

# Living With, Through & Beyond Cancer



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## The “Adventure” of Ovarian Cancer

On Wednesday September 9, 2020, Kim Crooks felt a terrible pain in her right lower abdomen like she had never felt before. She immediately assumed she must have appendicitis. She was seen by her physician and referred directly to the ER. After a CT scan, she was given shocking news that the likely cause of her right lower abdominal pain was Ovarian Cancer. She turned to her faith and said, “Lord, I guess we are going on a new adventure.” And she did.

Kim received three cycles of chemotherapy prior to undergoing a complete hysterectomy followed by three additional cycles of chemotherapy. Though there have been several recent exciting advances in the treatment of ovarian cancer using targeted agents, there is still no “cure” for her disease.

Ovarian cancer ranks 5th in causes of cancer-related death according to the American Cancer Society. Approximately 1 in 78 women will be diagnosed with ovarian cancer in their lifetime. While there is no definitive “cause” for ovarian cancer, up to 25% of cases are associated with an inherited mutation, most commonly BRCA 1 and BRCA 2, though several other gene mutations may also contribute. Other risk factors that could increase the risk of ovarian cancer include smoking, being overweight or obese, use of talcum powder, previous history of breast cancer, having children later in life or never having children, taking hormone therapy after menopause. Carrying a full-term pregnancy prior to age 26 is associated with decreased risk, as is breastfeeding children. Taking oral

contraceptives is also associated with lower incidence of ovarian cancer. (American Cancer Society, 2022)

Currently, Kim is on treatment with an antiangiogenic agent, Avastin (Bevacizumab). Kim recognizes that she will likely be on some sort of treatment for the rest of her life, but is excited to see what the new clinical trials bring. She notes that she has “been very fortunate” in tolerating her treatments. Cancer has been a very humbling experience for her. She was always the giver as well as a very busy educator and administrator, so accepting help was hard to do at first. She was able to purchase a Hoveround electric scooter thanks to a financial gift from the Rock Creek High School girls softball team and coach from their annual cancer benefit softball tournament. Now she is able to be more mobile and make it to her grandchildren’s games, which brings her great joy!

Being close to home and with her family and the team she knows so well at the Cancer Center is a great support to her. She has also had the opportunity to develop friendships in the treatment room with other patients, which has been a gift. Her advice to them, “Stay positive, find joy in each day, laugh when you can and put one foot in front of the other because tomorrow will be a better day!”



## Oncology Survivorship Education Series

We are so excited to be offering our quarterly Oncology Survivorship Education classes again! This education series is provided in partnership by the Oncology Survivorship and Palliative Medicine teams with funding provided by the Stormont Vail Foundation. On Thursday, July 14, 2022, we had our first class in the series called Healthy Habits. This class provided education on implementing healthy habits in long-term survivorship to help with side effects from treatment, as well as to promote optimal health and decrease risk of cancer recurrence.

Participants engaged in interactive stations including a physical health station where they learned about the role of physical activity, incorporating yoga and stretching, into their health routine. They also participated in a nutrition station where our dieticians reviewed tips for healthy nutrition as a cancer survivor and they got to taste some healthy recipes incorporating fruits and vegetables. There was also a mental health station where participants were led in a mindfulness exercise and learned about incorporating essential oils to help with relaxation.

Upcoming Survivorship Education classes include The New Normal Part I, planned for Thursday, October 13, 2022, which will focus on physical symptom management after cancer treatment. On Thursday, January 12, 2023, the New Normal Part II class will be offered focusing on psychosocial, spiritual and relational symptoms after cancer treatment. The fourth class in the series is Body Image, which is planned for Thursday, April 13, 2023, and will focus on self-image and body confidence after cancer treatment. Space is limited, so if you are interested in participating in any of these sessions, please contact Robin McKay, APRN, Oncology Survivorship Coordinator at the Cotton O'Neil Cancer Center at (785)-270-4844.



## Advances in the Treatment of Blood Cancers



Dr. David Einspahr has been treating patients at the Cotton O'Neil Cancer Center for 34 years. He has always been particularly interested in treatment of hematologic cancers after his training in the bone marrow transplant unit. He has seen many advances in the treatment options for lymphoma over the years with some of the most exciting being the development of Rituximab (Rituxan). Approved in November of 1997 for large cell lymphomas, Rituximab therapy targeting CD-20 cells in Non-Hodgkins lymphoma was a major breakthrough.

Many second line therapies have been developed for Hodgkins and Non-Hodgkins lymphomas that have improved survival for patients for patients as well and many treatments are now oral targeted therapies. The oral drug Imatinib (Gleevec) was also a very exciting advance for CML that came to market in 2016. This targeted tyrosine kinase inhibitor has provided improved disease control so that many patients no longer need to proceed to bone marrow transplant and are living longer and living with better quality of life. Dr. Einspahr says, "One of the most recent exciting advances in the treatment of lymphoma is CAR-T therapy."

