



THE HAROLD LEEVER  
REGIONAL CANCER  
CENTER

2002-2017

Fall 2017

# Aware!

Prevention and awareness information from The Harold Leever Regional Cancer Center, a joint partnership of Saint Mary's Hospital and Waterbury Hospital



## It's About Time!

### *Leever is one of the First in the Northeast to Implement VMAT Auto-planning*

The Greek philosopher Theophrastus once said that time is the most valuable thing a man can spend. And we couldn't agree more. But at the Leever Cancer Center, we understand that it is how you spend your time that really matters. Our state-of-the-art technologies, advanced treatment planning, and team approach to care allow you to spend less time here and more time doing what you love most.

#### **New Technologies, Shorter Treatment Times**

Our commitment to delivering world-class care begins with a world-class team of experts working with the most advanced technologies available. When it comes to radiation treatment, that technology is Volumetric Modulated Arc Therapy (VMAT).

VMAT is a new, highly advanced form of radiotherapy during which radiation beams sweep around the patient while delivering precisely shaped 3D radiation doses with each sweep. In traditional Intensity Modulated Radiotherapy (IMRT), the machines deliver the radiation in as many as nine fixed positions around the patient, a process that can take upwards of 10 minutes for complex cases. VMAT delivers the same highly conforming dose in just one or two 360-degree rotations, which can often be delivered in less than two minutes.

"IMRT is a huge improvement over conventional 3D radiotherapy, as it allows higher doses to be delivered to the target while decreasing the dose to the surrounding healthy tissue," explains Director of Physics Ian Crooks. "VMAT retains all the benefits of IMRT, while overcoming some of its problems, including increased treatment delivery time, which can mean more discomfort and possible movement for the patient, thereby reducing the accuracy of the treatment."

The VMAT system incorporates 3D volume imaging technology, allowing physicians to visualize the tumor just prior to treatment to

## In this Issue

- Page 2** Ask the Doctors
- Page 3** Team Spotlight:  
Diane Lafferty, LCSW, OSW-C  
Welcome Dr. Elena Ratner
- Page 4** Nutrition Notes:  
Dilemma: Eating Healthy Dinners  
When You Don't Have Time
- Page 6** HLRCC Happenings:  
Hail and Farewell to Our Friend  
Peter Sanchez
- Page 7** A Community of Caring
- Page 8** Community Events  
& Monthly Support Groups

Continued on page 2 ▶

leevercancercenter.org

ensure highly accurate localization of the target. VMAT is equally effective across patients and pathologies.

“Most cancer centers use IMRT, but not everyone uses VMAT,” notes Crooks. “That is something that sets Leever apart.”

### Advanced Treatment Planning

While VMAT reduces the time required for individual radiation sessions, automated treatment planning can get the entire process started faster and with better results.

Plan design is one of the most important steps affecting the quality of radiation treatment. It is also one of the most time consuming. “Auto-planning” optimization technology uses algorithms to automatically build individualized therapy plans that take into account treatment objectives, constraints, and dose-shaping contours.

“Treatment plans are developed on a computer, using complex algorithms that model the way the radiation will interact with the patient,” says Crooks. “Traditionally, a VMAT plan is done in a number of iterations where the planner adjusts various parameters to continuously improve the dose distribution until a plan achieves the physician’s goals for treatment. This process is quite time consuming. With auto-planning, the planning goals are entered into the computer, which then runs through the iterations with minimal intervention by the planner. This speeds up the process and produces much more consistent plans.”

Studies have consistently shown that automated planning can increase both the efficiency and consistency of individual treatment plans, meaning better care in less time.

In the end, it’s all about time — yours. What matters to you matters to us.

# Ask the Doctors

Jeffrey A. Bitterman, MD, Radiation Oncologist, The Harold Leever Regional Cancer Center, and Consuelito Medrano, MD, Hematologist-Oncologist, Saint Mary's Hospital Oncology Center, answer your questions about advanced cancer treatment.



