

WOMEN'S healthsource

ALL IN THE FAMILY? THE GENETIC LINK BETWEEN PROSTATE AND BREAST CANCER

FALL 2024 FINDING LIFE AFTER ADDICTION |
TOP CARE FOR KIDS | HOW EXERCISE FIGHTS BONE LOSS
| THE KEY TO INFLAMMATORY DISEASE



Main Line Health®

Recovery is possible: Mirmont Treatment Center



Jon Marano, MS
Behavioral Health
Therapist



Cary Beavers
Coordinator of
Alumni Services

In 2021, Heather Hoy's life burned to the ground. First, a literal fire destroyed her family's home. Then, a drug dealer left a voicemail for her sister, trying to collect money that Heather owed.

"I hit the wall," Heather says. "I either had to let my sister listen to that message or admit to myself that I needed help." But help in the form of treatment seemed impossible. "I was a mom of two young kids. How was the world going to spin with me away for 30 days?"

FINDING A LIFELINE

Fortunately, Heather found Mirmont Treatment Center. Mirmont Treatment Center has flexible programming focused on lifelong recovery. Offerings include a medication withdrawal (detox) program, inpatient treatment, outpatient treatment, specialty groups and a family support group. Individual and group counseling help patients express trauma they've buried under their drug and alcohol misuse.

"First, we stabilize the patient physically. Then, we educate about addiction and motivate for recovery," says clinician Jon Marano, MS. "Our goal is to help people feel safe coming off what is likely the worst time in their lives and helping them process."

Heather admits to being resistant at first but learned she could trust her counselors and other staff. "I thought once the drugs were out of my system, everything would be OK. But that was just the beginning," she says. "The people who work here are saving lives. You never feel like a number. They treat you like a person."

HEATHER'S JOURNEY

"Heather's strength is her ability to connect, her willingness to express her own pain," says Marano. "We work with a lot of people who have learned to stay closed off for their own protection. To see them want to live a different way is inspiring."

"Heather was determined," says Cary Beavers, Coordinator of Alumni Services at Mirmont Treatment Center. "She saw people beginning to build back their lives, and she wanted that for herself as well. Heather has become an unbelievable leader in the program."

Heather's family also supports her so she can attend meetings and other Mirmont Treatment Center events. "Life is so much better now. I'm not angry all the time. My husband and I like each other again!" she says. "To be able to walk back in, sit in those rooms — it's humbling. I say, even though it's tough right now, keep coming back. If you bring the body, the mind will follow."

TAKE THE FIRST STEP

If you or a loved one are affected by alcohol or drug dependency or other mental health concerns, we're here to help. Call Mirmont Treatment Center's Admissions team at **1.888.227.3898**.



Top care for kids: Bryn Mawr Hospital's pediatric unit



Hazel Guinto, MD
*Pediatric Emergency
Medicine Physician*

When your child needs exceptional medical care, you don't need to travel far. Bryn Mawr Hospital, part of Main Line Health, features a pediatric inpatient unit that offers world-class care close to home. Whatever your child's needs, the hospital has a dedicated pediatric unit staffed with trained pediatric experts and led by board-certified pediatricians from Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP).

"Having this resource in the community, where your child can be hospitalized close to home, should be reassuring to families," says Hazel Guinto, MD, a Pediatric Emergency Medicine Physician at Bryn Mawr Hospital. "Children are not just little adults. In our unit, we address each child's unique medical and emotional needs — while also creating a comfortable space for parents."

Dr. Guinto says that Bryn Mawr Hospital's dedication to children begins in their pediatric emergency department (ED). "Our ED is staffed with pediatricians and nurses all highly trained in taking care of ill or injured children," she says. "If a child needs to stay in the hospital, they are admitted to our pediatric unit."

FAMILY-CENTERED CARE

Bryn Mawr Hospital's pediatric unit features 14 private rooms, where parents can stay with their child at all times. "We make it a very comfortable, friendly place for children and families. It's critical for parents and caregivers to be with their child as part of their care team," says Dr. Guinto. The team encourages parents to participate in their child's recovery by being present for family-centered rounding. This means your child's medical team discusses your child's care plan at the bedside. "Partnering with families is crucial in providing high-quality care that is tailored to the needs of each child," adds Dr. Guinto.



