

The Meaning of Care

magazine

Fall 2017



Cancer-Fighting
Physicians & Families



John M. Fraser
President and CEO
Methodist Health System

President's Letter

Cancer is an enemy to health, life and loved ones.

The National Cancer Institute estimates that nearly 40 percent of the men and women in this nation will be diagnosed with cancer at some point in their lives. This year alone, more than 1.6 million new cases will be diagnosed, and cancer will kill more than 1,600 people a day.

How best to fight cancer? With powerful weaponry, strong programs and great people.

At Methodist, we offer award-winning, comprehensive inpatient and outpatient cancer care that encompasses advanced treatments and technologies, groundbreaking clinical trials and an unparalleled breadth of support services for patients and family members.

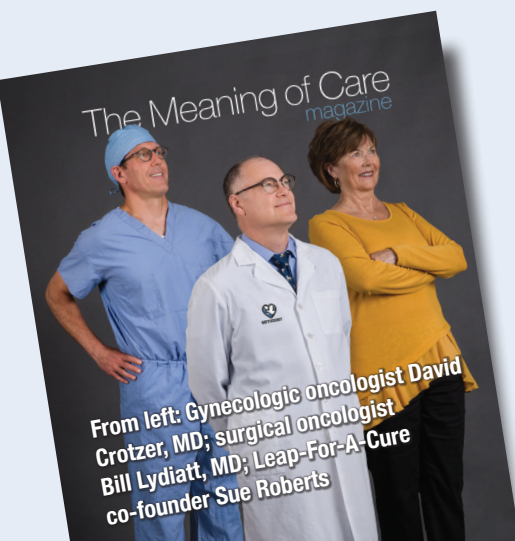
Our oncology program has been nationally recognized by the Professional Research Consultants, Inc. (PRC) Excellence in Healthcare Awards and garnered the Commission on Cancer Outstanding Achievement Award from the American College of Surgeons, making Methodist one of only 22 organizations in the nation to achieve this honor in 2016.

Such success is made possible through the skill, compassion, commitment and teamwork of many talented cancer fighters. In the pages that follow, you will meet just a few of the heroic fighters in this battle.

Some are medical professionals who specialize in certain types of cancer therapies and research. Some fight on in different ways, leaving legacies of laughter, hope and healing for the many daughters, sons, mothers and fathers whose lives are touched by cancer.

Every day we battle against cancer, working together to defeat the enemy while easing the journey back to health and wellness — one more way we live *The Meaning of Care*.

Sincerely,



**Heather Roberts,
Miracle Woman**

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Her Voice
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Fighting Cancer in Western Iowa

When it comes to fighting cancer in western Iowa, patients turn to the only cancer center accredited by the American College of Surgeons: Methodist Jennie Edmundson.

While offering a full range of cancer services, Jennie Edmundson added to its arsenal in 2016, when a brand-new linear accelerator began treating cancer patients in the region.

The cancer-fighting machine was made possible through a challenge grant from an anonymous donor, a grant from the Leona M. & Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust, and dollars raised by the Jennie Edmundson Hospital Foundation. Through the generosity of local donors and these funds, over \$5 million was raised for the project.

Since its installation, more than 3,000 patients have received treatment from



New linear accelerator at Methodist Jennie Edmundson Hospital

the state-of-the-art machine that delivers radiation with more speed and accuracy than the hospital's prior unit.

Patients battling lung, prostate, breast, head and neck, sarcoma and pancreatic cancer can all receive treatment with the cancer-fighting unit.

"This type of machine has only been out a couple years — and there's nothing better," said Nicole Nolan, MD, radiation oncologist at Methodist Jennie Edmundson. "We deliver the best radiation treatment we can give patients, and that's really important."

A Place of Comfort for Patients, Families

A cancer diagnosis is challenging, but if you have to travel a great distance for treatment, the challenges are even greater.

Patients and their families traveling to Omaha will soon have a place to call home during their treatment when the American Cancer Society's Hope Lodge Nebraska opens in January 2018.



**American Cancer Society's
Hope Lodge Nebraska**

Located at 8030 Farnam Drive, on land donated by Methodist Hospital, the Nebraska Hope Lodge will feature 32 private rooms with bathrooms. Sitting/television areas and laundry will be available on each floor. Common areas will feature a kitchen, dining room, library, and exercise and meditation spaces.

Each year, over 9,200 cancer patients travel more than 40 miles for their treatment. Hope Lodge Nebraska will be the state's cancer-only lodging facility and

available to anyone, regardless of where they are receiving treatment.

In addition to reducing the financial burden on patients and their families, Hope Lodge Nebraska will provide the emotional support and education that are crucial to recovery and survivorship.

Newly Remodeled Space Greets Patients

It was years in the making, but earlier this year, patients receiving treatment at Methodist Estabrook Cancer Center's Infusion Therapy Center noticed something different.