Jeffrey A. Bitterman, MD  
The Harold Leever Regional  
Cancer Center

**Q I heard that Leever is using an advanced radiation treatment. What is it, and how is it different from what other cancer centers are using?**

**Dr. Bitterman:** Radiation therapy is an effective tool in treating cancer because of its ability to control cell growth. In the 1990s, traditional 3D imaging, the standard for identifying tumors and defining radiation delivery parameters, took a giant leap forward with Intensity Modulated Radiotherapy (IMRT). With IMRT, the radiation beams conform more precisely to the exact shape of the tumor. But IMRT delivery can take as long as 10 minutes — time during which patients may grow uncomfortable and shift positions, thereby decreasing the accuracy of the radiation beams. That’s where Volumetric Modulated Arc Therapy (VMAT) comes in. VMAT is the quickest, most advanced means of delivering IMRT. VMAT delivers the same highly conforming radiation dose as traditional IMRT, but in a fraction of the time — often in less than two minutes. And while IMRT is standard protocol in most cancer centers, VMAT is new and not as widely used, putting Leever ahead of the pack, and leading the way in radiation technology and treatment protocols.



Consuelito Medrano, MD  
Saint Mary's Hospital  
Oncology Center

**Q The more I learn about my diagnosis, the more I understand that my care and treatment will be complex and multifaceted. I may need a surgeon, a medical oncologist for chemo, a radiation oncologist. It seems overwhelming. How can I be certain that my doctors are all in sync with my case?**

**Dr. Medrano:** At the Leever Cancer Center, we make it our operational imperative to treat cancer with a multidisciplinary and team-focused approach. This means that every patient benefits from the knowledge and expertise of medical professionals from a wide range of fields, all of whom weigh in on their diagnosis, treatment plan, and follow-up care. Our multidisciplinary cancer care teams include radiation oncologists, medical oncologists, surgeons, pathologists, radiologists, pulmonologists, nurses, social workers, nutritionists, and APRNs who meet regularly to present cases, compare notes, and make recommendations for care and treatment. By working together, our multidisciplinary teams ensure that comprehensive, coordinated care is available to each patient from diagnosis to treatment and recovery.

# Building Your Self-Care Toolbox:

## Diane Lafferty, LCSW, OSW-C

Diane Lafferty is a Certified Oncology Social Worker and a 28-year cancer survivor. In both principle and practice — through education and experience — Diane has come to understand what it means to face cancer and what tools and techniques can help patients and caregivers along the way.

Using things like meditation, breathing techniques, and journaling, Diane helps cancer patients decrease stress while increasing their coping skills. She brings those resources to the community through the Leever Cancer Center’s “Building Your Self-Care Toolbox” program, a series of no-cost workshops for patients and caregivers.

“We’ve had a great response from attendees every single time,” says Diane, who has to date brought 12 workshops to Leever. “Those coming are motivated to learn something new. The energy is high at the end of every session; it is very, very exciting.”

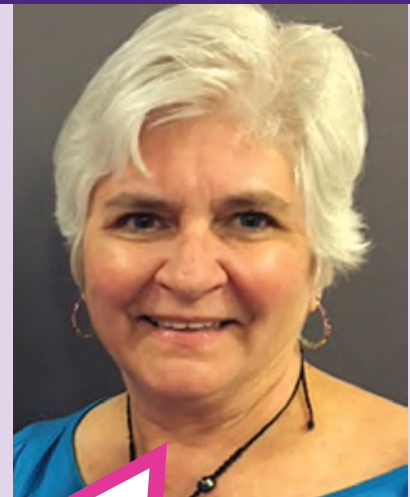
Diane was part of the oncology team at MidState Medical for 13 years; she has been in private practice in Watertown for the past two. She worked with Leever’s staff social worker, Melissa Seres, as a member of Connecticut’s Social Work Oncology Group. The rest is history.

“I spoke at the Leever Cancer Center groundbreaking more than 15 years ago,” recalls Diane. “In 2016 Leever asked me to facilitate a self-care program. It feels like I have come full circle; I am beyond grateful for the opportunity to share my love of complementary therapies with the patients, caregivers, and community.”

Recognizing that each patient and caregiver is unique, Diane works to bring a wide range of programs, allowing each individual to fill their care and coping toolbox with therapies and techniques that feel right for them. Diane has conducted journaling, breathwork, and mandala workshops herself, while tapping highly qualified and uniquely experienced practitioners to deliver Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT), reflexology, meditation, art therapy, aromatherapy, yoga, exercise, and nutrition sessions.

