

AURORA CANCER CARE NEWS & VIEWS

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Message from the Vice President, Aurora Cancer Care



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

2020 is almost over and I don't know many people who won't be glad to see it go. It really has been a year of cataclysmic changes in many areas, not the least of which is how medicine is practiced.

This was the year AAH was going to dip their toe into virtual visits with 25,000 planned for the year however the medical group had completed over 650,000 virtual visits

by mid-year. Personal protective equipment (PPE) was a term known to all surgeons for decades, but it has become a household designation for many. Wearing masks in public is something we used to see among tourists coming to the US from Asia but they are now becoming a wardrobe staple (although still not common enough in the US). We've heard all kinds of treatment theories with conflicting evidence about whether they work or not with proponents on both sides and the omnipresent promise of a vaccine may actually be available before the end of the year and certainly into 2021.

Despite these hardships, the cancer service line has continued to do well, and our patients continue to be treated with safety and comfort. Screenings for COVID are now being done at all sites and seem to be protecting both our patients and staff. Virtual visits have been instituted where appropriate and accepted by most of our patients and caregivers. PPE has become part of visits, infusions and testing. COVID testing is much more available despite the second surge and is appropriately confirming the safety of proceeding with operations, screening and chemotherapy and radiation therapy for our patients. Our integrative medicine services are now back and functional. And fortunately screening for breast, colorectal, lung, and other

cancers are returning to normal frequency.

Successes within the service line have been plentiful despite these difficulties.

- Under the leadership of Dr. Stephen Medlin and Lora Dow our hematology and transplant programs continue to grow. Our numbers of Autologous and Allogeneic transplants continue to beat our initial projections and St. Luke's has been approved as a site for CAR-T therapy. In fact, our first CAR-T patient has been already registered for cell production. Dr. Zartash Gul recently joined the transplant team. Dr. Gul has special interest in Allogeneic transplants and CAR-T therapy with special expertise in Autologous transplants for Multiple Sclerosis and Amyloidosis.
- Surgical oncology numbers continue to grow.
- We will have 20 sites open across the system for low dose CT lung screening by the end of the year.
- The addition of many new plastic surgeons across the system have allowed us to offer breast reconstruction at many sites to keep up with the newly detected patients with breast cancer who choose that option.
- Although a number of our oncologists have retired as planned, successful recruitment has allowed us to bring in 3 new medical oncologists this year in time to work with our retirees to carry on with continued growth of their practices. In the last 2 years the service line has successfully recruited 14 medical oncologists including at least 3 more who are scheduled to start in 2021.
- Dr. Geoffrey Bellini has now joined our faculty of surgical oncology, the first graduate of our recently ACGME accredited Complex Surgical Oncology Fellowship.
- New fellowships have been started in Palliative Care (accredited) and Hyperbaric Medicine and our Cardio-Oncology Program has been expanded with the recruitment of Dr. Manmeet Singh.

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Welcome New Providers

What Does Cancer Care Community Outreach Look Like During A Pandemic?

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

As the COVID-19 pandemic has had the attention of public health experts, health care institutions, medical professionals and community members, it is of no surprise that various cancer awareness focused programming and community outreach teams have had to make changes to maintain the importance of cancer screening and education in 2020. These changes are particularly of concern within the lens of community outreach for medically underserved communities where cancer morbidity and mortality are highest.

We want to ensure we can continue to support those in need, no matter what social determinants they endure. As shelter-in-place orders, social distancing guidelines and limited gatherings affected our community and screening programs, you may be thinking, how have we continued to be engaged with our surrounding communities without our usual face to face interaction in 2020?



Aurora Cancer Care has been able to support and engage communities in a few ways during these uncertain times. For example, we have been able to apply and obtain community grants from community partner organizations such as American Cancer Society and Susan G. Komen Wisconsin. This grant funding has aided in supporting transportation to appointments, virtual cancer education opportunities, navigating individuals to cancer screenings and diagnostic tests, as well as providing resources that assist current breast cancer patients to flourish during and after their surgeries and treatment.