The space underwent an extensive remodel, thanks to funds raised by employees of MCL Construction and their Scare Away Cancer initiative.

Dollars raised over the course of two years resulted in freshly painted walls, new flooring and new nursing station workspace counters.

"We are really excited about the final outcome of the project," said Patty Bauer, service executive for oncology services at Methodist. "We really wanted a space that was warm and inviting for our patients."

Scare Away Cancer raised funds over the course of two years and donated \$80,000 to the Methodist Hospital Foundation to make the remodeling project possible.



**Newly remodeled
Methodist Estabrook Cancer Center's
Infusion Therapy Center**



HEATHER ROBERTS Miracle Woman

New Aquatic Therapy Pool Is
Part of Heather's Legacy

Story by Julie Cerney

“Heather and her family have been selfless in promoting awareness and education, raising money and making a difference.”

— Patty Bauer, Oncology Service
Executive, Methodist Estabrook
Cancer Center

Sue and Jon Roberts look back on photos
and favorite memories of their brave and
selfless daughter Heather.

The unexpected diagnosis was brain cancer, and the prognosis was grim. Treatment could bring periods of stability. A cure would take a miracle.

When she was diagnosed in April 2008, Heather Roberts was just 28. She lived every moment afterward with boundless optimism, outrageous humor, fiery determination and the unwavering support of her close-knit family, friends, Methodist co-workers and care providers.

Cancer couldn't keep Heather from being Heather. Cancer couldn't restrain her carefree laughter or giving spirit. Heather was certain a cure would come in time. She would show the world how to beat this. She would be the miracle.

Those lucky enough to have known Heather know this for certain: She has always been a miracle.

From Water Baby to Career Woman

Heather was the baby in her family, the youngest of three much-loved daughters born to Omahans Jon and Sue Roberts.

“Heather was always a mommy's girl,” said Sue, “and we called her Frog because she loved the water so much.”

Heather was fearless around water. As a toddler, she leapt fully dressed into a swimming pool's deep end, popping gleefully to the surface while panic-stricken adults rushed to the rescue.

“We promptly put Heather in swim school,” said Sue. “She loved it and later swam competitively.”

After high school, Heather earned her business degree from the University of Nebraska Omaha while working for the Omaha Lancers. This was the beginning of an enduring relationship with the Lancers and led to a new job opportunity with fresh challenges and more computer time.

When the headaches started, Heather blamed stress and eye strain.

Tumor

But when Heather described the piercing pain, the Roberts family's internal medicine physicians at Methodist Physicians Clinic



Heather Roberts

Regency — Ramona Daryani, MD, and Elizabeth Denman, MD — suspected a more serious cause.

The decision to arrange for a same-day MRI was “what may eventually save Heather's life,” Sue wrote in 2008. “Chills still run through my blood as I remember those words: ‘It's a tumor.’”

Any parent would feel shock and worry. Sue felt terror tempered by a firm resolve.

Sue had already lost a parent to brain cancer. She must not lose a child, too.

Circle of Life

“I was 12 years old and my dad was 42 when he started having headaches and blacking out,” said Sue. “Dad went into a California hospital for a diagnosis. I never saw him again.”

Back then, surgery and cobalt therapy were the only treatment options.

“Doctors opened his skull, saw his brain filled with cancer and removed what they could,” said Sue. “Dad was never himself again, never walked or talked. He died weeks later.”

Sue hadn't connected her dad's death and her daughter's headaches. Yet from birth, Heather had a special link to the grandfather she never knew. Heather was born on the anniversary of his death from brain cancer.

“The circle of life will be completed,” said Sue, “with Heather receiving the treatment my father could never even dream of.”



Heather enjoyed a stingray encounter during a family vacation to Bora Bora.

Ready to Conquer Cancer

Heather's cancer, an aggressive anaplastic astrocytoma, was intertwined with normal cells in her brain and brain stem. To remove as much of the egg-size cancer as safely possible, neurosurgeon Doug Long, MD, performed two craniotomies on Heather at Methodist Hospital: one in April, one in June. Decisions about chemotherapy and radiation therapy would follow.

Heather's oncologist, Irina Popa, MD, with Oncology Associates at Methodist Estabrook Cancer Center, was struck by how ready Heather was to conquer cancer from their first meeting.

"I could see that her personality was larger than life — her mother's too," said Dr. Popa. "Heather was extremely young to have this terrible disease. She was also really strong, optimistic and determined."

That determination extended far beyond Heather's individual battle.

According to the National Cancer Institute, more than 162,000 Americans are living with brain and other nervous system cancers. This year, an estimated 23,000 new cases will be diagnosed, and more than 16,000 people will die.

"Heather saw her cancer as an opportunity to engage people in finding a cure, not only for herself but for thousands," said Dr. Popa. "The Roberts family worked at it together, keeping the same amazing spirit, mission and energy."

