



# the Navigator

news, views and tips you can use  
to live well with cancer

## Lessons learned from surviving 'a mystery cancer'

Imagine being told that you have an advanced, aggressive cancer, but that doctors don't know what kind or exactly how to treat it.

That was Marta Willson's dilemma four years ago. Upper-arm pain led to the discovery of a golf-ball-sized lymph node in her right armpit, but the source of that tumor remains a mystery to this day.

A successful sales and marketing consultant who's used to being in control, Marta was suddenly at the mercy of a mystery cancer, "carcinoma of unknown primary", CUP for short. Her first doctors proposed treating it as they would breast cancer with a single mastectomy and lymphectomy followed by radiation and chemotherapy.

"Whoa, hold the phone," she remembers thinking. "I was glad I already had a second opinion scheduled."

At Seattle Cancer Treatment and Wellness Center, doctors gave her hope, along with their expertise in combining specialized medical treatments with the naturopathic support she was seeking.

"Mainstream medicine tends to treat symptoms," she says. "I wanted to treat the source." Even if that source was a question mark.

Marta underwent six months of weekly, chemotherapy treatments with Medical Oncologist Dr. Nick Chen, received acupuncture from Chinese medicine practitioner Darin Bunch, and saw a spiritual counselor on her own. She continues to get nutritional guidance, most recently from Naturopathic Physician Letitia Cain.

Through it all, she maintained her career as a senior housing consultant. At 61, she's now "retired" and working part-time for herself. Scans show no sign of that original tumor or any others, but Marta remains vigilant about her twice-monthly vitamin C infusions and all-organic, cancer-fighting diet and supplement regimen.

Her experience taught her never to let down her guard, or give up. Now she advises others to:

- Always get a second opinion.
- Have an advocate come with you to appointments. (Marta is ever so grateful for her husband, Larry.)
- Do everything you can to fill your days with humor, life and optimism. (Marta has a no-dead-plants rule at her house.)

"I plan to live into my 80s," she says.

*No case is typical. Not every patient should expect to receive these results.*



Seattle Cancer Treatment  
and Wellness Center<sup>SM</sup>

Winning the fight against cancer, every day.®

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## about Seattle Cancer Treatment and Wellness Center

When you or someone you know has cancer – even advanced cancer or complex cancer – you never give up hope. Neither do we.

That's because Seattle Cancer Treatment and Wellness Center believes that people with cancer deserve every chance to receive care that's tailored uniquely to their cancer, their needs. No one-size-fits-all approaches here.

Your health care team includes Board-certified medical oncologists, Board-certified naturopathic oncologists, and other natural cancer care and supportive care practitioners. We are proud to have been the first cancer center in the Pacific Northwest where medical doctors, naturopathic physicians and other providers work side by side to practice true patient-centered care. We are experts in treating most types of cancer and have pioneered innovative treatment for pancreatic cancer, breast cancer, colorectal cancer and lung cancer.

We accept most health insurance plans. Our services and providers include:

#### Medical oncology and Clinical Research

Nick Chen, M.D., Ph.D.  
Atis Barzdins, MD

#### Naturopathic oncology

Dr. Letitia Cain, ND, FABNO  
Mark Gignac, ND, MSA, FABNO  
Paul Reilly, ND, LAC, FABNO

#### Chinese medicine/acupuncture

Darin J. Bunch, MTCM, L.Ac

#### Mind-body medicine

Lori Nelson, MA, LMHCA, LMP  
Stacy Oxenhandler, ND, MA  
Mana Iluna, MSW

#### Care coordination and patient navigation

Bennett Reyes  
Tanika Sims  
Shawna Smith, ARNP

For more information, visit [www.seattlecancerwellness.com](http://www.seattlecancerwellness.com) or call 206-FOR-HOPE

# take it easy!

Reducing stress can help fight disease, enhance recovery  
and improve your outlook on life



Stress is part of nearly everyone's daily life. But for people battling cancer, physical and psychological stress levels can skyrocket as concerns about long-term health, finances, work, relationships and other issues escalate.