“Diane has established and grown an important and meaningful program,” says Deborah Parkinson, Operations Manager at the Leever Cancer Center. “She is the constant thread, tying the program together. As a trained social worker, her finger is on the pulse of our patients’ needs. The response has been overwhelming and positive, with close to 40 people attending each session. Diane herself is a big part of the success of this program.”

*See back page for upcoming Self-Care Toolbox programs. All workshops are free and open to the public. Registration will open in 2018.*



**“Those coming are motivated to learn something new. The energy is high at the end of every session; it is very, very exciting.”**



Diane Lafferty, LCSW, OSW-C



# Welcome Dr. Elena Ratner!

Yale Gynecologic Oncology Program physician **Dr. Elena Ratner** now brings her comprehensive care and expertise to the Leever-based offices of the Smilow Cancer Hospital. Twice each month Dr. Ratner joins Drs. Chang, Katoch, and Sabbath in seeing patients on the second floor of the Leever Cancer Center.

Dr. Ratner is a board certified gynecologic oncologist, and an associate professor in the Department of Obstetrics, Gynecology and Reproductive Sciences at Yale University School of Medicine. Her professional interests include chemotherapy-targeted drug development, patient quality of life programs, and early cancer detection. Her laboratory is working on new targeted drugs for ovarian cancer in order to provide patients with truly personalized care.

Dr. Ratner is the co-director of Yale’s Discovery to Cure program, director of the Discovery to Cure Early Ovarian Cancer Detection program, and a founder and director of Sexuality, Intimacy and Menopause cancer survivorship program. Her work also focuses on reversing chemotherapy resistance in ovarian and uterine cancers. Dr. Ratner is a recipient of multiple clinical and teaching awards, most recently the 2015 Yale University Smilow Cancer Center Award for Clinical Excellence.

# Dilemma: Eating Healthy Dinners

## When You Don't Have Time

By Karen Sabbath, MS, RD, CSO

**It takes too long. I don't have time. Too much chopping. Everyone eats at a different time. I don't have the right ingredients.** These are just a few of the comments people make when asked about making homemade healthy meals.

According to a study reported in *Business News Daily*, Americans spend 23 hours a week emailing, texting, and using social media. Imagine how well you could eat if you used some of that time to prepare healthy food, or maybe even get in a walk! With a small amount of planning, food that is prepared at home can be delicious, easy to make, and healthier than fast food or take-out. Let's get started!



### 1 STOCK YOUR PANTRY WITH SOME BASICS

**Protein foods:** Purchase rotisserie chickens and freeze for future use. Other options include frozen fish fillets, boneless chicken thighs or breasts, ground turkey or chicken, and eggs. Canned tuna or, even better, salmon is great for sandwiches, salads, or even dinner. Vegetarian options include frozen soy beans (edamame), veggie burgers (make sure they have plenty of protein in them), and peanut or almond butter.

**Grains and starches:** Brown rice, quinoa, and wheat berries can be made ahead in large quantities and frozen in containers. You can also buy pre-made frozen grains, but you'll pay more for them. Whole wheat tortillas are a great staple to keep on hand, as are whole wheat pastas.

**Canned goods including beans/legumes:** Red, black, white... canned beans of all colors are great to have to add to soups, chili, tacos, or salads. Canned tomatoes can be plain or seasoned with Italian or Mexican

spices. Tomato sauce in a jar is a great staple.

**Vegetables:** Onions, garlic, and carrots: these healthy vegetables last a long time and can be incorporated into lots of dishes. Too tired to chop onions? You can buy them already chopped. Same goes for carrots and cabbage. Again, more expensive, but ultra-convenient.

**Greens:** No energy to wash and chop salad ingredients? No worries. Buy them already chopped and in the bag. Don't have dressing? A quick mix of equal parts olive oil and balsamic vinegar with a teaspoon of Dijon mustard added to a jar and shaken makes a delicious vinaigrette.

**Frozen vegetables:** Buy them plain, without added sauces. Green beans, broccoli, carrots, peas, corn, and mixed vegetables (like SoycaTash) are great to have on hand.