Building Awareness, Targeting a Cure

"No one seemed to know about the gray ribbon for brain cancer," said Sue. "We needed awareness and a cure."

The Roberts family's action plan started forming in July 2008 inside a grocery store. At the

checkout, Sue and daughter Michele noticed a charitable donation cup for a better-known disease.

"We started laughing, thinking of the millions we'd raise to fight brain cancer," said Sue. "All we needed was a catchy name."

That is how Leap-for-a-Cure, an all-volunteer charity affiliated with Methodist Hospital Foundation, was born. Its promise: "Each donation may be one small step for brain cancer awareness, but many donations become one giant Leap-for-a-Cure."

Leap-for-a-Cure

"Even people who didn't know Heather as 'Frog' picked up on the frog's significance to Leap-for-a-Cure," said Sue. "FROG also stands for Forever Rely on God."

Heather and her family put their faith into action with one grassroots effort after another, including Monster Bash, Omaha's family-focused Halloween extravaganza.

There were penny wars, walks, mud runs, bike rides and frog flings. Leap-for-a-Cure and Methodist partnered with the Omaha Lancers and with the UNO Mavericks for Brain Cancer Awareness Nights with T-shirt sales, jersey auctions, raffles, head shaves and a mustache contest.

So far, Leap-for-a-Cure has raised more than \$850,000 and made every dollar a mighty weapon in the war on brain cancer.

Making a Difference

"Heather and her family have been selfless in promoting awareness and education, raising money and making a difference," said Patty Bauer, oncology service executive for Methodist Estabrook Cancer Center. "Thanks to their passion and hard work, we have been able

to offer patients and care providers in Omaha additional new technology, training and other brain cancer resources."

For example, Leap-for-a-Cure purchased cutting-edge neurosurgical brain tumor software and a functional MRI, the gold standard for mapping speech, movement and other critical brain functions. Leap-for-a-Cure also sponsored two brain tumor symposiums at Methodist Estabrook Cancer Center.

Their latest project, a warm water aquatic therapy pool for Methodist HealthWest at 156th and Dodge streets, had long been Heather's dream. As her disease progressed, Heather experienced firsthand the difference aquatic therapy can make. She returned to the water she loved to relearn to walk.

No Complaining

Heather's cancer journey was never easy, yet she never complained. She just kept laughing and working. In 2009, she joined the internal medicine reception and administrative team at Methodist Physicians Clinic Regency.

"Methodist was more than a job to Heather," said Ariana Bauer, MD, an internal medicine physician there. "Heather said the community of love and support she'd experienced from the front desk all the way to the nurses, doctors and lab techs was such a comfort that she wanted to be a part of that healing for other patients."

"Heather felt at home there," said Sue. "She worked with such a great group."

Another member of the clinic's team was Mallory Callahan, PA-C, a Methodist physician assistant and Heather's lifelong friend.