As the body's physiological reaction to a perceived danger, stress keeps us alive and helps us strive and achieve. But too much of it over a long period of time is dangerous.

Research conflicts on whether or not stress can actually cause cancer. However, several studies have indicated that some psychological stressors – such as feeling helpless or suppressing negative emotions – as well as stress hormones like adrenaline can contribute to tumor growth and spread. Not only does stress flood the body with hormones that hamper its ability to fight infection and disease, it may also lead to unhealthy behaviors such as smoking, substance abuse, poor dietary habits, a sedentary lifestyle and isolation from family and friends.

So, what to do about stress? Here are a few tips:

- **Become more conscious of what triggers your stress and how you react to it.** Instead of simply thinking, "I'm so stressed out," take time to think about what triggered that out-of-control feeling and how you are reacting to it, emotionally and physically.
- **Pause and take a breath.** Once you become aware of your stress signals, be it clenched teeth or neck pain, stop whatever it is you're doing and take three deep breaths. A brief nap or walk around the block can often clear your head of stressful feelings.
- **Schedule relaxation.** Spending at least 20 minutes a day in some sort of relaxation exercise, including deep breathing, meditation, guided imagery or yoga, will reap long-term health benefits. Quiet the chatter in your head by focusing on a word or object, or imagine yourself on the beach. Relaxation tapes or CDs can guide you through this.
- **Listen to music.** A recent scientific review of 30 research trials involving nearly 2,000 participants found that singing, playing an instrument or even just listening to music may lessen anxiety in cancer patients and improve their overall quality of life.
- **Focus on the positive.** Living with the uncertainty of cancer is stressful. But even when medical news may not be encouraging, think about other parts of your life that are – the love of family, a pet's affection, an unexpected sunny day.
- **Take care of yourself.** Eat right and get enough sleep. Avoid tobacco and excessive alcohol and caffeine.
- **Move!** A new study from Britain suggests that cancer survivors could be at greater risk of serious long-term health problems and recurrence of cancer because they do not get enough exercise. The study found that breast cancer survivors, for example, can reduce their risk of recurrence and of dying from the disease by up to 40 percent by doing recommended levels of physical activity.
- **Get some support.** Studies have shown that people who manage to stay healthy and happy in spite of many stressful events have a strong support network of family and friends.

If you need support, advice or other stress-reducing help, ask the front desk about setting up an appointment with one of our mind-body therapists.

## Mark your CALENDARS

**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 6** – Our center is once again sponsoring PurpleStride Puget Sound 2011, a family-friendly walk and awareness event to raise funds for the Pancreatic Cancer Action Network (PANCAN). The walk takes place at Magnuson Park in Seattle. For more information, go to [www.pancan.org](http://www.pancan.org) and click on Get Involved.

**DECEMBER-JANUARY** – Attach a "Ribbon of Hope" to our Tree. At this special time of year, we welcome you to write a message of love, praise, remembrance or hope and tie it to our tree, or send your message to [carriew@seattlecancerwellness.com](mailto:carriew@seattlecancerwellness.com) and we will attach it for you.

**SATURDAYS ON AM 770** – Tune your radio to *Real Medicine*, brought to you by Seattle Cancer Treatment and Wellness Center. Listen to the inspiring stories of several cancer patients and the doctors who support them. Check [www.mynorthwest.com](http://www.mynorthwest.com) to find the schedule, stream it online or hear the podcasts.

Ask about our next **Look Good, Feel Better** session, available FREE through American Cancer Society.

## The CTCA difference

A team approach.  
Team-based care.

It sounds good in ad campaigns. But what does it really mean? For us, it means a lot more than practitioners who work in the same location.

Cancer Treatment Centers of America was the first medical system in the nation to bring medical oncologists and other cancer care specialists together in a regular regimen of meaningful discussions about their patients.

We make a promise to every patient that we will rally our team around them, delivering integrative cancer care for the mind, body and spirit.