The unit is also equipped with a playroom as well as gaming systems and flat-screen TVs. "We want to keep children entertained and occupied, especially when they are here for longer stays."

SPECIALIZED CARE, AROUND THE CLOCK

All providers on the pediatric unit are specially trained in caring for children. "The unit is staffed 24/7 by a CHOP pediatric hospitalist, an expert in taking

care of children while they are in the hospital," says Dr. Guinto. "We are supported by a seasoned team of pediatric nurses and a pediatric pharmacist."

Another feature that sets the pediatric unit apart is access to world-class subspecialty care. "We have access to all CHOP subspecialists," adds Dr. Guinto. "So, if we need an infectious disease or endocrinology consult, for example, we can work directly with the specialist to manage our patient's needs."

PEDIATRIC SPECIALISTS CLOSE TO HOME

To learn more about pediatric care at Main Line Health, visit mainlinehealth.org/pediatrics.



Genetic testing uncovers link between



Robin Ciocca, DO
Breast Surgeon



Rachael Brandt,
PhD, MS, LCGC
Genetic Counselor

Jennifer Dudek, an active 39-year-old and the manager of Corporate Design at Main Line Health, had no reason to believe she was at increased risk for breast cancer. She had no family history of breast cancer, was diligent about preventive healthcare, ate a healthy diet and regularly exercised. When Jennifer's gynecologist found a small lump in her breast, the discovery uncovered a surprising genetic link between her family's history of prostate cancer and her own breast cancer risk.

POTENTIAL CANCER LINK

After finding the lump, Jennifer's gynecologist referred her to Main Line Health's breast center for testing. There, she had a mammogram and ultrasound, followed by a breast biopsy with Breast Surgeon Robin Ciocca, DO. Thankfully, it was benign. But Dr. Ciocca had concerns about Jennifer's overall risk for breast cancer after learning about her family history of prostate cancer.

"Ten years ago, we had limited knowledge of genetics related to cancer, but every year there are new discoveries," says Dr. Ciocca, who referred Jennifer for genetic counseling. "Although prostate cancer is associated with males and breast cancer is typically associated with females, we now know the two cancers may share some genetic links, particularly if they are diagnosed at a young age."

GENETIC EXPERTISE

To investigate if she had a genetic link to breast cancer, Jennifer scheduled a telemedicine visit with Rachael Brandt, PhD, MS, LCGC, Genetic Counselor and Manager of the Genetics and Risk Assessment Program at Main Line Health.

"Each person has thousands of genes, and there is no single genetic test that can detect all cancers. We look for patterns in each patient's unique medical and family history that point us to potential genes we want to target for testing," explains Dr. Brandt.

After talking extensively with Jennifer, Dr. Brandt coordinated testing of multiple genes that have known links to both breast and prostate cancers.

"Providing a sample for the test was simple. I gave a saliva sample at home and

mailed it into the lab," explains Jennifer. "But having a genetic counselor to help me think about the pros, cons and limitations of testing, and then help explain the results, was key to the process."

**"I would have never thought to go to the gynecologist's office and mention my family's history of prostate cancer."
—Jennifer Dudek**



prostate and breast cancer

UNDERSTANDING THE RISK

Jennifer's testing showed she had a variation in the DNA pattern of her CHEK2 gene — a gene that is linked to prostate, breast and colon cancers. Although everyone has a CHEK2 gene, the specific DNA change identified increased Jennifer's breast cancer risk to about 20%, putting her in an increased-risk category.

"It's important to know that just because someone's genetic makeup increases their risk for cancer, that does not mean they will develop it," explains Dr. Brandt. "Knowing the risk can help doctors create a personalized plan for screening, prevention or sometimes even treatment."

NOT ALL GENES ARE THE SAME

Michelle Franko, Jennifer's sister, shares the same family history of prostate cancer and mentioned this to her doctor, who initially dismissed the connection between prostate and breast cancer. "Unfortunately, he wasn't up to date on the current genetic research," says Michelle, who is a high school biology teacher. "I switched to a Main Line Health physician who was informed and supportive."

Michelle met with Dr. Brandt and learned she had a 50% chance of having the same CHEK2 gene change that was found in her sister. She chose to have genetic testing, and the results showed she had not inherited the CHEK2 gene change and her risk for breast cancer was closer to the average person.

