

# Healthy Directions Spring 2010

## Teamwork and trust



### Three Mercy oncologists discuss breast cancer

BY MICKEY MILLER

**WHEN A WOMAN** receives a breast cancer diagnosis, the news can be devastating—not only for her but also for her family. But the oncologists and surgeons at Mercy Iowa City can offer expert treatment options and personal support to help each patient and her family through the cancer journey.

Every breast cancer patient should take the time to learn about all the treatment options available,\* says Abby Thrower, MD, PhD, a medical oncologist with Cancer Care of Iowa City, LLC. “Breast cancer patients should rest assured that they have time to make decisions,” she says.

#### Strong partnerships

When it comes to treating breast cancer, many female patients prefer to have a female health care provider, and having a trusting, personal relationship with a provider makes the decision-making process smoother.

“Women physicians bring a different perspective,” says Terese Howes, MD, MS, a radiation oncologist with Iowa City Cancer Treatment Center since 2006. “It’s easy to find something in common with my patients, and sometimes it’s just easier for patients to talk to you.”

The opportunity to develop relationships with patients and families is a large part of what drew Dr. Howes to her field.

“I feel like I really get to know my patients,” she says. “It’s nice to sit with a patient and feel like you’ve made a difference.”

Ferial A. Tewfik, MD, PhD, FACRO, a radiation oncologist with Iowa City Cancer Treatment Center since 1985, agrees that patient relationships are the most rewarding part of her career.

“I put myself in every patient’s shoes,” she says. “I treat them the way I’d like to be treated. Patients have to trust you, and you have to be worthy of that trust.”

—Continued on back page

\*Breast cancer can also occur in men, although this is much less common.

### Experts on your side



● Terese Howes,  
MD, MS



● Ferial A.  
Tewfik, MD,  
PhD, FACRO



● Abby Thrower,  
MD, PhD

Need a physician? Call Mercy On Call at 319-358-2767 or toll-free at 800-358-2767 seven days a week.

**2** The ins and outs of chemotherapy treatment

**4** Pass on the salt to help lower your blood pressure

**5** Join us for a meet-and-greet with doctors

**7** Do you know how to have the Happiest Baby on the Block?

# CHEMO- THERAPY

## How and why it works

Treatment  
can cause the  
body to use  
more energy  
to repair  
damaged  
tissue.

### **CANCER CAN BE TOUGH TO TREAT.**

Part of the reason is that it doesn't always stay in one place. Sometimes cancerous cells that are part of a tumor can break away and travel to other parts of the body without being noticed—at least early on.

For these potentially dangerous cells, doctors need a treatment that can find cancer cells where they hide. In many cases, that treatment is chemotherapy.

### **A whole-body treatment**

Chemotherapy is the treatment of cancer with drugs. According to the American Cancer Society, there are more than 100 chemotherapy medications now in use. These drugs attack cancer in different manners and are given in different ways.

Some, for example, are injected, while others are swallowed. Still others are infused through a thin needle placed in a vein. The type of cancer you have, where the cancer is and your general health help doctors decide which drug or combination of drugs is best for you.

In most cases, chemotherapy is a systemic treatment; that is, the medicines travel throughout your entire body.

They are often given after surgery or radiation therapy. But they can also be used to shrink a tumor before other types of treatment. In some cases, chemotherapy is the only treatment used.

Ultimately, the goal of chemotherapy is to help cure or control cancer or to relieve its symptoms.

### **Treatment challenges**

The strength of chemotherapy is also one of its potential drawbacks. Chemotherapy is very good at killing cancer cells. But it also cannot distinguish a diseased cell from a healthy cell. As a result, normal cells can be damaged during treatment.

Cells most likely to be affected are those that divide quickly, such as cells of hair follicles, blood cells, and cells lining your digestive and reproductive tracts. This is why side effects including hair loss, nausea, diarrhea and low blood counts are possible.

Specific side effects vary from drug to drug and may be influenced by dosage. But doctors can take steps to prevent or lessen the severity of many side effects.

While some chemotherapy-related problems may be long-term, many are only temporary. Once treatment ends, normal cells that were damaged will often repair themselves.

## Wondering what exactly causes cancer fatigue?

What drives the fatigue that comes with cancer and its treatment?

There's no single answer, says the American Cancer Society (ACS).

Fatigue is a common side effect of chemotherapy, radiation and other treatments.

For example, treatment can destroy healthy cells in bone marrow, which can lead to fewer red blood cells. That condition, called anemia, leaves less energy

for the body's needs, says the ACS.

Treatment can also cause the body to use greater amounts of energy to repair damaged tissue. What's more, anemia or other causes of fatigue can be due to cancer itself.

