

AWAARE!

Celebrating Twenty Years of Hope and Healing

LOOKING BACK, LOOKING FORWARD...

When The Harold Leeper Regional Cancer Center opened in 2002, its mission was to create a healing environment for the care of people with cancer, keeping patients and families at the center of every interaction.

We are proud to say that for 20 years we have been fulfilling that goal, providing the most advanced therapies to our patients and continuously seeking out and offering innovations in cancer prevention, diagnosis, treatment, education, and support.

A Vision Becomes Reality

The Harold Leeper Regional Cancer Center was the brainchild of Mr. Harold Leeper, a local businessman and generous donor who started the Capital Campaign for the Leeper Cancer Center. Mr. Leeper's goal was to encourage the two local hospitals — Saint Mary's Hospital and Waterbury Hospital — to join forces to fight a common enemy: cancer.

Mr. Leeper died in January 2001, but his legacy lives on. Thanks to his efforts, as well as a grant by the State of Connecticut, gifts from many area foundations, and the dedication and support of many forward-thinking community leaders, The Harold Leeper Regional Cancer Center opened its doors on October 8, 2002. Since then, over 30,000 patients have been seen.

Cutting-Edge Technology and Treatment

For two decades, the Leeper Cancer Center has maintained its commitment to making the latest cancer diagnosis and treatment technology available to our patients.



HAROLD & RUTH ANN LEEVER, JUNE 1990.

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Over the years, those efforts have included:

- Becoming the first cancer center in the state to offer dynamic Intensity Modulated Radiation Therapy or DIMRT and one of the first facilities in New England to provide Acculoc IMRT.
- The opening of our dedicated PET/CT Imaging Center, a 4,000-square-foot standalone facility that was the first of its kind in the state.
- The addition of HDR brachytherapy, a highly precise form of radiation therapy that allows quicker, more effective treatments and can spare healthy tissue and reduce side effects.
- A \$1.5 million investment in state-of-the-art stereotactic body radiation therapy (SBRT) and stereotactic radiosurgery (SRS) technologies, including four-dimensional cone-beam computed tomography (CT) and an upgrade of both linear accelerators to include multi-leaf collimator (MLC) heads, which allows doctors to treat inoperable malignant tumors.
- Multidisciplinary conferences, where doctors and other medical professionals meet to discuss the treatment plan and process for individual patients.



We conduct three different multidisciplinary conferences, one each for breast, colorectal, and thoracic cancer. Approximately 8,000 patient cases have been reviewed in these conferences.

- Volumetric Modulated Arc Therapy (VMAT), a highly advanced form of radiotherapy during which radiation beams make 360-degree rotations around the patient while delivering precise 3D radiation doses.
- The installation of a state-of-the-art, premium PET/CT system: the GE Discovery MI DR. In addition to significantly improving diagnostic accuracy, it reduces patient exposure to radiation by more than 50 percent.

As we move forward into our third decade, we will continue to consistently invest in the most advanced technology and training available to ensure that our patients have access to the very best in cancer care.

Looking to the Future

With COVID seemingly on the wane, we are looking forward to reopening some of our communal spaces and restarting some in-person resources, including our popular support groups. We have missed seeing our patients and their families and caregivers in the library, waiting rooms, and around the coffee machine, and we will be excited to welcome you back. Watch the website for updated information.

While we are looking forward to changing our visitor and screening policies, one thing will remain the same: our commitment to our patients and our community.

As part of that effort, we periodically conduct a Community Needs Assessment Survey to better understand the needs of our patients and the community with regard to cancer treatment, caregiver support services, and general treatment resources. Through the survey and in every individual interaction, we want our patients and valued community members to know that we care about them, we are listening to their needs, and we will do everything we can to help.

“The past two years have certainly presented some challenges, but we are confident we will become stronger as a result,” said Executive Director Kevin Kniery.