"Michelle's experience demonstrates that you can be in the same family and share many similarities but not have the same genetic makeup," explains Dr. Brandt. "Everyone is different, and genetic testing helps us to personalize care."

EMPOWERED FUTURE

In response to her increased chance of developing breast cancer, Jennifer's doctors created a new breast cancer screening plan. She now has a mammogram and a breast MRI each year, as well as breast ultrasound when

Jennifer Dudek (left) and her sister, Michelle Franko



indicated. Michelle, conversely, does not need extra screenings.

"This experience has not only been beneficial for me, but also for my whole family. We've had conversations that we wouldn't have had before," says Jennifer. "It's so important to share health

information and learn about one another."

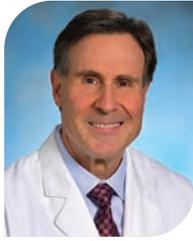
She adds, "I would have never thought to go to the gynecologist's office and mention my family's history of prostate cancer. Knowing my genetic link to cancer has allowed me to streamline my healthcare journey."

MAKE EARLY DETECTION A FAMILY AFFAIR

To learn more about cancer genetics and risk assessment at Main Line Health, visit mainlinehealth.org/genetics.



Beyond the operating room: Exploring the world of an orthopaedic surgeon



David Rubenstein, MD, an orthopaedic surgeon at Main Line Health, shares what he loves about sports medicine.

David Rubenstein, MD
Orthopaedic Surgeon

Q. What made you want to become an orthopaedic surgeon?

I hurt myself playing tennis in college and went to the university's sports medicine clinic on campus. At the time, it was one of the first sports medicine clinics in the country. I walked in and saw a variety of sports medicine equipment and flags from numerous colleges. I had been planning to become a dentist, but, at that moment, I knew I wanted to go to medical school to be an orthopaedic surgeon.

Q. What's your background in orthopaedics and sports medicine?

My specialties are the shoulder, knee and elbow. I trained in orthopaedics and sports medicine in California. During my training, I had the chance to work with most of the professional teams in Los Angeles and got to meet both Magic Johnson and Wayne Gretzky.

After my training, I moved back to Philadelphia and have been practicing here for about 30 years. I have continued to work with professional athletes in various sports and have been a team doctor for the 76ers and Phillies. A few years ago, I even got to meet my hero, Billie Jean King.

Q. What do you love most about your work?

I love taking care of people who are extremely active. And that doesn't just mean young people. I love working with the 75-year-old golfers as much as the 20-year-old football players. Sports medicine spans generations, which makes it really interesting. When I can help patients get back to the activities they love, they are so grateful.

Q. What are some of the most common injuries you see?

I see a lot of anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) tears — interestingly, young women now outnumber men with this injury — from activities such as soccer, basketball, field hockey and skiing. I also see a lot of people with shoulder injuries, such as rotator cuff tears and dislocations. Meniscal and cartilage tears are also incredibly common in men and women of all ages.