Aurora Cancer Care also collaborates internally with our Social Work Navigation program and Faith and Community Health department to provide cancer education, faith and social support discussions, and COVID safety guidelines during on-site screening process virtually. These opportunities have been provided virtually to community members. Additionally, our community-based organization partnership members have had access and joined our smoking cessation virtual education and programming which our Low Dose Lung CT team has fostered through 2020.



“The focus of Aurora Cancer Care community outreach and education programs will continue to adapt to the options that are available to us and evolve our approaches into 2021 as the pandemic progresses.”

The focus of Aurora Cancer Care community outreach and education programs will continue to adapt to the options that are available to us and evolve our approaches into 2021 as the pandemic progresses. ■

Developing Partnerships to Reduce the Cost of Cancer Care for Patients

By Brad Zimmerman MBA MSW APSW OSW-C, Oncology Social Worker, Aurora Cancer Care

It is widely recognized that cancer treatment can become very costly and lead to varying degrees of financial problems for cancer patients. Advocate Aurora Health recognizes financial concerns can arise and has developed ways to help cancer patients experiencing them. One way we can help cancer patients who receive expensive medications is to search for resources that reduce the cost of their cancer treatment.

Manufacturer assistance, national medication assistance foundations, and local financial aid programs can all provide varying degrees of financial relief. In order to ensure all financial assistance options are exhausted, Advocate Aurora has collaborated with Vivor to equip our financial navigation specialists with a software tool designed to identify financial assistance resources available based on the specific needs of our patients. Simply stated, Vivor software will help Advocate Aurora's financial navigators, social workers, prior authorization representatives, financial advocates and other team members identify programs that will help reduce the cost of cancer care for patients.



What is Vivor?

Vivor is a financial assistance technology platform for healthcare providers, which helps reduce out-of-pocket cost as a barrier to cancer care. Vivor matches patients to a personalized set of financial assistance options - then supports the complete process to enroll patients and secure funds for cancer patients in need.

The Advocate Aurora cancer care team recognizes the financial stress that results from cancer care treatment costs. Vivor is another valuable tool Advocate Aurora uses to help reduce the financial burden cancer care costs can create. Most importantly, it allows cancer patients to direct less of their attention on the cost of their treatment and more on the focus to get well. ■

How does Vivor work?

1

At the point when cancer treatment is ordered by a doctor, the patient's health insurance coverage is verified and benefits are determined.

2

During the verification process, if it is found that a patient may experience a high out of pocket cost for cancer medication that could lead to financial hardship, Vivor is activated.

3

A patient profile is created in Vivor that includes: patient demographic information, treatment plan, diagnosis, health insurance and household income information (collected from the patient).

4

Vivor uses the information to conduct a fast, seamless search of local and national financial assistance programs specifically designed to support the patient based on the information added to the patient's profile.

5

One of Advocate Aurora's Vivor users will contact the patient if it appears there may be a financial assistance program the patient may benefit from and steps will be taken to assist the patient with the financial assistance application process.

6

Any financial assistance available for the patient will be used to offset costs associated with his/her cancer treatment.

Stem Cell Transplant Program Advancements

By Lora Dow RN, BSN, OCN, Manager Oncology Services, Aurora Cancer Care; and Jamie Huebschen RN, BSN, OCN, Stem Cell Transplant Coordinator, Aurora Cancer Care

The Hematologic Malignancy and Stem Cell Transplant program at St Luke's underwent an immense amount of change in 2020. We have not only experienced rapid growth but have successfully launched an Allogeneic Stem cell transplant program, despite a global pandemic.