Most of all, we want you to know that, though we have all faced hardships recently, we are filled with hope: for our patients, for the Leever Cancer Center, and for the future.




We have made amazing strides in the past 20 years and we are excited and hopeful to see what possibilities tomorrow brings.

Kevin Kniery, Executive Director, The Harold Leever Regional Cancer Center



Hope Lives Here: A timeline of The Harold Leever Cancer Center

2002



Grand Opening!
The Harold Leever Regional Cancer Center officially opens its doors on October 8, 2002.



2003



IMRT
HLRCC implements the first MRC-based dynamic IMRT technique in the state.



2004



Reflections Boutique
Patients undergoing cancer treatment now have access to free wigs and head coverings. ▶

2005



Breast Multidisciplinary Conferences
HLRCC begins holding multidisciplinary conferences for breast cancer patients. ▶



2006



PET/CT Center
The 4,000-square-foot PET/CT Imaging Center at HLRCC opens, becoming the first dedicated PET/CT in a radiation oncology department in Connecticut.

Thoracic Multidisciplinary Conferences
We begin holding multidisciplinary conferences for thoracic patients.

2008



Synergy
HLRCC begins using Elekta Synergy linear accelerators with integrated three-dimensional imaging, the most advanced radiotherapy in the world.



GI Multidisciplinary Conferences
We begin holding multidisciplinary conferences for colorectal cancer patients.



2011



Survivorship Program
HLRCC launches the Stepping Forward Survivorship Program, a free resource that provides cancer survivors with post-treatment plans for care, disease prevention and support.

Breast Cancer Center
The Breast Cancer Center of Greater Waterbury is awarded the top honor by the National Accreditation Program for Breast Centers (NAPBC).



2012



HDR Brachytherapy
HLRCC begins offering a new, targeted form of radiation therapy called HDR brachytherapy to eligible patients. ▶



2014



New CT Scanner
The new wide-bore CT scanner for treatment planning is installed.

SBRT/SRS
HLRCC makes a substantial investment in SBRT and SRS technology — specialized types of external beam radiation therapy.



2016



Leever Website
We launch an updated website offering comprehensive information on cancer types and treatments, the Leever facility, doctors and staff, and support resources. ▶



2017



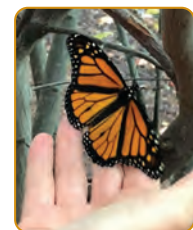
VMAT
HLRCC becomes one of the first facilities in the Northeast to offer VMAT, a new type of radiotherapy that reduces treatment time and can improve accuracy.

2018



PET/CT Upgrade
The PET/CT area gets a major renovation and a new state-of-the-art machine: the GE Discovery MI DR, which improves diagnostic accuracy and reduces radiation.

Butterfly Release
The inaugural “On the Wings of Hope” Survivors Day Butterfly Release ceremony lets survivors, caregivers, family, and friends celebrate hope and honor the memories of those who have passed. ▶



2022



20-Year Anniversary!



Cruising For A Cure: Relay for Life 2022



Once again, the Leever Cancer Center was a gold sponsor for this year's Relay for Life of Greater Waterbury, which took place Saturday, June 11.

The theme of this year's event was "Cruising For A Cure." As with previous Relay events, it included a survivor lap, commemorative luminaria, and other special events and activities to honor and support cancer survivors and their caregivers. Thank you to all who participated!

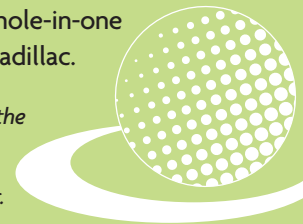


Horatio's Bar Holds Golf Tourney to Benefit Leever Cancer Center

Horatio's Bar in Watertown held its Third Annual Charity Golf Tournament on May 24 at the Watertown Golf Club, raising \$18,500 to benefit The Harold Leever Regional Cancer Center.