**Fruit and nuts:** Ramp up your salad or rice with pistachios, almonds, or hazelnuts, and add some dried cranberries or golden raisins for

a sweet and crunchy bite. Frozen fruits and berries packaged without added sugar are a great addition to smoothies, cooked cereals, yogurt, or desserts, or are great when added to roasted chicken dishes.

**Dairy:** Fat-free or low-fat milk, or non-dairy milk alternatives such as soy or almond milk, are easy additions to meals. Yogurt and cottage cheese are great snacks.

**Extras:** Olive and canola oils, vinegar (balsamic and apple cider vinegar are both delicious), spices, and salsa.

### 2 PLAN AHEAD

- ▶ Take time on a weekend to map out some menus for the week.
- ▶ Find your recipes and make a shopping list based on your menus.
- ▶ Double your recipes, and freeze

what's left over for nights when time is short.

- ▶ Make use of slow cookers that can be turned on before leaving the house.
- ▶ Don't hesitate to enlist the help of family members.
- ▶ Use leftovers for lunches.

### 3 SOME EASY DINNER IDEAS

Every meal should have a protein source, lots of vegetables, and some source of carbohydrate, found in fruits, vegetables, grains, bread, and potatoes. Whenever possible, opt for the whole grain option (Ex: brown rice, whole wheat pasta/bread). Meals in a bowl are very popular... just put a grain in the bottom of the dish, add a protein and loads of veggies, and top with your favorite sauce (tomato, teriyaki, or salsa, just to name a few). The possibilities are endless.

Allocating some time to eating well is a great investment in your long-term health and well-being. Foods taste better, are less processed, and can be tailored to your individual tastes. Try it for two to three weeks, and you'll be hooked.



## Quick Dinner Idea:

### VEGGIE FLATBREAD PIZZA

Roast lots of vegetables (onions, broccoli, cauliflower, mushrooms, fresh or frozen) on a sheet pan at 425° until starting to brown, about 20-30 mins. Can be done ahead and refrigerated. When ready to eat, place on top of whole wheat pre-baked pizza dough (keep some in your freezer) with either tomato sauce or fresh tomatoes, and parmesan and mozzarella cheese. Heat at 425° until bubbly.

# Eating Well for the Health of It!

**The Leever Cancer Center is fortunate to have nutrition expert Karen Sabbath, MS, RD, CSO, as part of our care team.** Many patients work with Karen individually to assess their changing nutritional needs after a cancer diagnosis. Karen also offers nutrition workshops as part of our Building Your Self-Care Toolbox series.

During her recent workshop, "Eating Well for the Health of It: Maximizing Lifestyle Changes Before, During, and After Cancer" (see photo below), Karen explained that, along with regular exercise of 150 minutes per week, being as lean as possible (without becoming underweight) is one of the most important ways to lower your risk of developing cancer. Here are some busted nutrition myths and healthy-eating tips from Karen:

- ▶ Organic produce is grown without pesticides but studies have shown no significant nutritional differences between organic and conventional produce. Remember, conventional produce is better than no produce at all!
- ▶ While it is true that the average person needs seven to eight cups of fluid each day to stay hydrated, it is also true that any type or source of fluid — including fluids in the foods you eat (fruits, vegetables, oatmeal, rice, soup, just to name a few) — count! Cucumbers, watermelon, pineapple, grapefruit, blueberries, melons, tomatoes, celery, and lettuce all help with hydration. And yes, coffee counts, too.
- ▶ Yes, drinking some alcohol may be good for your heart. BUT too much of a good thing can be a bad thing. Women who consume more alcohol have a higher incidence of breast cancer, since alcohol raises estrogen levels. Women should stick to no more than one drink per day; men should stick to one or two.
- ▶ It is a myth that sugar makes cancer grow faster; however, too much added sugar adds empty calories and can increase inflammation in the body, thereby increasing the risk of chronic disease.
- ▶ There is no substitute for good nutrition, not even vitamins and supplements! Unless your doctor recommends otherwise, stick to real foods and a healthy diet. What is a healthy diet? Five to nine servings of fruits and vegetables; whole grains and legumes; limited amounts (once a week or less) of red or processed meat; limited amounts of sugar and salt.