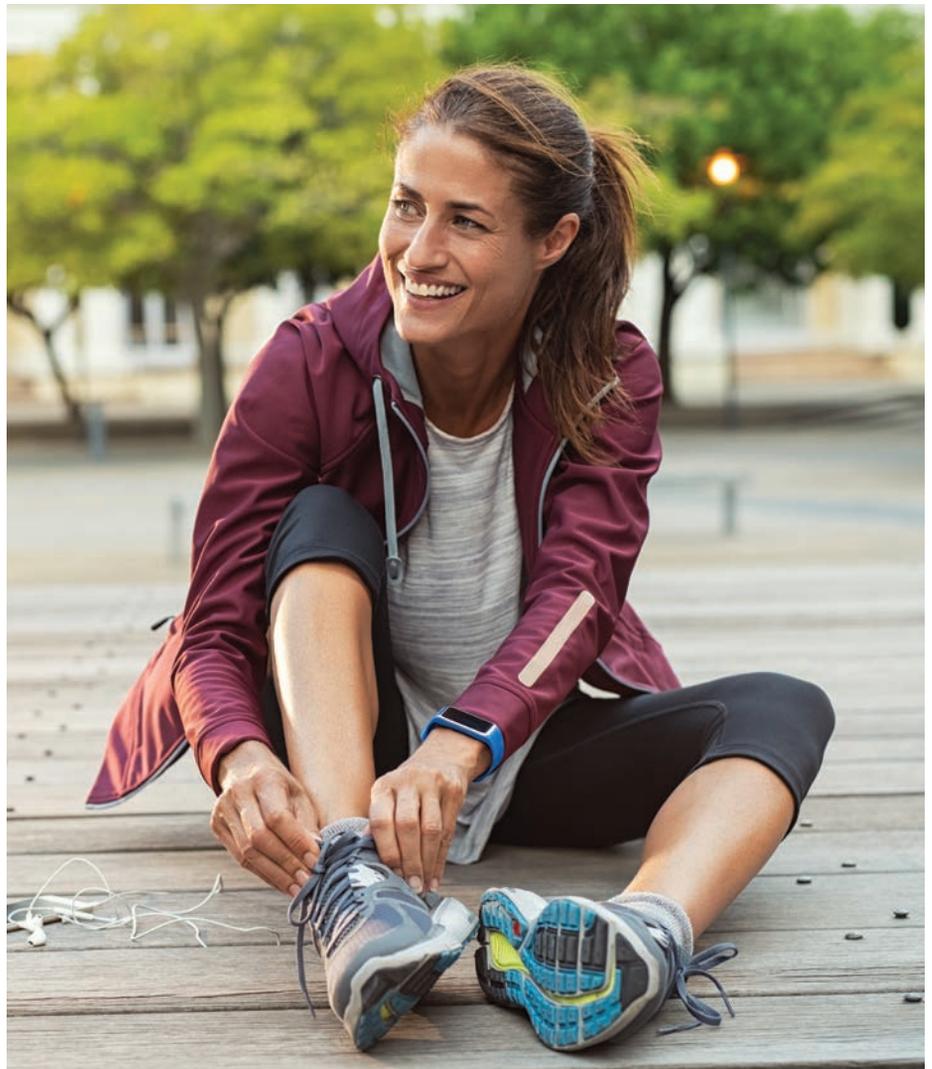
Q. What keeps you excited about orthopaedic surgery?

Even though I'm very conservative in terms of recommending surgery, I pride myself

on performing high-tech arthroscopic procedures that are minimally invasive and have very low complication rates. My goal is to have patients avoid joint replacements by using the best arthroscopic techniques available.

GET BACK IN THE GAME

To learn more about Orthopaedic and Sports Medicine Services offered at Main Line Health, visit mainlinehealth.org/ortho.





Bone up on exercise to fight osteoporosis



Deborah Bosley, PT
Physical Therapist

Bone health plays a significant role in our quality of life. Strong bones allow us to participate in activities we enjoy and live independently later in life by lowering the risk of fractures and chronic pain

due to posture-related changes. Although we naturally lose bone density with age, there are many things we can do to prevent or delay this loss. Chief among them? Exercise.

“Ongoing, consistent exercise has to be a part of every woman’s life,” explains Deborah Bosley, PT, a board-certified Clinical Specialist in Geriatric Physical Therapy with Main Line Health and trained BoneFit™ professional. “Regardless of where you are starting, you have the ability to positively impact your bone density in the future.”

EXERCISES FOR STRONGER BONES

Bosley recommends engaging in at least 30 minutes of weight-bearing cardiovascular exercise, such as walking, on most days. She also advises incorporating resistance training, such as

lifting free weights or using resistance bands, a few days a week.

“In addition to preventing or slowing bone loss, exercise benefits us in countless ways, including helping to maintain better posture,” she explains. “Good posture is especially important for those with osteoporosis because it helps reduce the risk for compression fractures and dangerous falls.”

A MULTIFACETED APPROACH

When it comes to better skeletal health, exercise is just one piece of the puzzle. To guide and mentor women with low bone density, Main Line Health is developing a multifaceted osteoporosis wellness program. Located at Bryn Mawr Rehab, the group program will begin this fall and include:

- Personalized exercises that focus on balance, stretching, posture and resistance training
- Guidance on proper body mechanics to help avoid fractures/injury
- Education regarding nutrition, supplements and other lifestyle factors that boost bone health

Learn more at mainlinehealth.org/rehab or call **484.596.5000**.

UNLOCKING YOUR BONE HEALTH

Bone density tests, also known as DEXA scans, are noninvasive, take just minutes to perform and can help detect bone fractures and lower the risk of osteoporosis — two common health risks for women.