The shotgun-style event featured a breakfast buffet and a lunch raffle, with prizes for first, second, and third place, longest drive, closest to the line, and closest to the pin, plus a hole-in-one car giveaway sponsored by Blasius Chevrolet & Cadillac.

Horatio's Bar owner Shaun Nardella presents a check to the administration team at Leever. From L to R: Tom Belzek, Finance Director; Kevin Kniery, Executive Director; Shaun Nardella; Deborah Parkinson, Operations Director.



Spotlight on: HLRCC Front Office Staff

When people walk through the front door of the Leever Cancer Center, they are often not feeling their best. They might be feeling ill or weak from treatments or be confused about where to go. That’s why our valuable front office staff is so important.

“The front office staff here at The Harold Leever Regional Cancer Center plays a critical role,” says Beth Lepore, Front Office Supervisor. “They are the first people that a patient, family member, or caregiver meets here. We have a positive and calming approach to assist patients and families in a compassionate and professional manner.”

Located at the front window down the hall from the main entrance, the front office staff — which includes Beth and patient representatives Jose, Kathy, and Kim — greets everyone when they come in, gathers the required information, and helps patients figure out where they’re going. “We get a lot of people who say all they know is their doctor told

them to go to the Leever Center, so we have to help them get to the correct provider,” says Beth.

With each patient, the team asks for identification, makes copies of COVID vaccination and insurance cards, and makes sure all demographic information is complete, then has them take a seat in the waiting room, where they will be met by a nurse or medical assistant to escort them to their appointment.

“Our job is to ensure patients get to and through their appointment efficiently,” says Beth. “We aim for minimum waiting times in a relaxed setting.” As part of that effort, the front office team is now sending out demographic forms (via mail or email) ahead of time for new consultations, so patients can fill them out beforehand and not feel stressed. “That makes it a lot easier for everyone,” says Beth.

While the front desk staff members are the first point of contact for patients on their way in to the Leever Cancer



“We have a positive and calming approach to assist patients and families in a compassionate and professional manner.”
 — Beth Lepore, Front Office Supervisor

Center, they also provide assistance to patients on their way out. They help patients schedule follow-up appointments, call a ride service for them, or help them get to the exit if they are in a wheelchair. “We do whatever is needed to support our patients,” says Beth.

Left to right: Kathy, Jose, Kim, and Beth.

Breast Center Receives Top Honor Again

The National Accreditation Program for Breast Centers (NAPBC), a program administered by the American College of Surgeons, has once again awarded their top honor to The Breast Center of Greater Waterbury at the Leever Cancer Center.

NAPBC accreditation ensures that Leever patients have access to comprehensive care, including a full range of state-of-the-art services; multidisciplinary, expert teams working together to develop individualized treatment plans; information about ongoing clinical trials and new treatment options; and quality breast care close to home.

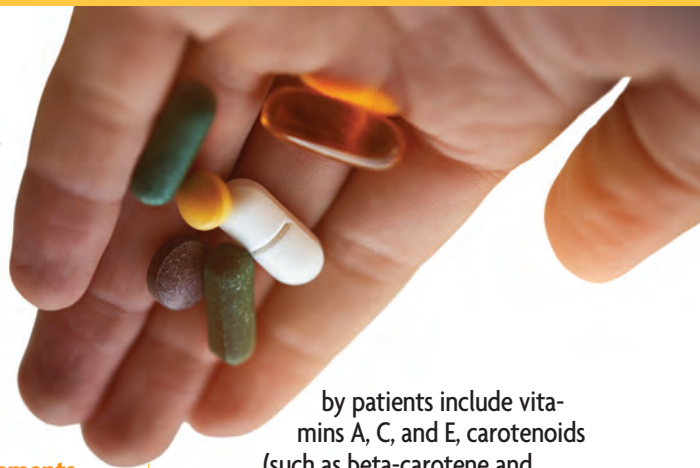
“NAPBC accreditation is a meaningful achievement that reflects not only our commitment to providing state-of-the-art, comprehensive care for patients with breast disorders, but also that we effectively deliver that care in accordance with the industry’s highest quality standards,” explained Kevin Kniery, Executive Director of the Leever Cancer Center.