**Questions about nutrition?** Contact our nutritionist, Karen Sabbath, MS, RD, CSO, at 203-575-5510 or email her at [ksabbath@leevercancercenter.org](mailto:ksabbath@leevercancercenter.org).

# Hail and Farewell to Our Friend, Peter Sanchez

*There once was a man named Peter,  
Who was a pro at his job, just like Derek Jeter!*

*Treatment planning guru,  
So, so many years in the field, who knew?*



So begins Radiation Therapist Kerrie Huria’s heartfelt and personal poem of tribute, written for Peter Sanchez on the occasion of his retirement from the Leever Cancer Center in June.

Peter was a part of the Saint Mary’s Hospital family for more than 36 years; he spent the last 15 as a medical radiation dosimetrist at Leever.

“Peter was with the Leever Cancer Center from the day we opened our doors,” says Executive Director Kevin Kniery. “He was an integral part of the day-to-day operation here — a familiar and friendly face — and will certainly be missed. We all wish him well in his retirement, and look forward to hearing about what will surely be his many adventures.”

By day, Peter was a seasoned and passionate professional with a wealth of knowledge — keeping pace with advances in the field of medical dosimetry, sharing his experience and wisdom with his colleagues and students. Beyond Leever’s doors, however, Peter’s passions were varied, and the stuff of legend. Whether cutting a sharp figure in the ballroom as a competitive dancer, setting the pace in his age group at the annual New Haven Road Race, cheering his beloved Yankees, or traveling the world sampling diverse cultures and fine wines, Peter brings fun and energy to every day.

“Peter is a highly regarded professional, a sought-after mentor, and a friend to all,” says Operations Manager Deborah Parkinson. “He made many friends during his long tenure here.”

All of whom could have written the last line of Kerrie Huria’s poem:

*Now the time has come for you to retire.  
Peter, you’re a great friend, whom I so admire.*



## Dog Days of Summer

Man’s best friend took center stage at the Leever Cancer Center in August, with the celebration of Dog Appreciation Month.

“Canine companions can be an invaluable source of comfort, support, and unconditional love for people facing all kinds of challenges in their lives,” explains Leever’s Operations Manager Deborah Parkinson, “and cancer is no exception.”

Research shows that therapy dogs can help alleviate loneliness, anxiety, isolation, and depression, all feelings commonly reported by cancer patients. Interacting with our canine companions also releases mood-boosting endorphins.

“Research tells us that just being around pets can lower blood pressure and reduce recovery times,” notes Parkinson. “Their role in cancer care and recovery cannot be underestimated, and more than merits a month of celebration.”

# A Community of Caring

The Harold Leever Regional Cancer Center wishes to express its appreciation and a sincere thank you to its neighbors and friends by recognizing the spirit and hard work of the members of our community in fulfilling the Mission of the Leever Cancer Center.



Team Leever was a strong presence at Relay for Life 2017, bringing together physicians, patients, staff members, family, friends, caregivers, and, most importantly, cancer survivors.

Deborah Parkinson  
Operations Manager



**Quilts That Care** recently hosted their annual fundraiser at The Village of East Farms, Waterbury. Now in their fifth year, they asked members of the community to join them in their mission of “Wrapping cancer patients in comfort and hope, one quilt at a time.” Over 2,000 quilts have been donated to date.

Above: Members of Team Leever attended the event: (from L to R) Gayle Crowley, Kathy Leach, Toni Pietro, Kevin Kniery, Peter Sanchez, and Deborah Parkinson.

## Still Sharing the Love *with Us*

**Premier Subaru of Watertown** has once again named the Leever Cancer Center a hometown charitable partner in Subaru’s national Share the Love campaign.

Now in its tenth year, Subaru’s Share the Love campaign is a high-profile, highly regarded program that supports charitable work across the country. Held at the end of each year, Subaru donates \$250 to one of its charitable partners for every new vehicle sold or leased between mid-November and early January. National partners include the ASPCA®, Make-A-Wish®, Meals on Wheels America, and the National Park Foundation. Locally, Premier Subaru ups the ante by making an additional donation to its hometown charitable partners, including the Leever Cancer Center.