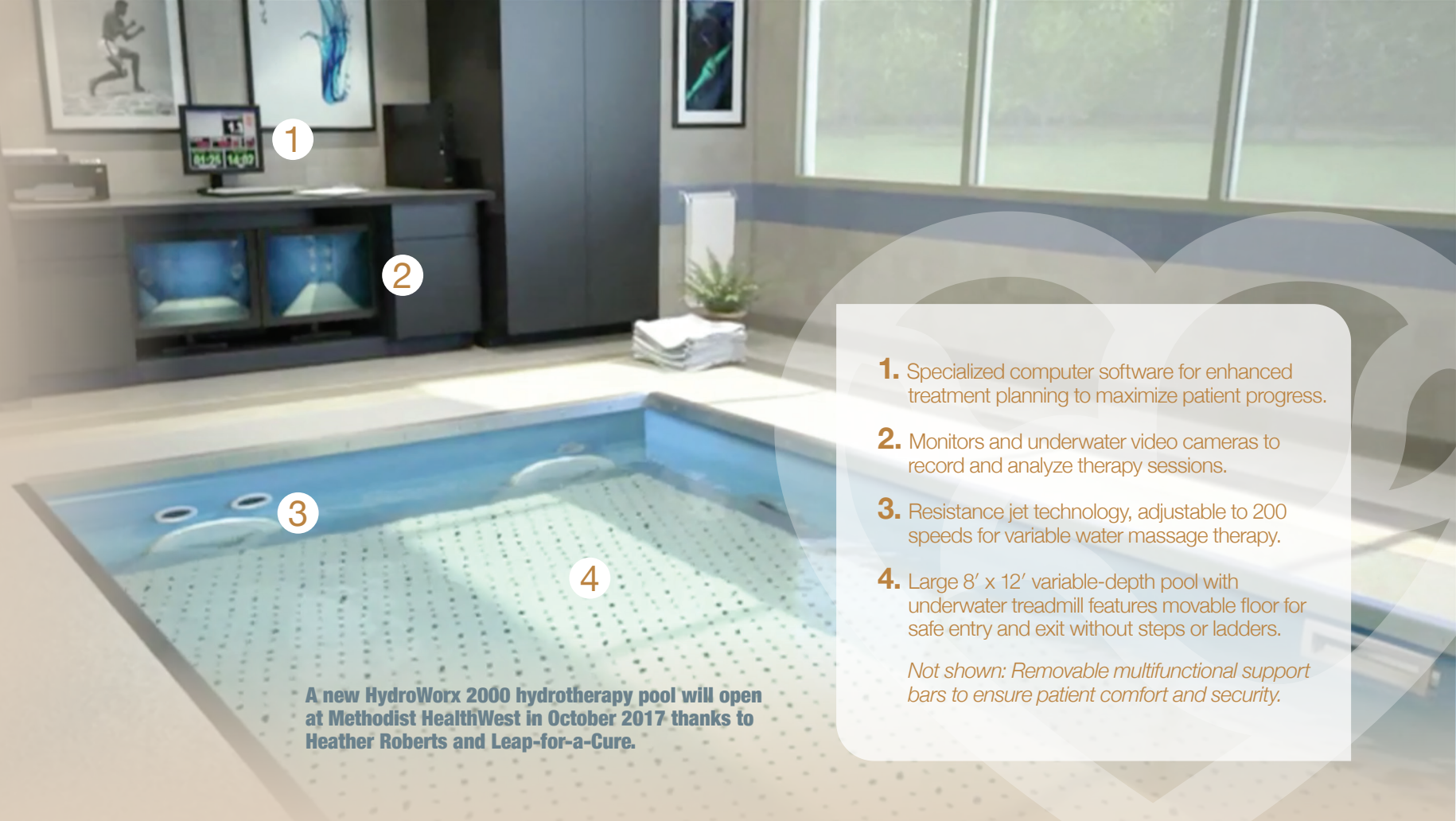
"Heather had the biggest heart," said Mallory, who lost her father to brain cancer. "She chose to be hopeful, so we chose to be hopeful too."

Admitting there is no delicate, honest way to put this, Mallory said, "Heather was usually laughing her butt off. She took the crappy hand she was dealt and uplifted everyone with the most inappropriate and amazing humor."

The battle to get Heather's cancer under control took surgery, chemotherapy, radiation therapy and steroids, accompanied by unwanted hair loss and hair growth, weight gain, aches, pains, nausea, eventual seizures, strokes, left side muscle weakness, paralysis and loss of balance.

"It's temporary," Heather would say, often with a curse word or two. She would do whatever it took to win.

Heather's care was a collaboration between Dr. Popa, a multidisciplinary Methodist team



A new HydroWorx 2000 hydrotherapy pool will open at Methodist HealthWest in October 2017 thanks to Heather Roberts and Leap-for-a-Cure.



Use of the removable support bars increases patient safety and stability during aquatic therapy sessions.

and a San Francisco neuro-oncologist Sue had reached out to long before Omaha had a neuro-oncologist. Sue and Heather turned frequent San Francisco medical trips into mother-daughter adventures.

"'Stable' became our favorite word," said Sue. "Heather's tumor was stable for five years and 11 months."

Lucky

Dr. Bauer was astonished and humbled by the way Heather described her cancer. Even after the tumor started growing again, Heather kept saying, "I'm so lucky."

"Heather would say, 'I'm so lucky because my cancer was caught before stage 4,' or 'I'm so lucky chemo is still an option' or 'I'm so lucky

I'm healthy enough to have a job,'" said Dr. Bauer. "She'd also say, 'I'd rather it was me than someone without a support system.'"

Meanwhile, Dr. Bauer would see Heather supporting others, quietly giving groceries or furniture to co-workers in need.

"Heather came to work every day dragging her bum leg like it was no big deal, laughing about how she tripped and fell on the way in," said Dr. Bauer. "She eventually had our maintenance staff rig a pulley to hold her limp arm out of the way while she worked from her wheelchair."

"At some point, we knew we couldn't beat it, but Heather did not quit," said Sue. "She said she got to choose her quality of her life, and she wanted to spend it working and fighting, trying anything that might help doctors help others."

Heather lost her brave battle on November 8, 2016, at age 37.

At Heather's insistence, the memorial service featured an "unclassy" door prize guaranteed to make the crowd laugh. Under the seat of one lucky attendee was a Walmart gift card.

Heather's Legacy

Heather's courage and selflessness continue to help others, even the four-legged friends so dear to her, through her support of a local dog rescue group. In one of life's bitter ironies, Heather lost two beloved rescue dogs to

cancer, one of them to brain cancer, while she battled the disease.

