

# CarePackage

The Regional Cancer Center



In affiliation with  
UPMC Cancer Centers

## Clinical Research – Now More Than Ever

Most advances in the diagnosis, treatment and care of cancer patients have occurred because of research studies called “clinical trials” or “clinical research protocols”.

Clinical trials are designed to help health care professionals test new approaches to the diagnosis, treatment or prevention of cancers and other diseases.

The Regional Cancer Center’s (RCC) clinical research program has been steadily expanding over the past 18 months. This growth is measured both in the number of trials opened and the number of patients participating in trials.

“At RCC we enroll more patients in clinical trials than any other community center in the UPMC Cancer Centers Network,” says Raymond Wynn, MD, FACR, and Director of Clinical Research at The RCC. “Clinical trials are an integral part of modern patient care,” he explains. New patients at The RCC are screened for potential participation in clinical trials, which may not be evident to patients because most of this work is done by clinical staff behind the scenes. Mary Lynn Haynes, RN, OCN leads the research team responsible for coordination of these programs. “We are continually screening for eligible patients, educating staff about the trials we have open and educating patients about the benefits of participation,” she says. These efforts have contributed to the success of involving more patients than ever in clinical trials at RCC. Weekly meetings with UPMC Cancer Centers’ research group bring additional resources to RCC’s program.

Patients at RCC receive the standard of care treatment, personalized to their disease and stage. Patients who participate in clinical trials agree to receive something additional that might enhance that standard. Patients may be randomly assigned to one of the two or more “arms” (or groups) of the study: one that receives the additional study variable and one that does not. During the course of the study and beyond, trial patients may see their doctor and/or nurse more frequently to document their progress related to the study.

Log on to [www.trcc.org](http://www.trcc.org) for more information about RCC’s:

- Open trials
- Research partners
- Patient rights
- Safety guidelines
- And much more

Best of all, every RCC patient benefits from The Center’s expanding research program, whether they are involved in a trial or not. Organizations that host research trials independently audit trial sites to ensure that the highest standards of care are in place – a critical component to quality research outcomes. ■RCC

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# How Can We Help You?

Have you noticed a new greeter at the front door of The RCC? These “Ambassadors” are working to be responsive to patient needs and concerns. Through them, Center leadership has become more familiar with the patient experience, which contributes to our patient centered approach to care. Ambassadors work in collaboration with The RCC reception staff and Center volunteers to accommodate the needs of visitors to The RCC.

Ambassadors are seeking ways to make your visit to RCC more comfortable and productive. Don't be surprised when someone near the main doors calls out “Hello, how are you today?” We really want to know. By sharing your perspective you help us to enhance the experience for all patients at The RCC. ■RCC

*During the winter months a RCC Ambassador will be helping patients into and out of the Center at the main entrance. While this is not valet parking, it is personal assistance escorting patients as they arrive and leave. If you desire special assistance you can look for the Ambassador near the main entrance or call ahead to the main reception desk to request it.*

## Mission of The Regional Cancer Center Foundation

*The Regional Cancer Center Foundation was created in 1988 to support the work of The Regional Cancer Center. Its mission is to raise money and distribute funds:*



1. To support the development of new or improved services to diagnose and treat cancer and blood disorders.
2. To support continuous education for Cancer Center staff and the regional medical community so they may keep abreast of developments in the diagnosis and treatment of cancer and blood disorders.
3. To support local research that can impact long term treatment and cure rates for cancer and blood disorders.
4. To provide support services, assistance and education that will enable patients and their families to better understand and deal with cancer and blood disorders and more easily handle the commitment that many treatments require.



You can share in the endeavors of The Regional Cancer Center Foundation by sending a contribution to:

The Regional Cancer Center  
2500 West 12th Street  
Erie, PA 16505



# Extending the Team for Better Service

When a person is told that they have cancer, it is natural for them to want to see a cancer specialist as soon as possible. Over the last 2 years we have been working steadily and methodically to reduce the number of days that lapse between a patient's call for an appointment and their first visit with an oncologist at RCC. Operationally we term that "days to first consult". For years RCC has been challenged to provide timely access to care with the resources at hand. Some in our community may have been frustrated historically about how long it took to get a first appointment at RCC.

With a variety of creative solutions we have significantly reduced our days to first consult. One key contributor to that success has been the addition of Physician Extenders (Physician Assistants and Nurse Practitioners) to our clinical teams. All of our Physician Extenders are certified and have spent months training with our doctors. Because they work closely and are in regular contact with your doctor they are truly an extension of his/her practice, and your doctor is confident in the care they provide

you. Physician Extenders manage side effects and complications of treatment, provide health education and instruction to patients and families, and perform follow up after treatment.