Additional factors can play a role in cancer-related fatigue, such as:

- ✓ Emotional stress from dealing with cancer and treatments.
- ✓ Changes in sleep habits.

✓ Physical inactivity. Being less active can cause you to be less physically fit, so it takes more energy to do your usual activities.

✓ Medicines other than those for chemotherapy. For example, those used to treat pain or vomiting can add to fatigue.

✓ Not getting enough nutrients. This can result, for example, from eating less because of poor appetite or nausea.

# Managing fatigue during treatment

If you're feeling the fatigue that often accompanies cancer treatment, you probably know it's nothing like ordinary tiredness that might simply fade with some extra sleep.

Not everyone feels fatigued during cancer treatment, but many do—and it can be overwhelming. Simple tasks, such as eating or talking on the phone, can leave you exhausted.

Talk to your doctor or nurse about your fatigue. Some underlying causes, such as anemia, are treatable.

In addition, there are things you can do to help cope. Consider these tips from the American Cancer Society (ACS) and the National Cancer Institute:

**Know that treatment-related fatigue does get better with time. You can get through this.**

Moderate exercise, such as walking, can help combat fatigue, but ask your doctor what's best for you.

1 } Set priorities and save energy.

Decide which of your regular activities are most important. Schedule them throughout the day rather than doing them all at once.

Being aware of your energy level can help you decide what you can realistically do, says Jerome Yates, MD, spokesman for the ACS. Keeping a journal noting when you're tired can help with this, he says.

2 } Get enough rest.

Schedule regular rest periods. Short naps or breaks may be better than one long rest. It's also important to balance rest and activities. Resting too much can sap your energy even more.

3 } Keep active.

Moderate exercise, such as walking, can help combat fatigue, but ask your doctor what's best for you.

4 } Ask for help.

Family or friends might lend a hand with mowing the lawn, running errands or doing other tasks that may be more than you can manage right now.

5 } Eat well.

Unless your health care team says otherwise, follow a balanced diet—one that includes foods high in protein, such as meat, milk and beans—and drink plenty of water.


6 } Mind your mood.

Talk to your doctor if you have feelings of hopelessness—you may be depressed, Dr. Yates says. Being depressed can make you feel tired.

Use a journal to track your fatigue. This can help your doctor determine whether your tiredness is related to your cancer treatment or depression or both, Dr. Yates says.

## Partner up

Find a physician to help you through your cancer care.

 Call Mercy on Call at 319-358-2767 or toll-free at 800-358-2767.

# Take a pass on

# salt

## Adding flavor without the salt

The American Dietetic and American Heart associations suggest:

- ✓ Basil with fish, lamb, salads and sauces.
- ✓ Garlic (not garlic salt) with vegetables.
- ✓ Lemon juice with lean meats, poultry and salads.

## Your blood pressure and health will benefit

**MANY HEALTH EXPERTS** say we should eat no more than 1 teaspoon of salt, or sodium, daily. One teaspoon translates to about 2,400 milligrams.

Sounds reasonable, right? But one cup of canned tomato soup may contain more than 1,000 milligrams of sodium. Some frozen pizzas pack 1,200 milligrams of sodium into just one 4-ounce slice. Eat two slices, and you've blown your total recommended sodium intake for the day—at one meal.

A little bit of sodium is good for you. It helps keep your body's fluids in balance and helps your nerves and muscles work properly. But too much sodium can build up in your blood, creating excess fluid and raising blood pressure.

One way you can lower your blood pressure is to cut back on the amount of salt you eat.

### Add less salt

The first step toward decreasing your sodium intake is to resist grabbing the salt

shaker when you cook or eat.

This might require retraining your taste buds, says the American Dietetic Association. But just as you learned to like salty food, you can unlearn it too.

Taste your food before adding salt. If you think it needs flavoring, consider adding flavored vinegar, herbs or spices instead of salt.

### Read more labels

Table salt is just the tip of the sodium iceberg. The U.S. Department of Agriculture reports that 75 percent of our sodium intake comes from processed foods.

So your second step toward eating less salt comes at the grocery store, where you can read nutrition labels and choose foods with low sodium content.

### Recipes for eating well

Get delicious recipes and video how-tos from Mercy Executive Chef Ron Hall.

 Go to [www.mercyiowacity.org](http://www.mercyiowacity.org) and click on "Taste of Mercy."

## When blood pressure is low

Less is usually better when it comes to blood pressure. However, blood pressure can dip abnormally low—a condition known as hypotension.

A blood pressure reading lower than 90/60 mm Hg is hypotension, says the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI). Having abnormally low blood pressure is not always a cause for alarm. Some people, for example, have chronically low blood pressure that doesn't cause health problems, reports the NHLBI.