"Heather cried only a few times, and she didn't cry about brain cancer," said Sue. "She cried about not getting to be a mom. Heather really wanted that."

"Heather told me she was most scared not about not being here," said Mallory, "but about her parents being OK."

"My heart is forever broken, but I have to be OK," said Sue. "I promised Heather."

The Roberts family continues Leap-for-a Cure's work in Heather's name, and this fall, the aquatic therapy pool that was Heather's dream will open so others can enjoy its benefits, including improved strength, balance, gait and pain relief.

With this pool, and with each life touched by Heather and Leap-for-a-Cure, there is a miracle.

"Every day, she reminds me to be a better person, because I ask myself, 'What would Heather do?'" said Dr. Bauer.

"Right now," said Dr. Popa, "I'll bet Heather is organizing heaven to get everyone focused on curing cancer."



Heather Roberts, Miracle Woman at bestcare.org/stories

MOM FINDS HER VOICE Against Cancer

Story by Katina Granger

“I’m back. I’m finally
me again.”

— Liz Pettinger



Liz once again has the energy to share quality playtime with her two boys.

As Liz Pettinger finished the final stanza of “The Star-Spangled Banner” in front of a crowd of more than 8,000 people, a single, emotional thought raced through her head.

“I’m back. I’m finally me again.”

It was a long road for Liz to get herself and her singing voice ready for this day. Just a few months earlier, a devastating diagnosis brought the 32-year-old mother of two to her knees.

Not Just a Virus

A singer and a communications professional, Liz is pretty in tune with what is happening with her voice. But when a lump developed in her neck, she really didn’t think much about it.

“With my kids getting sick all the time, I thought I was just fighting some virus,” said Liz, the mother of rambunctious 2- and 4-year-old sons.

A quick trip to her family doctor for antibiotics turned into a recommendation for a CT scan and a referral to the Head and Neck Surgical Oncology Clinic at Methodist Estabrook Cancer Center.

“Even at that point, I was kind of in denial because I was sure there was nothing wrong with me,” reminisced Liz, who is a self-admitted

go-getter with little time to slow down. “I work out every day and I eat healthy, so I just kind of assumed everything’s probably OK.”

It wasn’t until the doctor walked into the room and delivered the diagnosis that Liz truly understood.

“When the doctor said, ‘You have thyroid cancer,’ I started crying,” said Liz. “Your initial reaction when you hear the word ‘cancer’ is terror and disbelief. But then Dr. Lydiatt explained things in a calm manner and assured me that together, we’d take care of this.”

Specialized Care Close to Home

“Liz presented with a pretty significant burden of cancer in her thyroid and lymph nodes in her neck,” said Bill Lydiatt, MD, a surgical oncologist at the Methodist Head and Neck Surgical Oncology Clinic. “It was obviously a surprise to her, as a cancer diagnosis is to most people.”

Affecting nearly 64,000 Americans each year, thyroid cancer is one of the fastest-growing incidences of cancer in the nation. It’s also one of the most commonly treated cancers at the Methodist Head and Neck Surgical Oncology Clinic.

“Unfortunately, thyroid cancer is something we’re seeing a lot more of,” said Dr. Lydiatt. “It’s become much more common in the last 20 years. It has increased in incidence about 4-5 percent or so per year, and that’s a pretty dramatic climb.”

In fact, three of the cancers that are rising most rapidly — thyroid, HPV-related throat cancers and skin cancers, including melanoma — are treated by the six fellowship-trained head and neck surgeons at the clinic. The Methodist Head and Neck Surgical Oncology Clinic is one of the largest in the country and is the largest in the region dedicated solely to the care of head and neck cancer patients.

“We have the advantage of being a very large practice for relatively uncommon types of cancer,” said Andrew Coughlin, MD, a surgical oncologist at the clinic. “It’s great



Liz undergoes physical therapy with Shannon Seeley, MS, PT.

for the community, state and region to have this comprehensive clinic where we can have many talented, specialized individuals who are focused on caring for patients with the unique diseases we treat.”

The treatment of those unique diseases relies on the talents of head and neck surgical oncologists, speech and language specialists, as well as experts in the dental and prosthetic needs of head and neck cancer patients.



Liz is grateful for the informative consults and personalized care she receives from surgical oncologist Bill Lydiatt, MD.

The da Vinci® Robotic System allow surgeons to make precise movements during delicate head and neck procedures.



“One of the most fundamental aspects of cancer care is the more you do something, the better you get at it,” said Dr. Lydiatt. “Seeing such a very large volume of thyroid cancer and other head and neck cancers at one place improves our quality and improves our patient care. It is not just the surgeons who benefit from seeing so many patients with the same disease, it is also the nurses, physical and speech therapists, radiation oncologists, medical oncologists and others. We have more experience when it comes to these specific cancers, and that’s what makes the care so much better.”