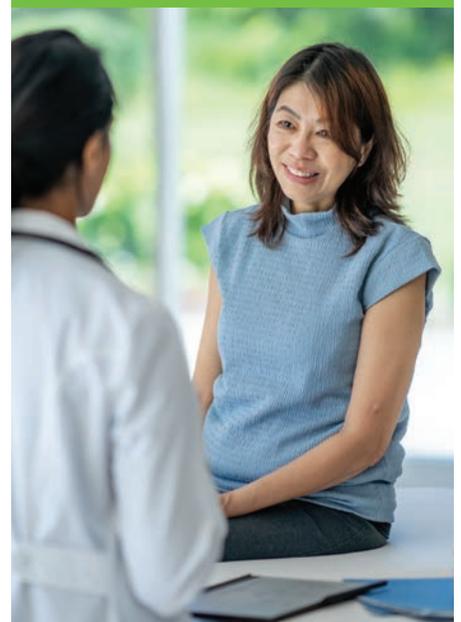
These scans are recommended for all women ages 65 and older, and for younger women who may be at greater risk for bone loss or osteoporosis. Risk factors include:

- Low body weight
- Poor nutrition
- Smoking
- Family history of bone loss or osteoporosis
- Personal history of previous bone fracture or nonestrogen-supported menopause
- Taking certain medications, such as steroids, selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) and proton pump inhibitors (PPIs)

Talk with your primary care doctor about whether a bone density test is right for you.

TO SCHEDULE YOUR SCAN

Appointments can be made online at mainlinehealth.org/imaging.



AARP SMART DRIVER COURSES™

Full Course (8 hours) and Refresher Course (4 hours) are recognized as approved Mature Driver Improvement Courses by the PA Department of Transportation. Insured drivers age 50+ may be eligible for a reduction in car insurance premium charges after completing the course (check with your insurance company or agent for additional requirements for eligibility for a discount). For upcoming courses and to register, visit mainlinehealth.org/events.

A MATTER OF BALANCE

Free evidence-based program for older adults explores concerns about falling, the value of exercise, fall prevention and assertiveness. Offered virtually (9 sessions) and in-person (8 sessions). For program dates or to register, visit mainlinehealth.org/events.

BLOOD PRESSURE SCREENINGS

Main Line Health provides free blood pressure screenings at locations across the region. Visit mainlinehealth.org/events for a current listing.

COMMUNITY CPR CLASSES

Basic Life Support (BLS) is for healthcare professionals and other personnel who need to know how to perform CPR and other basic cardiovascular life support skills in a wide variety of in-facility and prehospital settings. The **Heartsaver AED Course** is designed for non-medical professionals who need a course completion card for their job, regulatory (e.g., OSHA), or other requirements, or anyone who wants to be prepared for an emergency in any setting. For more information or to register, visit mainlinehealth.org/events.

THE DEAVER EDUCATION CENTER AND THE WELLNESS FARM

Offering in-person health and education classes to schools and community or church organizations. Classes are for school-age or adult groups. To schedule, call **484.476.3434** or email lhhealthcenter@mlhs.org.

FALL PREVENTION ROOM TO ROOM (VIRTUAL)

As we age, so does our home. Sometimes our home may no longer meet our needs or create fall risk for ourselves and loved ones. Join us for a discussion on identifying ways you can improve your home environment and decrease your risks for falls. To register, visit mainlinehealth.org/preventfalls.

HEALTHY STEPS FOR OLDER ADULTS

A free falls risk awareness program for PA adults age 60+. This evidence-based program is designed to raise awareness of falls, introduce steps on how to reduce falls, improve overall health and provide referrals and resources. For more about upcoming programs, visit mainlinehealth.org/events.

KING OF PRUSSIA TEACHING KITCHEN

Our King of Prussia Community Health and Outreach team offers a variety of health-related virtual educational programs and in-person cooking demonstrations free of charge. To see our list of upcoming events and how to register, please visit mainlinehealth.org/kopevents.

PREVENT T2 LIFESTYLE CHANGE VIRTUAL PROGRAM (DIABETES PREVENTION)

If you have prediabetes or other risk factors for Type 2 diabetes, now is the time to take charge of your health and make a change. Prevent T2 Lifestyle Change Program is part of the National Diabetes Prevention Program and features a proven approach to preventing or delaying Type 2 diabetes. Attend a 15-minute information session to learn about the Prevent T2 Program, a year-long diabetes prevention program being offered by Main Line Health King of Prussia's Community Health and Outreach team (virtual and optional in-person sessions are offered during the program). For dates/times and to register, visit mainlinehealth.org/kopevents.

