also provided additional bilingual and multiskilled staff to connect with our communities throughout the state.

In 2020, ACC has furthered our approach to diversity and inclusion by developing a continued medical education program that focuses specifically on providing cancer care to the underserved. Aurora Cancer Care will provide this free conference to Advocate Aurora Health providers, team members, and community health professionals across the entire WI-IL system. This conference addresses diversity and inclusion issues that present barriers to underserved populations gaining access to health care and cancer screening. Some topics include: "Conceptualizing Race Based Trauma and How it Influences Screening and Care Coverage," "Big Tobacco's Connection to Marginalized Communities," and "Cancer

“ We have increased diversity representation at community events by identifying the needs of the community while aligning them with team members of various rural and urban neighborhoods, cultures, faith groups, races, gender spectrum and skill sets. ”

Screening After Gender Affirming Surgeries.” Through this educational event, we are able share examples of how diverse populations are impacted by various levels of access, experiences, and systemic logistics of care.

Throughout our ACC community outreach partnerships, we continue to be aware of factors such as: race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, education levels, physical abilities, diversity within neighborhoods and zip codes, religious beliefs, political beliefs, values or other ideologies that may impact our outreach. All these diverse qualities influence how we are able to improve access to cancer screening, how education is performed, and how our work can be and is evaluated. Through our cancer focused outreach we can align with the AAH Community Relations vision to “build health equity, ensure access, and improve health outcomes in our communities through evidence-informed services and innovative partnerships by addressing medical needs and social determinants.”



Advocate Aurora Health team members (left to right) Youa Xiong, Jennifer Jarvey Balistreri, and Angelinah Xiong accepting sponsorship recognition at the 2019-2020 Milwaukee Hmong New Year Celebration.



Dr. David Hyman providing head and neck cancer screenings to attendees at PrideFest Milwaukee.

As our ACC community work continues within the lens of diversity and inclusion, we need to remember that diversity and inclusion must also provide a sense of belonging. This three-factor approach provides a space of trust, consistency, and continued meaningful partnerships in various community engagements. ■

# Welcome New Providers

**Pamela R. Portschy, MD**, encourages patients to understand that plastic surgery can be a healthy, natural part of their lives. Reconstructive operations she provides include:

- Breast reconstruction
- Fat grafting (transferring fat from one part of the body such as the abdomen and thighs to the breast or face)
- Female and male breast reduction
- Gender confirmation surgery (top surgery)
- Skin cancer (face and body) reconstruction
- Lower extremity reconstruction
- Hand operations (nerve decompression and trigger finger)

In addition, Dr. Portschy provides aesthetic operations that include:

- Breast augmentation
- Body contouring
- Mommy makeovers (specialized combination of body contouring procedures)
- Abdominoplasty (tummy tuck)
- Arm, thigh, breast and face lifts
- Liposuction
- Labiaplasty
- Upper and lower eyelid surgery
- Non-surgical facial rejuvenation with the injection of Botox and fillers

Dr. Portschy received her medical degree from the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health in Madison. She completed a residency in general surgery, along with a residency in plastic and reconstructive surgery, through the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis. In addition, she obtained a Master of Science in Clinical Research through the University of Minnesota School of Public Health in Minneapolis and has published more than 20 articles in respected peer reviewed journals. Her research has focused on clinical outcomes in breast cancer and reconstruction.

Pamela and her husband are raising two fun-loving girls. Outside of her various professional activities, she enjoys spending time with family and friends, fitness activities such as extreme fitness, reading, visiting new coffee shops and traveling.



**Pamela R. Portschy, MD**  
*Plastic Surgery & Cosmetics*

**Shunsuke Yoshida, MD**, offers the best possible outcome based on the patient's needs while offering expertise in decision making and surgical safety.

Dr. Yoshida's primary focus is on the full spectrum of breast reconstruction. This includes microsurgical breast reconstruction using the patient's own tissue, without implants. Tissue is removed from the abdominal region to reconstruct breasts following mastectomy. This is an innovative technique for appropriately selected patients. Most patients can benefit from this procedure, including patients with radiation changes to the skin or those who have experienced a failed implant reconstruction. Other breast reconstruction techniques include: implant-based breast reconstruction, oncoplastic breast reconstruction, flat closure breast reconstruction, breast reduction and gynecomastia surgery and removal of unwanted breast implants.

He also offers a wide range of plastic and reconstructive surgery services including:

- Reconstruction of the face, trunk and extremities following trauma or cancer removal
- Cosmetic surgery of the breasts and abdomen
- Body contouring surgery of the trunk and extremities

Dr. Yoshida earned his medical degree from the University of Cincinnati College of Medicine in Ohio. He completed his residency in general surgery at East Carolina University in Greenville, N.C., vascular surgery research fellowship at Harvard University in Boston, Mass., followed by a plastic surgery fellowship at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He is double board certified in plastic surgery as well as general surgery.