That experience and care comes from a team of physicians and specialists who collaborate to determine the best course of treatment.

“Every patient is presented at our multidisciplinary team conference before their therapy begins,” said Dr. Coughlin. “Surgeons, medical oncology, radiation oncology, endocrinology, speech and language pathology and oral surgery all have a seat at the table. Everyone hears the discussion and then contributes in a way that’s positive to the patient’s care.”

The “Easy Cancer”

While thyroid cancer is a highly curable cancer, treatment of this cancer — as well as many other head and neck cancers — can be anything but easy.

“My friends, in an attempt to ease my worry would say, ‘That’s the easy cancer,’” said Liz, “but putting the word ‘easy’ with cancer is kind of cruel in a way, because it’s not easy, especially for me. Besides being a wife and mother, I’m also a singer. This cancer, even though it was highly curable, was even more

concerning because of its location and potential risk to my vocal cords.”

“Any time you have a diagnosis of cancer, it changes your life,” said Dr. Coughlin. “For some patients, the surgery is straightforward and the overall prognosis is excellent. For others, it’s definitely life-altering because it can have a big impact on how we work, communicate and function.”

“The head and neck region is very complex,” said Dr. Lydiatt. “It has a number of major nerves and muscles that control most of our basic aspects of life — speech, swallowing, breathing, taste, chewing, the process of speaking, changes in voice tone or tenor — and it can also affect physical appearance, depending on where the cancer is located.”

“We have the advantage of being a very large practice for relatively uncommon types of cancer.”

— Andrew Coughlin, MD

In Liz’s case, it wasn’t just the nerves and muscles in her neck area that were traumatized by surgery, but also glands called the parathyroid. These glands, which control calcium levels in the body, were stunned,

causing her calcium to dip dangerously low. The medical emergency landed her back in the hospital until her doctors could get those levels back under control.

“My body felt like it was shutting down,” said Liz. “It was a terrifying experience.”

The surgery to remove lymph nodes from around her vocal cord nerve also temporarily paralyzed one of Liz’s vocal cords, rendering her voice a whisper and making it nearly impossible to swallow even the smallest bites of food.

“Every single time I drank water, I just spit it out because water was going down into places that it shouldn’t,” remembered Liz. “The thing that helped me the most was the ability to call my doctor and nurses with every question, and they were there reassuring me every step of the way.”

Back to a Pain-Free Life

Methodist’s strong commitment to patient care includes helping with every aspect of healing — from surgery to rehabilitation. Surgery can disrupt the complex network of muscles and nerves in the head and neck, resulting in lasting pain or limited movement. That’s why many patients seen by surgeons at the Methodist Head and Neck Surgical Oncology Clinic also see a physical or speech and language therapist before and after their procedures.

“It’s the surgeon’s job to catch the cancer, find it and treat it,” said Madonna Klein, PT, MPT, clinical coordinator of outpatient therapy at Methodist Hospital. “Our job is to help patients through that survivorship and offer them the treatment and tools to help maintain their quality of life.”

“There are multiple problems that stem from a head and neck surgery, and it basically comes down to where the cancer is,” said Shannon Seeley, MS, PT, a physical therapist at Methodist Hospital. “It’s really a puzzle to figure out what muscles and nerves are cut or damaged by the surgical process.”

In Liz’s complex case, those temporarily stunned muscles and nerves meant ongoing pain in her shoulder and trouble lifting her arm. It’s a common problem following an extensive neck dissection, creating an emotional challenge for a young mother trying to keep up with her kids.

“I couldn’t pick up my kids or hand them snacks in the backseat of the car,” said Liz, who spent more than seven months in physical therapy. “Shannon was wonderful because she listened to me. She was always thinking a step ahead, finding exercises that helped me get back to my normal self and a pain-free life.”

“This is really a team effort, and we enlist as many different and varied specialists as we can to maximize a patient’s recovery,” said Dr. Lydiatt. “It is our major goal to not only render

patients cured, but also make them feel as well as possible.”

A New Normal

Today, Liz counts herself as one of the lucky ones. She’s back to not only singing, but being an active mother and wife. If there is one word she can use to sum up her experience with Methodist, it’s “grateful.”

“I am finally starting to feel normal again, which is a relief,” said Liz. “Cancer is not a gift by any means, but it gave me the opportunity to slow down and appreciate the things and people in my life. It’s changed the course of my life in many ways.”

“Liz has been very engaged in her own care,” said Dr. Lydiatt, “and that always has such a positive impact on outcomes. She’s such a warm, giving and compassionate person and has been a delight to take care of. She’s very talented, and I am so happy to see her back doing all the many things that make her life special.”

Standing in front of the crowd with her microphone, sharing the talents a team of Methodist doctors, nurses and specialists helped to preserve, Liz is thankful for the new normal her life has become.