FREE WIG PROGRAM

This program is for female cancer patients who are currently or about to undergo chemo or radiation treatments that will cause hair loss. To schedule an appointment, call **484.337.5215**.

HIP AND KNEE PAIN SEMINAR

During this virtual one-hour webinar, learn about the anatomy of the hip and knee, common causes of joint pain and some simple steps you can take to lessen the chance of an injury. Visit mainlinehealth.org/orthoclasses to register.

STOP THE BLEED®

Severe bleeding injuries left unattended can result in death. When individuals learn the skills to stop uncontrolled bleeding during an emergency situation, lives can be saved. STOP THE BLEED is designed for anyone! For questions, individual registration or to schedule this free program for your organization, email eckenrodel@mlhs.org or krousem@mlhs.org.

STRETCH YOUR LIMITS (VIRTUAL)

This free exercise program for adults age 55+ includes light aerobic warm-up, strength training with elastic tubing and dumbbells, balance training and stretching with modified yoga, and chair tai chi. Classes are held Mondays, 9:30-10:30 a.m., and Thursdays, 4:30-5:30 p.m. To register for classes, email geerm@mlhs.org.

SMOKEFREE (VIRTUAL)

This free six-session program encourages smoking cessation among tobacco users and vapers. Participants may be eligible for free nicotine replacement therapy. For more information or to register, call **484.227.3735**.

MEDICATION SAFETY IN THE COMMUNITY (VIRTUAL)

Free one-hour presentation on proper safety measures when taking medications, appropriate disposal of medications and resources available to inform safe medication use within our community. To schedule this free program for your group, please call **484.565.8328**; or for a scheduled class, visit mainlinehealth.org/events.

calendar of events

HEART-TO-HEART CONVERSATIONS

The Women's Heart Initiative, Main Line Health's women's heart program, is proud to offer a virtual monthly cardiac support group for those looking for emotional support and encouragement during the healing process that follows a cardiac event.

Our Heart-to-Heart Conversations support group provides valuable feedback to those who have experienced an event or who are at increased risk for heart disease. In addition to meeting other women, you can ask questions and become better educated about your heart-related concerns.

JOIN US

Third Thursday of every month, 4:15–5:15 p.m.
Zoom virtual meeting

TO REGISTER

Email mlhwomensheart@mlhs.org or call 484.476.3WHI (484.476.3944).

You will receive a Zoom link that will give you access to the meeting.



Thriving During and After Cancer Treatment

LOOK GOOD FEEL BETTER WORKSHOP

Tips and tricks to support the visible side effects of cancer treatment.
Third Monday of the month.

GROWING HEALTHY HABITS AT DEAVER WELLNESS FARM

Explore the farm, discover the power of fresh food and grow healthy habits in your food choices.
Sept. 12, 2 p.m.

BREAKING DOWN THE MYSTERY OF MEDICARE

Better understand health insurance options and ask questions of experts to plan for open enrollment.
Sept. 23, 5 p.m.

Contact: 484.337.8775 or sweeneyta@mlhs.org

With you through your cancer journey

SUPPORT GROUPS Information, support, connections

BREAST CANCER SUPPORT GROUP

First Tuesday of each month, 5:30 p.m.
Contact: 484.227.3141 or mantegnad@mlhs.org

CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUP

Second Wednesday of each month, 5:30 p.m.
Contact: 484.565.1253 or powersv@mlhs.org

COLORECTAL CANCER SUPPORT GROUP

Second Thursday of each month, 1 p.m.
Contact: 484.476.8503 or bidasg@mlhs.org

COPING WITH CANCER A TO Z

Second Monday of each month, 4:30 p.m.
Contact: 484.227.3794 or stolbergt@mlhs.org

METASTATIC BREAST CANCER SUPPORT GROUP

First Tuesday of each month, 4:30 p.m.
Contact: 484.565.1253 or powersv@mlhs.org

CANCER SURVIVORS SUPPORT GROUP

Third Thursday of each month, 4:30 p.m.
Contact: 484.476.6239 or brogans@mlhs.org

LUNG CANCER SUPPORT GROUP

Fourth Thursday of the month, 1 p.m.
Contact: 484.476.8514 or cicinih@mlhs.org

PETER PUMPKIN SQUARES

Canned pumpkin, the main ingredient in this tasty autumn treat, is loaded with healthy nutrients, such as vitamins A, C and E, iron, and potassium.