By including physician extenders in the schedule of available appointments at RCC we have reduced the days to first consult – a service to new patients -- and become more responsive to active patients by opening up more opportunities for appointment scheduling.

Three Physician Assistants recently joined the RCC clinical team. Ashley McLellan and Sandy Rees will be working with the medical oncology/hematology team of physicians. Hannah Koenig will be teaming up with the radiation oncologists. Each has spent significant time shadowing and training with the RCC physicians in preparation for their new roles and will work closely with the doctors day to day.

The credentials of the entire physician extender team are available to you from any RCC staff member when you visit or call The Center, or anytime at [www.trcc.org](http://www.trcc.org). ■RCC

## New Faces at RCC

Two physicians will be joining us on an interim basis (locum tenens) this winter while replacements are recruited for physicians leaving our team in December. Joycelyn Speight, MD, PhD, will be working with our radiation oncology physicians and David F. Sciortino, MD will be working with the group of hematologist/medical oncologists. Both physicians were carefully selected by The RCC Executive Administration. Their credentials are available to you from any RCC staff member when you visit or call The Center. ■RCC



Joycelyn Speight, MD, PhD  
Radiation Oncologist



David F. Sciortino, MD  
Medical Oncologist/Hematologist

## Welcome New Physician Assistants



Ashley McLellan



Sandy Rees



Hannah Koenig

Visit [www.trcc.org](http://www.trcc.org)  
website of  
The Regional Cancer Center

# Where is my “chart”?

Patients may wonder why their clinician does not bring a paper “chart” into the exam room for reference and documentation. At The RCC, Electronic Medical Records (EMR) make the “chart” information available in a quicker and more efficient manner. Information that was once found only in a paper chart located in our Medical Records department is now available at the clinicians’ fingertips via computer, leading to more timely



responses to patient’s questions and concerns. When you see a staff member at a computer, know that your chart is “in there” – current and available to any authorized RCC staff member working with you at any location in the center. Our transition to EMR use is both gradual and complex. Please be patient as staff may take some extra time becoming accustomed to this new routine. ■RCC

## Staff Milestones

Congratulations to all RCC staff marking employment milestones in 2010!

### Five Years of Service:

Maryann Frontino	Social Worker
Jamie Jackson Mahaffey	Pharmacy
Karen Loomis	Radiology
Carol Campbell	PET/CT
Mary Lynn Haynes	Research
Debra Coleman	Pharmacy
Stephanie Hess	Lab
Mary Jane Gajewski	HIM
Mihaela Mihalache-Leca	Physics
Sandra McLaughlin	Medical Oncology
Jennifer Dougan	Medical Oncology
Hallie Hanlin	Medical Oncology
Patrick Miller	Facilities Maintenance

### Ten Years of Service:

Denise Blystone	Lab
Kyle Noyer	Medical Oncology
Lynn Cowell	Radiation Therapy
Lisa Berry	Cancer Registry
Kathleen Coyle	Medical Oncology
Pamela Williams	Radiation Therapy
Luz Lamb	PET/CT

### Fifteen Years of Service:

Karen Osborn	Lab
Mary Jo Schley	HIM

### Twenty Years of Service:

Shauna Hanley	Cancer Registry
Susan Marshall-Erven	Medical Oncology



## New Patient Lounges

Renovations to the visitor areas of The RCC have extended into the main waiting rooms and cafe. Rooms leading to the RT and medical oncology service areas have been redesigned and refurnished both for comfort and purpose. Various features will contribute to the lounge setting:

- TVs will be removed and will be replaced with a video messaging system making Center news and patient information more available to guests.
- Ambient music replaces television audio, for ease of talking, reading and relaxing.
- Computer stations are available for guest use, including internet access.
- A designated space for lab-only appointments and designated areas for wheelchair “parking” make better use of available space.
- New furniture was selected with patient comfort and needs in mind.

Experiences, thoughts and suggestions from patients contributed to plans for the renovated area, designed to be welcoming and comfortable. ■RCC

*Wireless internet access is now available for guests in the following locations*

- *Medical Oncology patient lounge*
- *Radiation Oncology patient lounge*
- *Chemotherapy patient lounge*
- *Drug infusion area*

*Instructions for connecting wireless devices to the internet can be found in the patient lounges.*



# The Sweet Truth About Chocolate

By Karen Schnaekel, RD, LDN, CNSD



Chocolate, particularly dark chocolate, has a number of health benefits. Surprised? Many people are, until they are reminded that chocolate is a plant-based food. Chocolate treats begin with the cacao bean. The cacao bean is roasted and ground into a thick chocolate liquid. When hardened, this liquid becomes unsweetened chocolate. When processed under pressure, the fat or cocoa butter is removed, and the remaining solid is dried and sifted to become cocoa powder.