“Things do happen for a reason, and I think we go through the bad stuff so we can really appreciate the good.”

Early Detection Can Save Lives

The signs can be small: a small lump, a strange freckle, ear pain or trouble swallowing. They may seem like tiny nuisances, but each could be a sign pointing to a potentially deadly illness.

“Cancer is a scary thing,” said Andrew Coughlin, MD, head and neck oncologist at the Methodist Head and Neck Surgical Oncology Clinic. “We take care of thyroid cancers, skin cancers, sinus- and skull-based cancers, cancers of the tongue, the throat, the voice box, the back of the tongue — anything in the head and neck that can cause a cancer, we take care of it.”

Head and neck cancers — including thyroid, HPV-related throat cancers and melanoma — are three of the fastest-growing cancers in incidence in the nation. With more than 100,000 people being affected this year alone, what are the signs you should know to protect yourself?

The symptoms can often be irritating, but easy to dismiss:

- Difficulty swallowing
- Difficulty breathing
- Ear pain
- A sore in the mouth or throat
- Swelling in the jaw
- Voice changes
- Lump in the neck
- Pain that won’t go away
- Headaches

Traditionally, alcohol and tobacco were major risk factors for cancers of the head and neck. We now know that the paradigm is changing. Things like sun exposure, radiation exposure and now, most notably, having multiple sexual partners has also become a very important risk factor. Nearly 70 percent of cancers in the oropharynx (including the tonsils, soft palate and base of the tongue) are linked to the sexually transmitted HPV virus.

“Over the last 15-20 years, we’ve seen an increase in tonsil and basal tongue cancers in people who are not smokers or drinkers,” said Dr. Coughlin. “What we’ve found out is that they are related to the same virus that causes cervical cancer: HPV.”

Thankfully, almost all of these virus-related cancers have a relatively high survival rate: up to 85-90 percent, when caught early.

If you have concerns about your head and neck health, speak with your Methodist Physicians Clinic primary care provider.



Mom Finds Her Voice Against Cancer at bestcare.org/stories

CANCER Clinical Trials AT METHODIST

PARP Inhibitors Offer New Hope in the Battle Against Ovarian Cancer

Story by Julie Cerney

Gynecologic Oncologist
David Crotzer, MD

More Time

"Finally, we are finding ways to give women with advanced-stage ovarian cancer significantly more time," said David Crotzer, MD, a gynecologic oncologist at Methodist Estabrook Cancer Center.

"Some of the new molecularly targeted medications we are studying in our clinical trials have doubled or nearly tripled the length of progression-free survival," said Dr. Crotzer.

"These therapeutic agents hold more promise than anything we've had to offer our patients in the last 10 to 20 years."

Ovarian Cancer: The Silent Killer

The fifth-leading cause of cancer death among U.S. women is ovarian cancer, often called "the silent killer." Warning signs, if present, are typically too subtle for early detection and treatment of the disease.

When ovarian cancer is discovered in its later stages, the likelihood of long-term survival drops and the risk of recurrence skyrockets. According to the National Cancer Institute (NCI), 70 percent or more of advanced-stage ovarian cancer patients relapse after treatment.

"For years we have been waiting for something better, more effective, with fewer and more easily managed side effects for our patients," said Dr. Crotzer, "and now we're part of the cutting-edge international research into PARP inhibitors, an oral therapy that is advancing the treatment of ovarian cancer."

New Cancer Weapon: PARP Inhibitors

"PARP stands for poly ADP-ribose polymerase, a family of enzymes in our bodies," said Dr. Crotzer. "PARPs impact physiological processes on a cellular level, and they are especially good at helping cells repair single-strand breaks in DNA."

Normal cells are less likely to require immediate repair of small DNA breaks. Fast-growing, rapidly dividing cancer cells are far more vulnerable.

"PARP inhibitors are synthetic enzymes designed to suppress PARPs' ability to make DNA repairs," said Dr. Crotzer.

The goal is to keep cancer cells from self-repair and reproduction: Kill cancer cells; protect normal cells.

Dr. Crotzer described the initial study results that led to fast-tracked FDA approval of the first class of PARP

inhibitors in the treatment of recurrent ovarian cancer as "impressive — and better than we've seen in ovarian cancer in a long time, both in response rates and in the duration of response."

Leadership in Oncology Research

Clinical trials collect the evidence essential to assess a cancer drug's efficacy and side effects, to determine whether it should be used in place of or in combination with other treatments and to identify who will benefit most. This potentially disease-defeating, lifesaving evidence requires the dedication and commitment of cancer patients, hospital leadership, physicians and support staff.

Methodist Estabrook Cancer Center is unique among community cancer centers, both in its strong institutional support of oncology research and its level of patient participation in clinical trials.