## Aware!

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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@leevercancercenter.org](mailto:dparkinson@leevercancercenter.org)

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# THE HAROLD LEEVER REGIONAL CANCER CENTER

1075 Chase Parkway Waterbury, CT 06708

A joint partnership of



@LeeverCancerCenter

## Community Events and Monthly Support Groups

FALL/WINTER

### UPCOMING EVENT:

#### COPING WITH CANCER DURING THE HOLIDAYS



**Tuesday, November 14**  
**3:30 PM – 4:30 PM at HLRCC**  
Part of the “Build Your Self-Care Toolbox” Series. Free self-care gift for each participant. Please RSVP to 203-575-5544 by November 9.

### SAVE THE DATES:



SPRING 2018

#### BUILD YOUR SELF-CARE TOOLBOX Tuesdays at 3:30 PM

**March 20:** Tai Chi

**March 27:** Art Therapy

**April 10:** Chair Yoga

**April 17:** Vision Boards

A healthy snack will be provided. Classes are subject to change.

**AMERICAN CANCER SOCIETY: LOOK GOOD, FEEL BETTER!:** monthly, 1st Tuesday, 2 PM – 4 PM, contact the ACS at 203-756-8888

**AMERICAN CANCER SOCIETY: REACH TO RECOVERY:** by appointment, contact the ACS at 203-756-8888

**AMPUTEE SUPPORT GROUP:** monthly, 3rd Friday, 5 PM, contact Dila Hassiem: 203-597-8818

**ART THERAPY:** monthly, 2nd and 4th Friday, 2 PM, contact Deborah Parkinson: 203-575-5564

**BETTER BREATHING CLUB:** monthly, 3rd Friday, 1 PM, contact Rachel Kirchner: 203-757-4991

**BRAVE AT HEART BREAST CANCER SUPPORT GROUP:** monthly, 1st Wednesday, 7 PM – 9 PM, contact Anne Pringle: 203-910-7582

**COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS:** monthly, 2nd Wednesday, 6:45 PM – 10 PM, contact Sharon: 860-384-1398

**CT MULTIPLE MYELOMA FIGHTERS SUPPORT GROUP:** At Prospect Library, monthly, 2nd Tuesday, 6 PM – 8 PM, contact Robin Tuohy: 203-206-3536

**ENERGY THERAPY:** Tuesdays and Wednesdays, contact Melissa Seres, MSW: 203-575-5511

**FAMILY AND FRIENDS SUPPORT GROUP:** monthly, 3rd Monday, 12 PM – 1 PM, contact Melissa Seres, MSW: 203-575-5511

**FREEDOM FROM SMOKING:** An 8-week smoking cessation series. Contact Sandra Micalizzi, APRN, CDE, Heart Center of Greater Waterbury Outreach Nurse, at 203-575-5573 for information on the start of the next series.

**HOPE MUTUAL AID GROUP FOR PATIENTS AND THEIR LOVED ONES:** monthly, 1st and 3rd Tuesday, 12 PM – 1 PM, contact Melissa Seres: 203-575-5511

**JOURNALING: A WAY TO HEAL FROM YOUR CANCER EXPERIENCE:** Friday, 10 AM – 11:30 AM, contact Bob Devito: 203-910-3107

**QUILTS THAT CARE:** monthly, 1st and 3rd Monday, 6:30 PM – 8:30 PM, contact Deb V: 860-945-0184

**THYROID CANCER SUPPORT GROUP:** monthly, last Tuesday, 6 PM – 7 PM, contact Dot Torretta: 203-756-3481

**WATERBURY AREA OSTOMY SUPPORT GROUP:** monthly, 1st Monday, 6:30 PM – 8:30 PM, contact Bob Baker: 860-248-1116

**WOMAN TO WOMAN BREAST CANCER SUPPORT GROUP:** monthly, 3rd Tuesday, 7 PM – 8:30 PM, contact Theresa Lombardo: 860-274-2200

Call contact person to confirm that group is as scheduled. Meeting times may be rescheduled to accommodate holidays or special meetings. See [leevercancercenter.org](http://leevercancercenter.org) for ongoing events.