So what are the health benefits of chocolate? Chocolate contains powerful antioxidant components called flavonoids. Eating chocolate and cocoa increases the level of antioxidants in the bloodstream. There is also evidence that the oxidation of LDL cholesterol is slowed. This is the process in the body that converts cholesterol to the form that is bad for our blood vessels. The antioxidants in chocolate also appear to protect our body's genetic material from damage that can develop into cancer. Chocolate can also improve our heart health by improving blood flow through veins and decreasing blood pressure.

Chocolate has proven health benefits, and many people are trying to add this once-guilty indulgence back into their diets. Americans consume an average of 12.3 pounds of chocolate per year! But before embarking on a chocolate binge, we need to examine the best ways to include this treat without causing the weight gain that will negate its benefits.

First, choose dark chocolate. Dark chocolate and cocoa contain the highest amounts of antioxidant compounds. In fact, one serving of dark chocolate surpasses the antioxidant capacity of both blueberries and cranberries.

Choose plain chocolates that contain at least 65% cocoa. Avoid creamy fillings, nuts and nougats.

Remember to balance the calories. One Hershey's Special Dark chocolate bar contains 180 calories. Consuming just 180 additional calories per day would result in a 19-pound weight gain over the course of one year!

Don't replace healthy foods with chocolate. Fruits and vegetables provide many of the same antioxidant benefits of chocolate at a fraction of the calories. Most of our diets already include some sweets. Simply replace some of your sweet caloric intake, like cookies and cakes, with dark chocolate.

If you include about one ounce of chocolate into a diet filled with fruits and vegetables, you'll be satisfying your sweet tooth and enjoying a wide variety of delicious foods – and you'll be reaping the benefits of antioxidant compounds. Enjoy! ■RCC



## Chocolate Dipped Fruit

- 3 ounces dark (70% cocoa) chocolate
- 8 large strawberries
- 16 large seedless green grapes
- 1 large banana, cut into 8 pieces
- Strong toothpicks

Line a baking sheet with baking parchment or wax paper. Set aside.

Break up or chop chocolate. Place in a small microwaveable bowl and heat for 1 minute on high. Stir, then microwave in 10 second bursts on medium until small pieces remain. Stir until chocolate is completely melted. Alternatively, place bowl in small skillet filled with 2 inches of simmering hot water and stir occasionally until melted.

Pat fruit with paper towels to be sure it is completely dry. Holding each strawberry by its hull, dip halfway into melted chocolate and lift out with a twisting motion. Shake berry over bowl for 10 seconds to let excess chocolate drip off. Place strawberry on prepared baking sheet. Repeat until all berries are dipped.

Insert toothpick into stem end of each grape. Dip grapes until half covered with chocolate, twisting and letting excess drip off. Lay each grape on baking sheet.

Stand each banana section on round end and insert a toothpick in center of top. Dip, twist, and let excess chocolate drip off, like other fruit. Lay on baking sheet.

Place the baking sheet with the dipped fruits in the refrigerator until chocolate hardens, about 30 minutes. Serve immediately, or within 6 hours.

Makes 4 servings.

Per serving: 170 Calories; 7 gm total fat (4 gm saturated fat); 27 gm carbohydrate; 2 gm protein; 4 gm dietary fiber; 0 mg sodium.

(American Institute for Cancer Research, [www.aicr.org](http://www.aicr.org).  
Recipe by Dana Jacobi for AICR)





Members at the December meeting of the Patient Advisory Group (left to right): Wendy Smith, Nicky Kowalczyk, Joanne Church, Cathy Fresch and Harry Bowser.

## Patient Advisory Group

RCC incorporates the insight and experience of current and former patients in the planning of what we believe is constructive change in the daily operations of the Center. Our Patient Advisory Group is an informal gathering of a small group of patients who voluntarily help us by sharing their perspectives. What started as a novel experiment toward our goal of enhancing patients' experience has bloomed into a productive monthly meeting for us. In an hour's time this group responds to questions we pose, reacts to plans we're making, and sensitizes us to the patient experience. Inevitably we leave the meeting with some bit of information or reaction we were not expecting at all. We can honestly say that time and time again modifications in our facilities, publications, processes and staff have grown from conversations with this group of people. Our Patient Advisory Group has turned out to be a critical component in our ongoing quest for patient centered care. ■RCC