For more information, visit the Leever Cancer Center website at leevercancercenter.org or the NAPBC site at accreditedbreastcenters.org.



Using Supplements During Chemo: Yes or No?

By Karen Sabbath, MS, RD, CSO



Americans spend more than \$30 billion a year on vitamins, herbals and other supplements. It is not uncommon for our patients to arrive to their oncology consultations with a large bag (or long list) of the supplements they are taking. It has been estimated that 65% - 80% of all cancer patients take one or more vitamin or mineral supplements, and many of these patients START taking supplements just prior to starting their treatment.

by patients include vitamins A, C, and E, carotenoids (such as beta-carotene and lycopene) as well as selenium and Coenzyme Q10. We generally recommend that patients discontinue them before, during and for a period of time after treatment is completed.

The problem is that many supplements actually have the potential to interfere with the cancer treatment, in some cases making the treatment less effective. Plus, supplements can interact with other medications, resulting in delivering too high or too low of a dose or triggering unwanted side effects.

Keep in mind, there are some supplements that are prescribed due to pre-existing deficiencies or deficiencies caused from treatment, and these are medically necessary. Some examples would be correcting a chemotherapy-induced magnesium deficiency, or replenishing someone's vitamin D or vitamin B-12 levels if they are low.

Why is supplement use during cancer treatment, particularly of antioxidants, a problem? Many studies have indicated that taking antioxidant supplements (foods are fine) during chemotherapy and/or radiation treatment was associated with a lower breast cancer survival rate and may hasten the spread of lung cancer, as well as some other cancers. One study observed that taking vitamin C with Tamoxifen decreased its effectiveness.


How does this work? It's all about "free radicals," which are highly charged oxygen complexes in your body that can be created by cigarette smoke, exposure to radiation, environmental toxins, or an unhealthy diet. Too many free radicals can result in DNA changes and cell damage that may lead to diseases including cancer. Antioxidants, which can be produced by our bodies or obtained from a diet rich in fruits and vegetables, can neutralize these free radicals and prevent cell damage. Getting your antioxidants from food is the best way to reap the benefits. Getting them from supplements does not appear to provide the same benefits.


So, what's the problem? Many cancer treatments work by creating free radicals that then go on to destroy cancer cells. Taking antioxidants in supplement form (again, remember that antioxidants in food are fine) may actually "protect" cancer cells during treatment. In other words, antioxidants in pill form have the potential to counteract the effects of chemotherapy or radiation therapy. Common antioxidant supplements taken


Other supplements can increase or decrease blood sugar, blood pressure, or bleeding time. If you are taking medications for any of these medical conditions, make sure that someone reviews what supplements you are taking to be certain that there will be no adverse effects to your health.

Are there any exceptions? Vitamin D, which is NOT an antioxidant, is often called "the sunshine vitamin" and deserves special consideration. Because it is not found in foods, it can be difficult to obtain enough naturally through sun exposure. It is easy to get a blood test to determine your vitamin D level. Low levels of vitamin D have been associated with increased risk of certain cancers, and higher levels of vitamin D are associated with a lower risk of developing breast and colon cancer and improved survival from lung and colon cancer. It is important not to overdo vitamin D supplementation, since blood levels which are too high can increase inflammation. Your doctor can help you determine the best way to increase your levels if they are low.

Bottom Line[s]

 Let your doctor know what supplements/herbals you are taking before you start your treatment.

 Try to get your nutrition through foods and a healthy diet.

 Discontinue any supplements that are not medically necessary or could potentially interfere with your treatment, with other medications you are taking, or with your specific medical conditions.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact your doctor, nurse, or the Leever Oncology Dietitian, Karen Sabbath, MS, RD, CSO, at ksabbath@leevercancercenter.org or 203-575-5510.