Blood pressure can also dip temporarily. If you've briefly felt dizzy after suddenly standing or following a long period of sitting or lying, you've experienced hypotension.

Low blood pressure becomes a concern, however, when it causes more severe problems. These can include fainting, nausea, blurred vision, clamminess or breathing difficulties.



## Welcome, new medical staff members

- ✓ Castin J. Anderson, MD  
**Specialty:** Anesthesiology  
Physician Anesthesia Care of Iowa City
- ✓ Tracy J. Anderson, MD  
**Specialty:** Anesthesiology  
Physician Anesthesia Care of Iowa City
- ✓ Anne Boileau, MD  
**Specialty:** Family medicine  
Iowa City Family Practice Clinic
- ✓ Matthew K. Geneser, DDS  
**Specialty:** Pediatric dentistry  
Pediatric Dentistry of Coralville
- ✓ Diane C. Kraft, MD  
**Specialty:** Internal medicine  
Mercy Hospitalist Program
- ✓ Janeta F. Tansey, MD, PhD  
**Specialty:** Psychiatry  
Mercy Inpatient Psychiatry Unit
- ✓ Robert M. Valleau, MD  
**Specialty:** Internal medicine  
Mercy Hospitalist Program

Want to find a Mercy doctor who suits your needs? Just call Mercy On Call at **319-358-2767** or toll-free at **800-358-2767**. Mercy On Call is available seven days a week from 7 a.m. to midnight.

of healing, rather than taking a disease-focused approach.”

Dr. Tansey describes Mercy 4 North as the first psychiatric unit in Iowa to integrate evidence-based psychiatry with humanistic and complementary healing therapies to treat mind, body and spirit.

Dr. Tansey is board-certified by the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology. She also holds a PhD in religious studies with a focus on modern religious studies from the University of Iowa. From 2001 to 2009 Dr. Tansey served a joint faculty appointment in UI’s program in biomedical ethics and medical humanities and in the department of psychiatry, and in 2008 she received the UI Collegiate Teaching Award. Dr. Tansey is also the owner of and a private practitioner in Integrative Psychiatry of Iowa City PC, located in Eastwind Healing Center.

# Focused on healing

Mercy psychiatrist sees new direction for behavioral health care

**JANETA TANSEY, MD, PHD**, has joined Mercy as Medical Director of Inpatient Behavioral Health, located on Mercy 4 North.

“This is an unlocked unit to care for patients with acute mental distress,” Dr. Tansey says. “It’s a safe stopping place where we can take care of severe symptoms and help individuals stabilize.”

Dr. Tansey foresees an active treatment program on the unit.

“We want to empower patients to make changes and to eliminate the passive quality of some mental health care,” she says. “There are many ways of effecting healing change. Our approach will tap into a more ancient philosophy



● **Janeta Tansey, MD, PhD**



You can now visit Mercy on Facebook!

## Need a doctor? Plan ahead

Kirk Gieswein, MD, and Hilary Barr, MD, invite you to Mercy Services Coralville at 2055 Oakdale Road on Wednesday, March 10, from 5 to 7 p.m., for an informal meet-and-greet session. If you are looking for a doctor in the area, it is a great chance to ask the doctors questions and get to know the clinic.



● **Kirk Gieswein, MD**



● **Hilary Barr, MD**

## FINDING SUPPORT

### COMMUNITY SUPPORT GROUPS

For more information about community support groups that meet at Mercy, call **Mercy On Call**. They include:

- ✓ NAMI (National Alliance for the Mentally Ill)
- ✓ Parkinson's Support Group
- ✓ Al-Anon

### ONGOING SUPPORT GROUPS

Call **Mercy On Call** for dates, topics and locations.

- ✓ Breath of Fresh Air (for people living with chronic lung disease)
- ✓ Cardiac Support Group
- ✓ Continuing After Breast Cancer
- ✓ Diabetes Support Group
- ✓ Hope Cancer Support Group
- ✓ Stroke Group

### **FREE** SLEEP APNEA SUPPORT GROUP

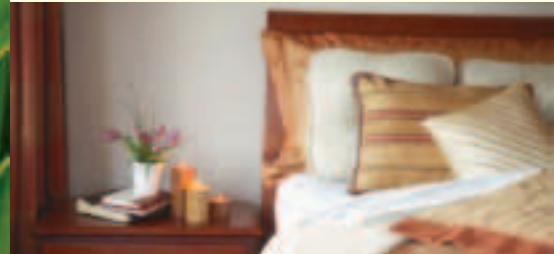
**Wednesday, April 14, 6 to 8 p.m., first floor conference room, Mercy Hospital**

For patients, family members, friends and partners affected by sleep apnea and other sleep disorders. Offers education on different diagnoses, CPAP and BIPAP equipment use, and guest speakers.

# TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR HEALTH

For more information or to register, call **Mercy On Call** at 319-358-2767 or toll-free at 800-358-2767.

Courtesy of Washington Bulb Co., Inc.



## HEALTHY LIVING

### ARTHRITIS SELF-HELP CLASS

**Mondays, March 22 to April 26, 6 to 8 p.m., Scanlon room, Mercy Medical Plaza**  
**\$70 per person**

Designed for people with arthritis, fibromyalgia, osteoporosis, osteoarthritis or rheumatoid arthritis, this six-week class will cover topics such as relaxation techniques, exercise, fatigue, energy conservation and pain management. Class size is limited. To register, call Progressive Rehabilitation Associates at **319-354-5114**.

### CANCER SURVIVORS DAY

**Saturday, May 1, 1 to 3 p.m., Atrium, Mercy Hospital**

All cancer survivors and their families are

invited to enjoy social time and refreshments. Speaker: Alecia Williams, Pastor of First United Methodist Church, North Liberty.

### LIFESTEPS WEIGHT MANAGEMENT

**Mondays, beginning March 1**

A 12-session weight-management program taught by a dietitian and an exercise physiologist.

### SMOKE STOPPERS

Now offered as a one-on-one program with a respiratory therapist. Smoke Stoppers helps you quit in three phases: the countdown, learning to stop and staying smoke-free. Call **Mercy On Call** for more information.

### VASCULAR SCREENINGS

✓ **Tuesday, March 23, Mercy Services West Liberty, 1401 Crees St., \$99**

✓ **Tuesday, April 27, Mercy Services Coralville, 2055 Oakdale Road, \$99**

✓ **Thursday, May 20, Mercy Family Medicine of Washington, 420 E. Polk, \$99**

This screening package includes a stroke/carotid artery ultrasound, an abdominal aortic ultrasound, an ankle-brachial index and a blood pressure check. Results are reviewed by a Mercy vascular surgeon. To make a screening appointment at either location, call **Mercy On Call** at **319-358-2767** or toll-free at **800-358-2767**.

## YOUR GROWING FAMILY *Call Mercy On Call for dates and to register.*

### **FREE** EASING THROUGH PREGNANCY

*Tuesdays, March 16, May 18, 7 to 9 p.m., classroom 2*

A one-session class that provides information and comfort measures to parents-to-be for the physical and emotional changes of first- and second-trimester pregnancy.

### **FREE** CHILDBIRTH PREPARATION

*Tuesdays, March 2, 9; April 6, 13; May 4, 11, 7 to 9 p.m., classroom 4, Mercy Hospital*

A two-session class for couples in the third trimester of pregnancy. Class addresses labor, delivery and car seat safety and includes a tour of Mercy's birth care unit.

### CHILDBIRTH EDUCATION

- ✓ *Monday and Wednesday evenings*
  - ✓ *Refresher course on weekends*
- Fee varies*

Class addresses comfort, relaxation and breathing techniques for labor and vaginal and cesarean delivery. Includes a tour of Mercy's Birth Care Unit. Taught by registered nurses who are certified childbirth educators.

### BEGINNING WITH BABY

*Sundays, April 25, July 18, 1 to 4:30 p.m., McAuley room, lower level, Mercy Medical Plaza, \$15 per family*

This one-session class addresses bringing baby home and "now what?" questions. Covers baby care, new responsibilities, parenting concerns and safety.

### **FREE** NEW BROTHER/NEW SISTER

*Mondays, March 1, April 5, May 3, June 7, 6 p.m. and 7:15 p.m., classroom 4, Mercy Hospital*

This one-session class helps children ages 3 to 12 prepare for the arrival of a new baby.

### **FREE** CAR SEAT SAFETY

*Tuesdays, March 23, May 25, 7 to 9 p.m., classroom 4, Mercy Hospital*

A one-session class to help parents understand Iowa car seat safety laws, car seat use and types of car seats.

### **FREE** PUT SAFETY FIRST

*Tuesdays, April 20, June 22, 7 to 9 p.m., classroom 4, Mercy Hospital*

A one-session class for parents and grandparents about childproofing strategies and home and personal safety.

### HAPPIEST BABY ON THE BLOCK

*Sundays, March 14, May 23, Aug. 29; Monday, April 19, times vary, \$30*

New babies are blessings, but they can also bring sleepless nights and stress. This one-session class is based on pediatrician Dr. Harvey Karp's approach to baby care. Topics include the fourth trimester, the calming reflex, the 5 S's and cuddle care. May be taken before or after the baby is born.