For decades, Aurora St. Luke's Medical Center has performed only autologous stem cell transplants to the community we serve. By embarking on an allogeneic program, we now can continue to care for a patient population, that would have otherwise been referred out to a neighboring health care system. The ability to care for all patients is key to building a comprehensive multidisciplinary treatment program for hematologic malignancy and stem cell transplant patients and creates "One Stop Shop" care for the patients served by the Advocate Aurora Health Care System.

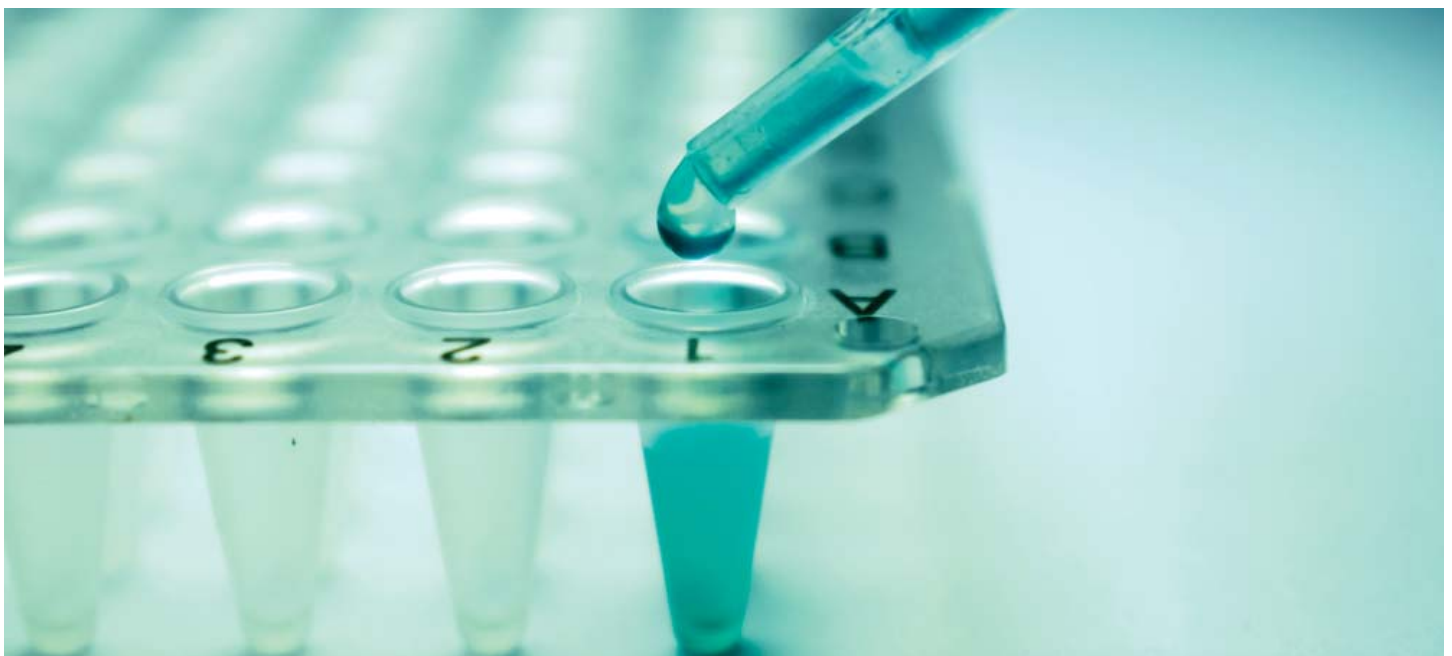
In January of this year we achieved the exciting milestone of performing the first allogeneic transplant at Aurora St. Luke's Medical Center, using a sibling matched donor. In May, through demonstrated quality and outcomes achievement, the program received approval from the National Marrow Donor Program (NMDP) to start receiving unrelated grafts, which means that the program can perform stem cell transplants for patients using unrelated donors. The NMDP is the world's largest and most diverse registry. Patients at Aurora St Luke's have received donor cells from as far away as Germany utilizing a search through NMDP.