## What's in a Name? You Tell Us!

We'd like to rename this newsletter and we welcome your help. What does The RCC newsletter mean to you? Please e-mail llouis@trcc.org, or call Lisa Louis at (814) 838-0420 with your suggestions. Be sure to include your name (spelled) and a phone number – whoever submits the name selected will win a \$10 credit at The RCC's Sunrise Café! ■RCC



## RCC Staff ID

You may notice new identification badges being worn by RCC staff members. These are for patient benefit. Staff credentials are clearly stated on the badges along with photos, and first names. The badges are color-coded: staff members with green fields behind their name and title are authorized (through job responsibility and training) to have physical contact with patients; staff members with white fields behind their name and title are not authorized to have patient contact. ■RCC



## www.trcc.org

- Key questions to ask your doctor.
- A listing of area cancer support groups.
- The National Cancer Institute's cancer information database, including a glossary of cancer terms.
- Key contacts, like The RCC dietitian, financial counselor and nurse coordinators.

This and much more is available to you at any time by logging on to The RCC's updated website: [www.trcc.org](http://www.trcc.org). Check it out! ■RCC



*Do you need a wig?  
Need help styling your wig?  
Not sure how to tie a scarf or wrap?*

The Regional Cancer Center has assistance with these services. Our volunteer, Christie Simmers, Licensed Cosmetologist, is available to assist you. Christie will help you choose a wig, instruct you on how to clean and style your wig and

show you how to tie a scarf or wrap. Christie is available by appointment. You can contact the Social Workers at 836-2618 or 836-2639 to make an appointment.

The Regional Cancer Center accepts donations of new and gently used wigs. Christie then prepares and styles the wigs for patients. For those of you who are familiar with the wigs at The Regional Cancer Center, their location has changed. Please ask a volunteer or a Social Worker to escort you to our new show room. ■RCC

## RCC Support Groups

**Family and Caregiver Support Group** for family members and caregivers of patients with cancer and blood disorders  
 RCC Main Conference Room  
 4:00 PM – 5:30PM  
*January 11  
February 8  
March 8  
April 12*  
 Contact the social work department at (814) 836-2618 with questions.

**“Thrivers”** for patients with advanced cancer who want to share their feelings, vent, talk, and receive support from one another  
 RCC Courtyard Conference Room  
 4:00 PM – 5:30 PM  
*2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month*  
 Contact Sarah Kaveney at (814) 838-0431 with reservations and/or questions.

**Breast Cancer Support Group** designed to offer support, education and encouragement to those who have recently been diagnosed with breast cancer, are undergoing treatment, or have recently completed treatment  
 RCC Main Conference Room  
 5:30 PM – 7:00 PM  
*3rd Wednesday of each month*  
 Contact Diane Simon at (814) 836-2677. Reservations are requested; light refreshments are provided.

# lunch LEARN



## Mark Your Calendar for Lunch and Learn

RCC sponsors a Lunch and Learn Series on the second Tuesday of the month, 11:30 AM - 1:00 PM. There is no charge for these programs, but reservations are requested.

- January 11 **Update on Community Resources**  
Presented by RCC Social Workers
- February 8 **Smoking Cessation Program**  
Presented by Laura Bright, Erie County Health Department
- March 8 **Creating a Legacy for your Family and Loved Ones**  
Presented by RCC Social Workers

Please RSVP for each lunch program by contacting the social work office at (814) 836-2618 or 836-2639. You must register one week prior to each session.

## Nurse Practitioner Gets National Recognition



Susan Roche, MSN, CRNP, APRN-BC, AOCNP recently spoke at the national meeting of the Oncology Nursing Society (ONS). Her talk, entitled “Lytes, Camera, Action: Electrolyte Abnormalities in Oncology”, was part of the ONS Advanced Practice Conference. ■RCC



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## Save the Date *Celebration of Life - 2011* June 10 You're Invited!

*The Regional Cancer Center's Celebration of Life event celebrates survivorship – life after cancer! Mark your calendars for this annual event which will be held in 2011 on June 10. The spring edition of this newsletter will include your invitation and all event information.*

# CarePackage

The Regional Cancer Center

*The Regional Cancer Center's mission is to provide comprehensive care for patients with cancer and blood disorders with a commitment to advanced care, research and optimal quality of life for patients and families.*

*CarePackage* is published by The Regional Cancer Center twice a year to provide patients, donors and friends information on activities at the Center as well as updates on cancer treatment and education. Lisa Louis is the editor.

If you wish to remove your name from our mailing list, please either clip your mailing label or complete the coupon below and send it to:

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