### INFANT MASSAGE

*Sundays, beginning April 11 and June 27, 1 to 3 p.m., classroom 4, Mercy Hospital, \$30 per family*

A three-session class for parents and their 2-week-old to 7-month-old babies. Parents learn how to massage, soothe and relax their baby and help the little one sleep. Taught by a certified infant massage instructor.

### BREASTFEEDING CLASS

*Monday, March 29; Tuesdays, April 20, May 11, 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., first floor conference room, Mercy Hospital, \$10*

A one-session class for expectant mothers (recommended before delivery). A support person is welcome to attend at no extra cost.

### **FREE** BREASTFEEDING AND MORE

*Thursdays, noon to 2 p.m., McAuley room, lower level, Mercy Medical Plaza*

An informal group offering support and friendship to new mothers. No registration is necessary.

## HERE WHEN YOU NEED US

HEALTHY DIRECTIONS is published as a community service for the friends and patrons of MERCY HOSPITAL, 500 E. Market St., Iowa City, IA 52245, telephone 319-339-0300, website [www.mercyiowacity.org](http://www.mercyiowacity.org).

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## Answers over the phone

Whatever your health care need, Mercy On Call can help.

The experienced registered nurses of Mercy On Call have information about a wide array of community resources.

**Just call 319-358-2767 or toll-free at 800-358-2767.**



Mercy On Call toll-free: 800-358-2767

Main hospital number: 319-339-0300



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[www.mercyiowacity.org](http://www.mercyiowacity.org).

### OUR MISSION

Mercy Iowa City heals and comforts the sick and works to improve the health of the community in the spirit of Jesus Christ and the Catholic tradition of the Sisters of Mercy.

## A support system in your corner

Judy Gilliam's cell phone is an important tool of her trade.

An oncology nurse for more than 20 years, Judy is now the new breast cancer coordinator at Mercy. In this role, she works closely with women who are undergoing breast cancer treatment. She helps them receive timely and supportive care, and she listens to their concerns and answers their questions—even when that means cell phone calls on weekends.

"I think that it's important because it's such an emotional disease," Judy says.

In addition to working with patients, Judy serves as a liaison between physicians, nursing staff and community agencies to offer support to breast cancer patients.

## Teamwork

—Continued from front page

Dr. Tewfik says that, although she and Drs. Thrower and Howes often receive the expressions of gratitude from patients and families, "it's teamwork—from reception to physician. We all do our best to make patients look forward to coming."

### Facing forward

As for the future of breast cancer treatment, Dr. Tewfik says: "Every day there is excitement on the horizon—much improved machines, more individualized treatments and fewer side effects."

Dr. Thrower hopes to see more detailed

For a copy of Mercy's newest *Cancer Program Annual Report*, call Mercy On Call at 319-358-2767 or toll-free at 800-358-2767.

pathology reports to support personalized medicine and allow for more clinical research. Dr. Howes expects to see shorter treatments in the future.

All three doctors have one thing in common—the desire to help their patients.

"Everybody who walks through the door—I might not be able to cure them, but I can help them," Dr. Thrower says. "That's a pretty rewarding career."

## A team approach to breast cancer care

Mercy's Cancer Program brings together several partners to meet patients' needs:

- ✓ Cancer Care of Iowa City, LLC, provides outpatient chemotherapy, hematology and education services. It is a partnership between Mercy Iowa City and University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics and is located at 613 E. Bloomington St. in the Mercy Cancer Center. Physicians are James Feeley, MD; Abby Thrower, MD, PhD; and Thorvardur Halfdanarson, MD.
- ✓ Iowa City Cancer Treatment Center provides outpatient radiation therapy. It is located at 601 E. Bloomington St. in the Mercy Cancer Center. Physicians are Hamed Tewfik, MD, FACRO; Ferial Tewfik, MD, PhD, FACRO; and Terese Howes, MD, MS.
- ✓ Surgical Services, PC, cares for patients at 510 E. Bloomington St. Physicians are Rick Shelman, MD; Robert Radcliffe, MD; and A. Donald Smith, MD.
- ✓ Breast reconstruction surgery is provided by Al Aly, MD; Phyllis Chang, MD; and Albert Cram, MD.
- ✓ Mercy Hospital provides diagnostic services, inpatient care, support and education, home care options, nutrition counseling, social support, rehabilitation, and more.

Mercy's oncology program has been recognized by the Commission on Cancer of the American College of Surgeons since 1992 for offering high-quality cancer care.