In addition to the exciting expansion of an allogeneic transplant, the program has partnered with Kite Pharma, and is gearing up to offer Chimeric Antigen Receptor

“In January of this year we achieved the exciting milestone of performing the first allogeneic transplant at Aurora St. Luke's Medical Center, using a sibling matched donor. In May, through demonstrated quality and outcomes achievement, the program received approval from the National Marrow Donor Program (NMDP) to start receiving unrelated grafts.”

T-Cell (CAR-T) Therapy. CAR-T cell therapy is a treatment option that involves using your body's own immune system to treat cancer. With this treatment approach, a patient's T-Cells are collected and sent to a laboratory where these cells are reprogrammed to produce chimeric antigen receptors (CARs). Once reinfused back to the patient, these receptors help to find and destroy cancer cells. At the end of August 2020, Aurora St Luke's Medical Center was successfully deemed an authorized treatment center through Kite Pharma.

Program advancements such as these require strong team and programmatic effort. With a focus on patient care, quality, and innovation. The Stem Cell Transplant team members have all played a significant role in moving this program forward and leading change. The team and program achievements will allow Aurora St. Luke's to offer a full range of care options for patients that seek treatment here, from Wisconsin and across the country. ■



Special Issue of Journal of Patient-Centered Research and Reviews Presents “Women and Cancer” Theme

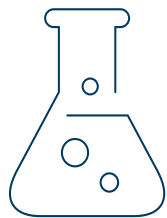
Articles report research findings pertaining to breast and uterine cancers as well as survivorship, hysterectomy and labor pain management

By Joe Grundle, Managing Editor, Journal of Patient-Centered Research and Reviews, Advocate Aurora Research Institute

Released on the heels of both breast and gynecologic cancer awareness months, the latest issue of Advocate Aurora Health’s **Journal of Patient-Centered Research and Reviews (JPCRR)** covers a theme of women and cancer.

This special issue opens with a timely commentary by UCLA breast surgeon Deanna Attai about targeting new audiences and updating the objectives of Breast Cancer Awareness Month advocacy campaigns.

“The reality of breast cancer is that the patient experience does not always fit neatly into positive or inspirational marketing,” Dr. Attai wrote. “Awareness campaigns need to accurately represent all of the faces of breast cancer, address barriers and promote equitable access to care, and emphasize the importance of research.”



Progress Through Research

Original research articles published in this issue address challenges faced by women diagnosed with and treated for cancer, including Advocate Aurora’s testing of a low-cost mobile app that connects breast cancer survivors to personal wellness coaches discussed in the article **“Evaluation of a mobile health**

intervention to improve wellness outcomes for breast cancer survivors.” This study found that patients who used the app saw more improvements to their physical activity, diet, and body mass index than did patients in the control group.

“Achieving a healthy weight, consuming a nutrient-rich, plant-based diet, and engaging in regular physical activity are all important factors in improving the health and well-being of breast cancer survivors,” said Jamie Cairo, lead author of the study. “Unfortunately, many survivors struggle to develop and sustain healthy lifestyle habits so innovative interventions like this novel mobile app are worth investigating.”

Two other articles, **“Validation of an endometrial tumor diameter model for risk assessment in the absence of lymph node mapping”** and **“Cole relaxation frequency as a prognostic parameter for breast cancer,”** from Advocate Aurora oncology report a simplified tumor diameter model for risk stratification of patients with



endometrioid endometrial cancer, and a novel parameter for prognosticating breast cancer respectively. Oncology authors include physicians Scott Kamelle and Wendy Mikkelson, nurse practitioners Jamie Cairo, Laurie Williams and Lisa Bray, physician assistant Katrina Goetzke, and many additional contributors noted within the 2020 Aurora Scientific Day abstract supplement.