A Community of Caring

The Harold Leever Regional Cancer Center wishes to express its appreciation to our neighbors and friends...

We are so grateful to “Watertown’s Finest” – the **Watertown Police Department** – for their enduring support over the years.

Special thanks to **Kim and Jeff Di Bona** for their generous donation of gift cards for patients with funds raised from a golf outing.

Over 100 patient care bags were gratefully received from **Kirsta Palomba** and her group of helpers.

Thanks to **Lieutenant B. Johnson** and the **Naugatuck Fire Department** for their very generous donation.

A big thank you to **Pomperaug High School’s Interact Club** and to **Jackie Cote** for donating Valentine’s Day cards for patients.

The staff is most grateful for the delicious lunch donation from **Jersey Mike’s Subs** in Watertown.

Thanks to **Diane Williams Andrew** for the proceeds of her birthday fundraiser.

Our sincere gratitude to **Diane Lafferty** and **Mary Mitchell** for contributing to the Patient Holiday Collection.



“Joy is when a tiny bird sings a big, sweet song.”

Thanks to **David Battistoni** for bringing joy to our patients with his painted mini-birdhouses.

We are most grateful for the following donations:

Comfort caps, knit hats, and other items from **Maria Bernardo, Joan Brennan, Rebekah Carley, Jayne and John Cieslewski, Maryann Jackson, Bonnie Loiseau, Wolcott Senior Center Knitters, and Church of Assumption Knit Whits.**

Chemo caps, comfort pillows, and port protectors from **The United Church of Christ, Southbury** and **Farmingbury Women’s Club of Wolcott.**

Useful personal care toiletries from **Unilever.**

Gift cards for patients from **Brave at Heart Cancer Support Group.**

Handmade ornaments from **St. John of the Cross Women’s Group.**



Compassion until there’s a cure... Many thanks to **Pink Aid** for the donation of patient bags for Mother’s Day.

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is published by
The Harold Leever Regional Cancer Center

Editor-in-Chief: Deborah Parkinson
Editorial Executives: Kevin Kniery and Tom Belzek
Design: Aro Strategic Marketing

We encourage your feedback.
If there is a cancer topic you would like covered, to respond to an article you’ve read, or to be put on our mailing list, please call 203-575-5555 or email: dparkinson@leevecancercenter.org


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HAPPY 10TH ANNIVERSARY, *Quilts that Care!*

As The Harold Leever Regional Cancer Center celebrates 20 years of caring for patients, we want to acknowledge another anniversary reached this year by one of our most beloved and generous partners: Quilts that Care.

This year marks 10 years in which Quilts that Care has been making beautiful quilts for cancer patients at the Leever Cancer Center. In that time, QTC has donated approximately 500 quilts to HLRCC and nearly 5,000 quilts overall.

Quilts that Care is a Waterbury-based charitable organization that was founded in April 2012 and has grown into a group of more than 60 volunteers. Each quilt is handmade by a single group member or a team of group members to provide warmth and comfort to those undergoing cancer treatment.

A huge thank you to the Quilts that Care organization and all the individuals involved for your continued generosity!

For more information on Quilts that Care, visit quiltssthatcare.org.

Members of the Quilts that Care board. Left to right: Maura Yerger; Melissa Seres, HLRCC; Deb Van Steenberg (QTC founder) and Edna Wells.



PROUD TO BE COMMITTED

The 13th annual "Are You Dense" Music Fest was held on Saturday, June 25 at the Palace Theater. The Leever Cancer Center was proud to be honored with an award for our continuing support.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

All onsite support groups and events are on hold until further notice.

As always, the health and safety of our patients and staff are of the utmost importance, and we are doing everything we can to provide the necessary care to our patients while protecting against the spread of COVID-19.

For the most up-to-date patient alerts and safety precautions, go to leevercancer-center.org/news/important-information-about-the-leever-cancer-center.