Dr. Yoshida is married and has four children. He coaches baseball and watches football, hockey and basketball, and challenges himself with new activities such as: skiing, rowing, sailing, golf, yoga, grilling, home improvements and walking his dog. He enjoys learning new skills and applying them to improve other facets of his life. ■



**Shunsuke Yoshida, MD**  
*Plastic Surgery & Cosmetics*



# AURORA INTEGRATIVE CANCER CARE: MORE THAN JUST A PILL

By Melissa Armstrong, MHA, Program Coordinator, Integrative Medicine

**W**hether you're facing a new cancer diagnosis, or a survivor coping with lasting treatment effects, we are here to help with your wellbeing. Integrative Cancer Care services at Advocate Aurora Healthcare offer a variety of options that empower you to actively participate in your own self-care wellbeing plan.

Day-to-day life can be overwhelming, add on stresses associated with cancer diagnosis, local tragedies, or a global pandemic and the need for effective self-care is more critical than ever before. You are not alone. Proactive stress management measures can help. Our integrative care strategies can be accessed from the comfort of your home and shared with your loved ones.

## SELF-CARE FOR PATIENTS AND TEAM MEMBERS

There are many stress reducing self-care activities, such as breathwork, centering and grounding, guided imagery, and meditation.

One exercise you can easily do from anywhere is this breathing and meditation exercise\*:

- Sit quietly in a comfortable position with your legs uncrossed.
- Pick a mantra or word that speaks to you (i.e. "health," "peace," "love," "calm," etc.).
- Close your eyes.
- Relax all your muscles, one by one, starting at your feet and moving up to your head.
- Focus on breathing in and out of your nose while silently repeating your mantra.
- If possible, practice this exercise two times a day for 10 minutes.

For other self-care exercises and techniques, Aurora Integrative Cancer Care has provided a free "Help Yourself Heal" online class. This class teaches stress management techniques and allows you to practice through audio and video platforms.

Access our course here:

<https://www.aurorahealthcare.org/services/integrative-medicine/help-yourself-heal>.



## INTEGRATIVE HEALTH COACHING

If you prefer, you can work directly with an Integrative Health Coach to explore, develop and achieve an integrative self-care plan. Your goals are our priority. Our coaches are licensed health care professionals, with advanced training in Integrative Health Coaching, who utilize cognitive behavioral strategies to help guide you to identify obstacles and discover your inner strengths to create empowering lifestyle shifts.

Areas of focus include:

- Stress reduction
- Improved sleep
- Increasing energy
- Living a healthier life
- Improving work/life balance
- Getting more exercise

This program offers fee-based video and teleconferencing with a licensed Integrative Health Coach, for more information, visit: [www.aurora.org/coaching](http://www.aurora.org/coaching).

## PATIENT CENTERED CARE

When it is safe to do so, patients can return to the Aurora Cancer Center and receive individualized care again from your acupuncturist, massage therapist, and reiki volunteers. Our evidence-based care has been proven to help patients manage fatigue, stress, pain, and nausea associated with cancer treatment. Patients often report integrative therapies help achieve better sleep, ease of mind, and sense of well-being. Our accessible and affordable integrative cancer care is available thanks to generous philanthropic donative to the Aurora Foundation.

From diagnosis through survivorship, our therapies and self-strategies have been shown to improve well-being, boost the immune system, and reduce pain, nausea, stress and fatigue. ■

<https://www.aurorahealthcare.org/services/integrative-medicine/integrative-cancer-care>



*\*Adopted from: The Relaxation Response, Benson, H. Williams Morrow and Co., NY 1975*

## Message from the Vice President, cont.

virtual online meetings and can be updated much sooner if breakthrough findings are published.

Once a patient receives a cancer diagnosis with its stage, the physician is brought to the treatment recommendations of the VIA pathway. If available, the first option is always a clinical trial. If the physician feels this is not appropriate for a given patient, or if the patient is not interested in participating in a trial, current standard of care treatments are then ranked. Ranking is determined first by efficacy; if several treatments are equally effective for their given cancer, they are then ranked according to the least toxic side effects; if multiple treatments are equally toxic, ranking is then determined by cost. Every patient is given the option of a clinical trial and if they choose not to participate, they receive the most effective, least toxic, and potentially least costly evidence-based treatment.

In addition, each new patient case is presented at our system wide, disease specific, multidisciplinary conferences (there are currently 14 each week) which includes oncologists from all of the cancer disciplines (Medical Oncology, Surgery or Surgical Oncology, Radiation Oncology, and Interventional Oncology). Clinical trials nurses, geneticists, and other cancer experts also participate in these conferences. All of our oncologists have designated disease specific interests and participate in these conferences, so regardless of where a patient enters Aurora Cancer Care, they will benefit from the expertise of a large group of providers that focus on the patient's specific type of cancer.

When patients check their medical records, they should feel confident they are being cared for in a system that is very concerned that all patients receive the most innovative and best evidence-based care available. This is what our excellent caregivers deliver throughout Aurora Cancer Care.

To learn more about the Live Well app visit: [advocateaurorahealth.org/livewell](http://advocateaurorahealth.org/livewell). ■

**Did you know?**

### ClinicalPath Oncology

(formerly known as VIA Oncology) has named Dr. Timothy Goggins as Chair of the global organization's Head, Neck, and Thyroid Committee.



 **Aurora Cancer Care**®

We are  AdvocateAuroraHealth

[aurora.org/cancercare](http://aurora.org/cancercare)  @Aurora\_Cancer on Twitter

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