Visit aah.org/jpcrr to access all current and archived content, to submit a manuscript for peer review or to sign up to receive quarterly email notifications. Follow [@JPCRR](https://twitter.com/JPCRR) on Twitter for weekly journal updates and health science news. Questions regarding the journal can be directed to the editorial office at JPCRR@aah.org. ■

Published by Advocate Aurora Health, JPCRR is a PubMed-indexed medical journal dedicated to scholarly works that aim to improve patient-centered care practices, health outcomes, and patient experiences. JPCRR articles have been downloaded hundreds of thousands of times by readers in more than 200 countries.

Oncology Integrative Medicine and Aurora Foundation Collaborate to Continue to Provide Integrative Therapies to Cancer Patients

By Melissa Armstrong, MHA, Program Coordinator, Integrative Medicine

Your Care is our Priority:

Aurora's Integrative Cancer Care program is Wisconsin's largest Integrative Oncology program and a pioneer in non-pharmacological symptom management. Designed for patients, our integrative therapies like, acupuncture and massage therapy, are offered at little to no cost and conveniently accessible across Aurora Cancer clinics. Choosing integrative cancer care therapies can result in regaining a sense of control, improved treatment outcomes, decreased symptoms and lower anxiety. Whether or not the disease is cured, our Integrative Cancer Care program focuses on your health, wellbeing and healing.

Integrative cancer therapies are prioritized from a health equity perspective to ensure affordable access across the Wisconsin market through philanthropic donations and fundraisers in partnership with the Aurora Foundation.

Enter Covid-19:

Due to COVID-19 and for the wellbeing and safety of our patients and community, our in-person fundraising events were impacted. It was time to get creative and act together to ensure patients have access to the highest level of care possible!

Teamwork Makes the Dream Work:

In June, Integrative Medicine and the Aurora Foundation quickly collaborated to premier the "Innovations in Care" virtual donor engagement conversation about the Integrative Cancer Care's transformative outcomes.

Our June Innovations in Care donor engagement event was well attended and ultimately motivated Daryl and Michaela Stuermer to hold an auction in support of the variety of integrative therapies offered at Aurora Cancer Care. Daryl Stuermer, who has toured the world with Genesis and Phil Collins, and his wife Michaela donated, \$10,000 funds for Aurora Cancer Care patients. He's



Michaela and Daryl Stuermer with their family.

auctioning off some guitars and other items he played tours and songs like "In the Air Tonight". Daryl's wife, Michaela, was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2017 and says the integrative medicine therapies offered at the cancer clinic made a huge impact on her recovery.

"The support she received with these treatments was so helpful. Nothing is easy when it comes to cancer, but when you have confidence in the care, that makes such a difference," Daryl said.

"I know if Aurora gets more funds they can get more of these services in more locations. So that's what I want to do - help other people through it," Michaela said.

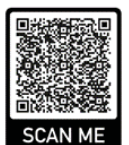
Our second successful virtual fundraising event was Gills Walk Off for Cancer. Historically, Gills Cancer Walk Off been the major fundraising resource for the integrative cancer care program. In partnership with the Lakeshore Chinooks, the 2020 virtual event raised over \$8,000.

As the pandemic continues, we will continue to be creative and collaborative in fundraising to ensure our patients have access to the highest quality of care. Ultimately, any generous donation to the integrative cancer care fund can go a long way in bettering the lives of both patients, families and our community.

To donate to the Integrative Cancer Care fund:
Aurora Cancer Care Integrative Therapies Fund

*In the drop down choose the Integrative Therapies Fund

If you have a fundraising idea please contact:
Erin Starck at erin.starck@aah.org or
608-345-7494 ■



(Left) Daryl playing guitar. (Right) Daryl and Michaela.

Advocate Aurora Health Joins Precision Medicine Study of Genetically Guided Treatments for Brain Tumors

Study will compare the use of several novel medications that target tumors with certain genetic mutations

By Nick Bullock, Scientific Writer and Editor, Advocate Aurora Research Institute

Advocate Aurora Health community cancer clinics in Wisconsin are joining a precision medicine clinical trial studying how well genetic testing can drive treatment for patients with cancer that has spread to the brain.