INGREDIENTS

1 can (16 oz.) pumpkin
1 ½ cups brown sugar
4 eggs
¾ cup cooking oil
1 ½ 2 cups all-purpose flour
1 ½ cups rolled oats
1 tbsp. ground cinnamon
2 tsp. baking powder
1 tsp. baking soda
Cooking spray to grease the pan

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. In a medium bowl, stir together the pumpkin, sugar, eggs and oil. Mix well.
3. In a large bowl, mix the flour, oats, cinnamon, and baking powder and soda.
4. Add the pumpkin mix to the flour mix. Stir well.
5. Spray a 9 x 13-inch baking pan with cooking spray.
6. Pour the batter into the pan and bake for 30 minutes.



For a full list of all the community programs offered at Main Line Health, visit mainlinehealth.org/events.

Unlocking the key to inflammatory disease



Patrick Viatour, PharmD, PhD
Medical Researcher

In today's world of medicine, patients have become accustomed to seeking out the right specialist. Have arthritis? See a rheumatologist. Irritable bowel disease? A gastroenterologist.

Cystic fibrosis involves various physicians — a pulmonologist for lung issues, an endocrinologist for related diabetes and hormonal issues, and more.

But what if one medicine could treat many of those inflammatory diseases and others? Lankenau Institute for Medical Research (LIMR) scientist Patrick Viatour, PharmD, PhD, is optimistic that he is on a path where one drug, while not erasing the need for other specialists, could make their jobs easier and patients' lives better.

THE COMMON THREAD

"Arthritis, irritable bowel disease, Crohn's disease and cystic fibrosis all have one thing in common," says the Associate Professor. "They are chronic inflammatory diseases. You may not think of it this way, but cancer is in that family of diseases, too, hijacking the immune system and causing inflammation to promote the disease's growth."

Dr. Viatour has made a believer out of the federal government. He has been awarded a grant from the high-risk, high-gain Innovative Science Accelerator Program, funded by the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK), which supports hematological research.

In chronic inflammatory diseases, blood stem cells are stimulated to accelerate the production of inflammatory cells. Dr. Viatour has identified a dual mechanism that drives this cycle and now seeks to develop a drug to attack both arms of it, restoring appropriate blood cell production.

Steroids suppress the immune system and are currently the most effective way to treat chronic



Patrick Viatour, PharmD, PhD, has been awarded a grant from the Innovative Science Accelerator Program.

inflammation. But they carry a risk for side effects, including weight gain. George Prendergast, PhD, President and CEO of LIMR, says Dr. Viatour's approach would be far less toxic.

"This is extraordinary work that ties into what medical science learned during the battle against COVID-19," Dr. Prendergast says. "The innate immune system is like the front lines of an army, trying to limit infection and buying time until the adaptive immune system can learn a strategy to fight back more effectively. But COVID can trigger a cytokine storm, sending the innate system into overdrive. The body would fight so hard that it was actually killing itself. Patrick's approach would regulate the innate system without steroids' side effects."

CONTINUING RESEARCH

Dr. Viatour's research journey has taken him many places. During his postdoctoral training and as an independent investigator, he has been working on two arms of research. One is cancer. The other is blood cell formation, part of immunology. He sees an important connection.

Although the NIDDK grant focuses only on inflammatory diseases, Dr. Viatour continues his cancer research on a parallel track and is optimistic his work will benefit liver cancer patients.

As for inflammatory diseases, after 20 years of searching for a mechanism common to all of them, he believes he has a drug that will work.

"We still have a lot of work to do, but we're very excited by it," Dr. Viatour says.



GET THE DETAILS

Scan the QR code to watch a video in which Dr. Viatour talks more about this exciting research. To learn more about clinical trials at the Lankenau Institute for Medical Research, visit mainlinehealth.org/limr.



A heartbeat away: A husband's heroic rescue



Maribel Hernandez, MD
Cardiologist

Patti and Kevin Trabocco are as devoted a couple as you could possibly find. Married since 1999, they raised two boys together, and share a deep love for the Jersey shore and the Philadelphia Eagles. To see them

laughing together as they often do, one would never know how much they both have been through.