Put into action here in Seattle, our medical oncologists,

naturopathic physicians, acupuncturist/Chinese medicine practitioner, mind-body therapists, nurses and care coordinators meet together every single morning to discuss our patients. We call it our morning huddle. By talking through the various therapies we provide, and how patients are responding, we can decide together how to proceed to ensure the best care and the best outcomes for each individual.

CTCA believes in the power of integrative medicine – melding multiple disciplines together to treat cancer. We also believe in the power of teamwork.



Cancer  
Treatment  
Centers  
of America

Winning the fight against cancer, every day.®

## NAVIGATING the cancer care journey

We now have two “navigators” on board to help smooth the journey for our cancer patients.

For several years, Patient Navigator Tanika Sims has been helping prepare new patients for their first visit and treatment at our Center.

This summer, we brought on a second navigator, Bennett Reyes, to work with patients who need or want the extended services offered at our Cancer Treatment Centers of America sister hospitals, including the closest one in Phoenix.

“Our CTCA hospitals offer specialized procedures that aren’t available anywhere in the Seattle area,” Bennett says. “I work with our doctors to identify patients who may want to discuss those options.”

If appropriate, Bennet will help coordinate the patient’s travel to a CTCA hospital. Then he collaborates with physicians at both facilities to make the experience as smooth and seamless as possible.

“Whenever I can, I take advantage of programs that make getting to one of our hospitals easy and affordable,” he says.

Bennett actually isn’t new to our center. He worked with us for several years as a physician’s assistant shortly after we opened in 1996. His nearly 25 years in medicine began at the age of 17 as a hospital corpsman in the Navy. Most recently, he worked as a clinical research coordinator at another local cancer center.



“Patients should have access to the different options, information and support to chart a treatment course that’s right for them,” he says. “I believe in CTCA’s integrative approach. I’ve seen it work.”

CTCA’s hospitals are located in:

- Phoenix, AZ
- Suburban Chicago, IL
- Tulsa, OK
- Philadelphia, PA

### THANKS FOR THE INFO!

If you’ve received this issue of *The Navigator*, it’s because you live near our Center in Renton. We developed this newsletter to provide news and tips to support the health and wellbeing of our local community. We know that cancer affects nearly 1 in every 3 people, so chances are, you know someone living with cancer. We invite you to pass this information along. Questions? Email [info@seattlecancwellness.com](mailto:info@seattlecancwellness.com)



## Harnessing the healing power

of faith and hope

Enough evidence exists of the health benefits of hope and prayer that most medical schools include it in their curriculum. Large hospitals offer on-site chapels and contract with ministers, rabbis and other faith leaders. Doctors and nurses take their patients’ spiritual as well as medical histories.

Traditional medicine is starting to acknowledge the role of faith, but general health care providers still grossly underestimate the importance of “psycho-spiritual variables” in the treatment process, says Dr. Mark Gignac, naturopathic oncologist and director of integrated medicine at Seattle Cancer Treatment and Wellness Center.



During a recent seminar, “Faith and Hope During Cancer Treatment,” at Crista Ministries campus in Shoreline, Dr. Gignac related the stories of three cancer patients and the role that faith and hope played in their healing process.

Science has long separated the physical from the spiritual to the detriment of patients, he says. You can’t divorce the mind and spirit from the body. Patients can’t help but be affected by their beliefs, attitudes and emotions, good and bad.

“Optimism, faith and hope are all essential ingredients for a successful treatment outcome,” Dr. Gignac says. “Even though many of us know this to be obviously true, science is also proving the powerful effect that attitude and belief has on the very cells that sustain, nourish and protect our physical body.”

Numerous studies support the connection between health, hope and prayer. People who are hopeful about their health and pray regularly tend to heal faster, spend fewer days in the hospital and have generally better health than non-praying patients with negative attitudes.

According to the American Cancer Society, research has shown that praying can reduce stress and anxiety, promote a more positive outlook and strengthen the will to live.