The study, known as Alliance A071701, will compare the use of several novel medications that target tumors with certain genetic mutations and may stop the growth of tumor cells by blocking enzymes needed for growth. Specifically, investigators will study these potential treatments for lung cancer, breast cancer and other cancers that have metastasized to the brain.

“The study, known as Alliance A071701, will compare the use of several novel medications that target tumors with certain genetic mutations and may stop the growth of tumor cells by blocking enzymes needed for growth. Specifically, investigators will study these potential treatments for lung cancer, breast cancer and other cancers that have metastasized to the brain.”

“Brain metastases are often genetically different from the original tumor, meaning genetically targeted treatments that work on one tumor may not work on another,” said oncologist **Michael Thompson, MD, PhD**, Advocate Aurora Research Institute’s principal investigator for the trial and co-director of Advocate Aurora’s Oncology Precision Medicine Program.

Researchers have found several genes that become altered or mutated when cancer spreads to the brain from elsewhere in the body.

By genetically sequencing a clinical trial participant’s brain tumor, researchers may be able to provide more targeted and effective cancer treatment.

“This is an important clinical trial for our patients and for our health system, as this is a vastly more sophisticated form of treatment than traditional radiation and chemotherapy,” said oncologist **Thomas Saphner, MD**, co-principal investigator, along with Dr. Thompson, for Advocate Aurora’s National Cancer Institute (NCI) Community Oncology Research Program, or NCORP, through which the clinical trial is available.

This clinical trial will be taking place at all 17 of Advocate Aurora’s NCORP sites in Wisconsin.

Brain metastases affect up to 25% of cancer patients and present about 300,000 new cases per year in the United States, according to the study sponsor, Alliance for Clinical Trials in Oncology, a cooperative research group that designs and conducts clinical trials under the sponsorship of NCI.

Researchers for this study, “**Genetic testing in guiding treatment for patients with brain metastases,**” aim to enroll 150 participants nationwide and will follow their progress for up to five years. The trial, led by Priscilla Brastianos, MD, at Massachusetts General Hospital/Harvard Medical School, and Evanthia Galanis, MD, at Mayo Clinic, is already open at more than 300 sites throughout the U.S.

To learn more about Advocate Aurora’s research, visit aurora.org/research. ■



Message from the Vice President, cont.

- Precision medicine continues to grow under the leadership of Dr. Michael Thompson and Jennifer Godden, Pharm.D. and continues to gain national recognition in this important area.
- Dr. Michael Mullane's innovative HCPMC hereditary cancer program has expanded to multiple sites within Aurora and has now been developed with our colleagues in Illinois.
- Plans are afloat to start a Hematology/Oncology fellowship, a Dental Fellowship in collaboration with Marquette Dental School, and a Breast Surgery Fellowship in the near future.
- Our oncology colleagues in the Advocate Medical Group went live successfully with EPIC, Beacon, and ClinicalPath (formerly VIA Oncology) on October 11 providing a collaborative expansion of the Vertically Integrated, evidence-based oncology program developed among our Wisconsin colleagues.
- Tumor registries within the two states have now been combined under a common leadership team.
- Under the leadership of Dr. Aaron Chevinsky, there has been standardization of practice for breast cancer and hepatobiliary cancer patients in both states.

So, despite the hardships brought on by the pandemic the Oncology Service Line continues to deliver innovative, comprehensive, and safe care to our patients by our many team members. We look forward to the integration of the Aurora Health Care Medical Group and the Advocate Medical Group on January 1, 2021 and continued expansion of programs from both groups across the state line.

It has been a difficult year in many ways. Nonetheless, we have seen many successes and plan for these and others to continue and expand in the coming months. Best wishes for a happy and healthy holiday season and on behalf of the Cancer leadership team, stay healthy, sane and safe. ■

Welcome New Providers



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