

Prostate cancer support group helps men cope

by Pat Kramer

Fear. Vulnerability. Anxiety. The feelings are common to men diagnosed with prostate cancer, but these men are not alone. Prostate cancer remains the most common cancer, other than skin malignancies, among American men.

Now, a new support group at City of Hope will give voice to patients' concerns, helping them share, learn and cope throughout their treatment.

The Prostate Cancer Program has launched a free monthly support group offering expert guest speakers and practical tips, as well as a chance to meet others going through similar experiences. The group grew from a partnership between the Department of Urology & Urologic Oncology and the Sheri & Les Biller Patient and Family Resource Center, a new umbrella program at City of Hope that encompasses a spectrum of valuable support services.

"Cancer is a diagnosis that is very hard to go through alone," said Pat Robertson, L.C.S.W., who facilitates the prostate cancer group. "When a man gets this diagnosis, his anxiety levels can skyrocket, and it helps to have someone to talk to who understands his feelings. This support group also provides practical information from survivors: information you will not find in a book or on a Web site, on everything from issues with family members to how to deal with the medical community."

With 1,096 prostate cancer patients treated in 2005, City of Hope operates the largest prostate cancer treatment program in the western United States. Growing numbers of patients seek treatment at the institution for its physicians' expertise and advanced treatments, including robotic surgery through the da Vinci Surgical System and targeted radiation treatment through the TomoTherapy HI-ART System.

The support group will keep patients and survivors in touch with the institution's expertise through a series of guest speakers. City of Hope

urologic surgeon Roger Satterthwaite, M.D., kicked off the first group meeting by discussing how common cholesterol-lowering drugs called statins may deter advanced prostate cancer. On Nov. 30, patients will hear how the da Vinci Surgical System is speeding recovery time for patients who undergo robotic-assisted laparoscopic prostatectomy, while the Dec. 28 presentation will address sexuality after treatment.

"The motive in presenting medical information at these support groups is to dispel any myths regarding prostate cancer," said Timothy G. Wilson, M.D., Pauline and Martin Collins Family Chair in Urology and director of the Prostate Cancer Program.

"With these new support services, our patients can live more active lives after treatment without the fear, shame and anxiety many patients needlessly suffer as a result of misinformation," Wilson said.

The free prostate cancer support group meets on the fourth Thursday of each month (except for November, when it meets on Nov. 30), from 6 to 8 p.m. in the Main Medical Building, conference room Y9. The group is open to anyone diagnosed with prostate cancer, and patients' family members also are welcome to attend. For more information, contact Pat Robertson at probertson@coh.org or 626-256-4673, ext. 60481.

Other new services also will soon launch as part of the Biller Resource Center's expansion of support to patients and their families. The Patient Peer Pals program will connect recently diagnosed patients with patients who have experienced a similar diagnosis and treatment, while the Patient Navigator Service will provide each patient with a knowledgeable staff member who can guide them through their experience at City of Hope.



Pat Robertson

Affymetrix GeneChip array analysis, directed by Xiwei RNAi and validation, d Kowolik, Ph.D.; and genetic Garry Larson, Ph.D. City of have access to core facilities by year's end, Jove said.

Jove also is enthusiastic about chemistry bound to come Building, which houses n David Horne, Ph.D., professor the Division of Molecular Me

"Dr. Horne is taking the D Therapeutics Program to a w synthetic organic chemistry "While we have always had and DNA synthesis group capability is central to the st molecular targeted therapies less toxic treatment of cancer

The High Throughput S facility also adds another Richard Yip, Ph.D., associat the Division of Molecular Developmental Cancer TH leads the HTS core.

"Dr. Yip's work will City of Hope's efforts molecules and natural produ to be developed into cancer "while Dr. Horne will lead C translational medicinal chem turn discoveries of these a into new drug treatments fo

Theodore G. Krontiris, M City of Hope Comprehensive Fong-Fong Chu, Ph.D., a the Department of Radiati labs in Flower.

New investigators Janice professor in the Department and Drug Discovery, Huiqing professor in the Depart Pathology, Tiziano Barbe professor in the Division of James Ito, M.D., director of Infectious Diseases, will ter Flower Building until renova is complete.