

Spring 2007

# INTEGRATIVE NEWS



## Physician Feature: Discussions with Jennifer Levine, MSW, MD

There has long been an awareness that once survivors are past the period of greatest risk, they have needs beyond the scope of services traditionally offered. Over the past few years, Dr. Levine, Assistant Professor of Clinical Pediatrics and Medical Director of The Center for Survivor Wellness in Pediatric Oncology, has developed a multidisciplinary program dedicated to addressing the long term effects of pediatric cancer which specializes in the needs specific to adolescent and young adults survivors. Evolved in conjunction with The Integrative Therapies Program, The Valerie Fund Psychosocial Team, and Medical Oncology, The Center for Survivor Wellness began seeing patients, 40 years of age and younger, this past summer in a new clinic in the Irving Cancer Center.

The Center for Survivor Wellness seeks to provide excellent medical follow up, educate survivors about their long term risks, and promote an overall healthy lifestyle. "Lifestyle," Dr. Levine elaborates, "includes nutrition, education, employment, physical activity, and psychology. A focus on wellness," she continues, "decreases the variety of long term complications and addresses the psychosocial and quality of life issues of having experienced cancer, often not addressed in the traditional model." Shifting attention to longer term complications, the center focuses not only on proximal risk factors affecting this population, but also on more distal risk factors, such as access to insurance and the ability to obtain opportunities for success. When asked where she sees the center in five years from now, Dr. Levine notes: "A place where all survivors will be seen and their concerns addressed individually and holistically."

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## "Nurse's Day" at the Hospital

This past December, The Integrative Therapies Program put aside four days to offer "Nurse's Day" to all pediatric oncology nurses in both the in-patient and out-patient clinics. The goal of "Nurse's" Day was to further inform our nurses about the complementary therapies we offer to the children and their families. Through hands-on experience, the nurses would be better equipped to identify patients that would benefit from complementary therapies. The nurses could then coordinate services with the program to maximize positive patient outcomes. Each nurse picked a day, time and complementary therapy of their choice to experience for thirty minutes. Services offered included acupuncture, reflexology, reiki, yoga, meditation, aromatherapy, and exercise.

Nurse reviews of the day include:

"I loved it. I wish we had it once a month. It was so relaxing. One on a scale of 1-10, it was a 20!" ---Jill, RN

"It was like going to a spa." ---Lisa, NP

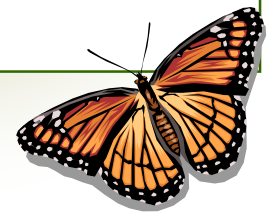
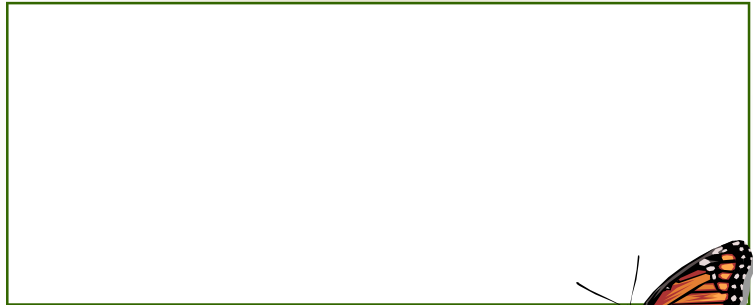
"It was fabulous. I wish we could have it every day. Now I will be able to recommend it to my patients more." ---Jane, NP

The Integrative Therapies Program is planning to host "Physician's Day" and "Psychosocial Day" in the upcoming months to the physicians and the psychosocial staff.

-Diane Rooney, L.Ac., L.M.T.



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## “The Cancer Dancers”

Although all too often a neglected part of the cancer treatment plan, regular exercise is important during and after cancer treatments. Exercise of all forms can help you look and feel better and can help avoid muscle atrophy, reduced heart and lung function, and decreased endurance and strength to carry out everyday activities. Engaging in group exercise is also known to reduce mild and moderate levels of depression and anxiety and helps facilitate the formation of peer social networks.

Many of our adolescents and young adults tend to isolate themselves due to fatigue, low self esteem, or poor body image from extreme weight gain or weight loss. As part of our collaboration with The Center for Survivor Wellness, I designed a physical activity assessment to measure endurance, body composition, and flexibility and began evaluating our survivors’ activity levels on their wellness clinic day. Through follow up personal training sessions, I developed trust and friendship with many of our survivors, and over time, I was able to form an adolescent and young adult survivorship exercise group which meets twice a week. Recently, I have discovered the group’s great talent for dance, each bringing a different style, form, or attitude to our freestyle sessions. By collaborating on the development of several dance routines, the survivorship exercise group has formed their own method of healing beyond cancer through movement. The group now calls themselves “the Cancer Dancers.” What they cannot handle on their own, they conquer together.

Stay tuned, we plan to take the show on the road with the help of a leading dance studio in NYC! Dance heals!

-Christine Grimaldi, Ph.D