"Nationally, only 3 to 5 percent of cancer patients choose to participate in clinical trials," said Kathryn Bartz, oncology research program manager for Methodist Estabrook Cancer Center. "In 2016, 14 percent of our screened patients were trial participants here."

Methodist Estabrook Cancer Center typically offers access to about 75 NCI-approved open trials, giving the local community opportunities that otherwise might require traveling hundreds of miles to a major academic center.

"Within the arena of gynecologic oncology, Methodist has the most robust clinical trial program in the region," said Dr. Crotzer. "Our department is committed to research. That is one of the reasons I came here."

Dr. Crotzer is one of four fellowship-trained gynecologic oncologists practicing at Methodist, where there are 16 gynecologic oncology trials available, including seven ovarian cancer trials. A total of 22 ovarian cancer patients are currently participating in PARP inhibitor trials at Methodist.

"...we're part of
the cutting-edge
international
research into
PARP inhibitors..."

— David Crotzer, MD



The X marks a break in a cancer cell's DNA where a PARP inhibitor is blocking repair, leading to cell death.

Helping to Find a Cure

One of the 22 is Judi Carter of Falls City, Nebraska.

"When I was diagnosed with ovarian cancer in 2011, I knew something was wrong," said Judi, "but I didn't dream it was cancer."

The surgical removal of a softball-size tumor was only the beginning of Judi's long battle. Three times the cancer has recurred: in 2013, 2014 and 2016.

Judi has also lost many loved ones to cancer and knows there is a genetic component to her disease. She remains hopeful, especially knowing that special enzymes can trigger the body to fight cancer cells.

"The decision to participate in a PARP inhibitor trial was easy, a no-brainer," said Judi. "We've got to find a cure for this disease."

Disclosure Statement: Dr. Crotzer receives compensation from AstraZeneca as a member of their speakers' bureau and consulting board for olaparib, a PARP inhibitor.

COMING SOON: Mobile MAMMOGRAPHY

Fundraising Continues for Area's First and Only Mobile 3-D Mammograms

Dawn Gonzales thinks about breast cancer every single day. She helped her mom battle the disease and then faced it herself. Both women survived, and now Dawn wants to make sure others have the same chance.

"An early diagnosis means more options for the patients, and often, better outcomes," said Dawn.

In 2017, breast cancer will kill more than 40,000 U.S. women and men. Every week, Nebraska averages 24 new breast cancer cases and four lives lost to the disease.

Access to mammograms for early detection and treatment of breast cancer has never been more important, yet Nebraska ranks a low 40th in the nation in the percentage of women 40 and older who report having a mammogram within the past two years. Sections of Douglas and Saunders Counties have been named priority screening access areas by Susan G. Komen Great Plains due to dramatically higher rates of late-stage breast cancer diagnosis and death due to breast cancer.

To make mammograms more convenient and more accessible, Methodist Health System is opening the area's first and only 3-D mobile mammography unit starting in 2018. Methodist will take this lifesaving technology to underserved neighborhoods, community centers and local businesses.

Assistance will be available to women who cannot afford the screening or who may face scheduling difficulties. Methodist Mobile Mammography is expected to serve approximately 18 women per day.

Methodist's push to make mobile mammography a reality in Omaha is a team effort that has drawn the enthusiastic sponsorship of Susan G. Komen Great Plains and a growing list of donors. The program's lead donor is The Harper Family Foundation, which created Harper's Hope, a comprehensive cancer survivorship program.



Dawn Gonzales

“An early diagnosis means more options for the patients, and often, better outcomes.”

— Dawn Gonzales
Breast Cancer Survivor

Betsy Harper Murphy, a Harper Foundation trustee, is a daughter of the late Charles "Mike" and Joan "Josie" Harper.

"My mom and dad felt so strongly about making health care accessible to everyone in our community," said Betsy. "The mobile mammography unit aligns perfectly with their vision and the mission of our foundation to improve the quality of lives throughout our region."

Another important partner is Susan G. Komen Great Plains. Dawn Gonzales is the organization's president-elect.

"Mobile mammography is a key component to finding breast cancer early," said Dawn. "With Methodist, we are taking this lifesaving technology on the road."

Methodist Hospital Foundation's fundraising target to cover startup costs is \$655,000. Your generous support will help to put this lifesaving technology on the road.

To learn how your gift can increase access to mammography for early detection of breast cancer, contact Methodist Hospital Foundation at (402) 354-4825 or visit MethodistHospitalFoundation.org/Mammography.

Statistical Sources: National Cancer Institute, Susan G. Komen Nebraska 2015 Community Profile, The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation

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Named for the year in which Methodist Hospital was established, the 1891 Society recognizes the current giving of loyal donors who support the programs and projects of Methodist Hospital Foundation. We thank the following friends who made a gift between **January 1, 2017, and July 31, 2017.**

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