Here at Seattle Cancer Treatment and Wellness Center, patients are encouraged to explore or develop spiritual practices as part of their cancer treatment, whether it’s in the form of an established religion or simply a way to find greater self-awareness, meaning and peace.

To see a YouTube video of the Faith & Hope seminar, including Dr. Gignac’s talk, visit the SPIRIT 105.3 radio website at [www.spirit1053.com](http://www.spirit1053.com) and follow the links.

## The mind-body connection in cancer treatment

Effectively treating cancer involves the whole person – body, mind and spirit.

Our mind-body medicine practitioners address the psychological and emotional factors that can affect a cancer patient’s treatment and recovery. We offer individual, couples and family counseling along with stress management, relaxation therapies, spiritual support and other services that help you direct your energies toward healing and health.

Mind-body medicine – based on a rapidly developing area of care called psychoneuroimmunology – explores the influence of your mind and emotions on your body and immune system, and vice versa.

Cancer treatment can be physically demanding and cause side effects, such as nausea, vomiting, muscle tension and lost sleep. Mind-body medicine can help reduce some of these symptoms and improve your quality of life.

Ask the front desk about setting up an appointment with one of our mind-body therapists.



## Balance & moderation are the keys to healthy holiday eating

Naturopathic physician Dr. Letitia Cain has some reassuring advice for those who struggle to eat healthy over the holidays.

It’s okay to treat yourself as long as you practice moderation and continue to make healthy choices, she says. That way, you won’t feel guilty when you eat that piece of pie – or feel deprived when you don’t.

Traditional holiday meals tend to be heavy in refined carbohydrates, which can throw your body into a “food coma” – blood-sugar rush triggers insulin surge triggers crash. To avoid this, include lots of lean protein (including organic turkey, range-fed beef and ocean fish) as well as fiber (beans, veggies, fruits and whole grains) in your meal.

Here are some more tips:

- Start with **small portions** on your plate. You can always go back for seconds.
- **Eat in-season, antioxidant-rich veggies and fruits**, including colorful winter greens and squashes, pomegranates and cranberries.
- **Spice it up**. Curry, chili powder, ginger and cinnamon help with digestion and warm the body.
- **Drink it up** – water and green tea, that is. A glass of red wine (an antioxidant) is okay with dinner.
- **Watch the sugar**. Halve the amounts called for in your holiday baking recipes or use honey or maple syrup. Try natural sweeteners, such as agave, in place of artificial ones.
- **Choose grains with fiber** – brown rice or quinoa beats white rice, and whole-grains trump refined.
- **Don’t forget to exercise**. Take a walk after your big meal to balance blood sugars, help with digestion and burn off those extra calories.



## RECIPE OF THE SEASON

### Leftover Turkey, Black Bean, Pumpkin Seed and Cheese Quesadillas

Recipe courtesy of PCC Natural Markets

1 cup cooked turkey meat, cut into small chunks  
½ cup cooked black beans  
½ cup toasted pumpkin seeds  
2 tablespoons chopped cilantro  
1 tablespoon thinly sliced green onions  
8 sprouted corn tortillas  
Vegetable oil for brushing on the tortillas  
6 to 8 ounces Monterey Jack cheese, grated

In a bowl, combine turkey, black beans, pumpkin seeds, cilantro, green onions and tomatoes.

Brush vegetable oil on one side of two tortillas. Place one tortilla, oiled-side down in a 10-inch or larger skillet over medium heat. Spread one-quarter of the cheese on top of the tortilla and top with one-quarter of the turkey and black bean mixture. Place the other tortilla, oiled-side up, on top.

Cook until the bottom tortilla is golden brown. Turn quesadilla over and cook until filling is bubbly. Repeat the process for three more quesadillas. Serve with lime wedges and Cranberry Salsa.

#### Cranberry Salsa

In a small bowl, combine:  
½ cup whole-berry cranberry sauce  
1 teaspoon finely chopped green onions  
1 tablespoon chopped cilantro  
1 teaspoon maple syrup  
1 teaspoon lime juice  
Hot sauce to taste