As a young man, Kevin served overseas as a sergeant in the Marine Corps, and in his words, “survived by the grace of God.” And in 1993, when Patti was just 31 years old, she suffered a heart attack that many would not have survived, along with multiple strokes. She was diagnosed with a rare blood clotting disorder and has since been on medication to control it. There seemed to be no reason for any further concern.

It was on April 19, 2015, that their lives would be turned upside down. The couple went to bed at about 11 p.m., and Patti began feeling a bit nauseated. She curled up in the fetal position and tried to sleep. She remembers telling Kevin she was not feeling well.

At approximately 1:30 a.m., Kevin was awakened by two loud, disturbing groans. Opening his eyes, he saw Patti's feet on her pillow and her head at the end of the bed. She was not breathing. She did not have a pulse. Patti was in cardiac arrest.

THE RACE AGAINST TIME

Kevin's experience as a Marine immediately kicked in. He pulled Patti onto the floor and began cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), performing chest compressions and breathing air through Patti's nose, as her jaw had clamped shut.

In between compressions, Kevin dialed 911, and quickly ran downstairs to turn on the lights and unlock the front door for the emergency medical services (EMS) team. When the team arrived, Kevin had to be convinced to let them take over for him on CPR. “Patti is my best friend,



the love of my life,” says Kevin. “She wasn't dying on my watch.”

Patti was in the ambulance on the way to the hospital 45 minutes after Kevin first awoke. She still did not have a pulse. The EMS team continued to perform CPR in their relentless efforts to resuscitate her.

Kevin followed them in his car, parking next to the ambulance at the front door. As the medical team rushed Patti into the emergency room, Kevin told the lead physician, “Don't come back out here unless you have good news.”

Still, Kevin knew the odds were against them. He sat in the waiting room for two agonizing hours before the doctor emerged.

He shared that Patti had survived. And that Kevin's ability to immediately perform CPR saved her life.

THE ROAD TO RECOVERY

Patti lay unconscious in the hospital for several days as she began to heal. On April 27, when she was awake, her medical team implanted a defibrillator — a small, battery-powered device that sits under the skin, usually just beneath the collarbone, with thin wires that connect to the heart through the blood vessels. The device delivers an electric shock to the heart if it beats too quickly, too slowly or erratically. Patti was released the day following the procedure.

“When I first came home, I could barely walk a few steps,” recalls Patti. “It took a good month to rebuild my strength.”

“Patti was diagnosed with two heart conditions that require ongoing treatment and monitoring,” explains Main Line

Health's Maribel Hernandez, MD, Medical Director, Women's Heart Initiative — she has served as Patti's cardiologist for the past year, since her previous physician moved out of state. “She has cardiomyopathy — an abnormality in the heart muscle that leads to difficulty pumping blood properly; and she has ventricular arrhythmia, which refers to an irregular heartbeat. These conditions are directly connected to one another, and both were caused by damage resulting from her heart attack in 1993. This is what led to her cardiac arrest in 2015.”

Patti continues to take medication for her clotting disorder, and since 2015, takes medication for her more recently diagnosed heart conditions. She has a home monitor for her defibrillator, which is also closely monitored in real time by Dr. Hernandez's office. Every six months, she sees Dr. Hernandez, who reports that Patti's cardiovascular health is stable, and she should continue to do well.

“Not only did Kevin save Patti's life, but he saved her quality of life,” states Dr. Hernandez. “His ability to perform CPR kept blood flowing to Patti's body and brain, preventing what could have been neurological damage during the time it took for EMS to arrive. I cannot stress enough how invaluable CPR training is for everyone.”

FAST ACTION SAVES LIVES

“If you want to be a superhero, learn CPR,” says Patti. “I still haven't really grasped the fact that my husband saved my life.”

Main Line Health offers ongoing CPR courses and makes onsite visits to conduct training. The American Heart Association offers CPR training as well.

“I used to hate it when the birds outside woke me up at 5:30 a.m.,” shares Patti. “Now each morning when they wake me, I think to myself, you guys can make all the noise you want!”

HEART CARE EXPERTS

To learn more about heart and vascular care at Main Line Health, visit mainlinehealth.org/lhi.

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