Chimeric Antigen Receptor Therapy, or CAR T-cell therapy, utilizes the body's own immune system T-cells to attack cancer. This therapy is done only at certain specialized centers throughout the United States for patients with very aggressive disease or patients whose disease has progressed on standard therapy. CAR-T starts with collecting T-cells from the patient in a process call leukapheresis. After the patient's white blood cells are removed and T-cells are collected, they are sent to the lab for activation the gene specific CAR. These cells are then multiplied in the lab, which can take several weeks. When enough cells have been made the CAR-T cells will be given back to the patient through an IV infusion. These therapies are being used in both adult and pediatric patients and the data is evolving, but showing very hopeful outcomes with increased progression free survival. Dr. Einspahr continues to be impressed with treatment advances and is "excited to see what the future holds!"

(American Cancer Society, 2022; Cancer Institute of New Jersey, 2022)



## Advancing Research Right Here at Home!

August is Cancer Research month and we are fortunate to have a very robust research team at Stormont Vail and the Cotton O'Neil Cancer Center! The Cotton O'Neil Cancer Center research team works to enroll patients into cancer clinical research trials and helps to coordinate each patient's treatment for the duration of the trials. By offering access to innovative treatments, we help provide cancer patients with the best potential research options available. There have been many important advances in cancer treatment — immunotherapy, personalized medicine, vaccines, and breakthrough medications — and we have contributed to many of them.

Our research team enjoys helping cancer patients find new or additional options for treatment. We work in conjunction with the Cancer Center's interprofessional team to identify potential candidates for clinical research studies.

We offer a variety of clinical research trials ranging from observational

studies, to new cutting-edge treatment options. The research team conducts many of our trials through a partnership with Ascension Via Christi Hospital. This allows us to open and participate in trials through The Alliance for Clinical Trials in Oncology, which "seeks to reduce the impact of cancer by uniting a broad community of scientists and clinicians who are committed to the prevention and treatment of cancer." This partnership supplies Cotton O'Neil Cancer Center patients with access to over 100 potential clinical trials. The research team also collaborates with local universities to identify areas where cancer treatments could be improved and to determine potential solutions. Additionally, we work with numerous pharmaceutical companies around the world to bring our patients more options for the treatment of their cancer and to improve future cancer treatments.

Currently, the Cotton O'Neil Cancer Center Research Department consists of two registered nurses.

Scott Harrison is the Site Supervisor and has been with Stormont-Vail since 1997, starting in the ER and then

working in Trauma Services until 2011. He has worked in Research since 2011 and has been at the Cancer Center since 2012. He is now coordinating as a Sub-Investigator with Robin McKay, APRN, on a nursing research study at the Cancer Center as well.

Catie Capps has been with Stormont Vail in the Cancer Center Research Department since January 2022.

We have openings for additional team members in our department and would love to share more if interested.

If you have any questions about research opportunities at the Cotton O'Neil Cancer Center, please contact the research team at (785) 270-4962.

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## Nutrition Corner - Antioxidants

*Allison Gunnoe, RD*

According to the American Institute for Cancer Research, nutritional supplements do not offer cancer protection or provide benefit to cancer survivors looking to prevent cancer recurrence. However, changes in our diet can have an impact on cancer prevention and recurrence. Antioxidants are substances found in foods that can prevent or delay cell damage and phytonutrients are nutrients that are found in plants, can help protect against cancer. While there is no single food that can prevent cancer, a diet rich in fruits, veggies, whole grains, and beans, can help to prevent cancer or to help prevent cancer recurrence.

Consuming antioxidants and phytonutrients help to protect your

cells, reduce inflammation, and help to keep your immune system strong. Most have probably already heard that eating berries is beneficial, as they contain antioxidants, however, there are some other food sources that may be lesser known, that contain antioxidants and phytonutrients that can be incorporated into your diet. Some examples of antioxidants are vitamin C (ascorbic acid), beta-carotene (a form of vitamin A), vitamin E, and selenium. Vitamin C-containing foods would include citrus fruits or juice, green leafy vegetables, green peppers, strawberries, tomatoes, and broccoli. Good sources of beta-carotene would include carrots, sweet potatoes, pumpkin, and spinach. To increase your intake of vitamin E, try eating more nuts, seeds, whole grains, and green leafy greens in your diet.

Selenium can be found in fish, shellfish, red meat, chicken, eggs, garlic, and grains.

Some common phytonutrients include flavonoids, polyphenols, lycopene, lutein, and lignin. Soy, red wine, purple grapes, tea, cranberries, and pomegranate are good sources of flavonoids/polyphenols. Lycopene can be found in tomatoes, watermelon, and pink grapefruit and lutein can be found in dark green leafy vegetables, kiwi, broccoli, spinach, and brussel sprouts. Try to aim for more oatmeal, flax seed, barley, and rye in your diet to incorporate lignin in your diet. There is no dietary allowance of antioxidants or phytochemicals, so your goal should be to eat a variety of foods that are rich in fruits and vegetables of different colors as well as whole grains.



# White Fish Tacos with Strawberry Mango Salsa

## Ingredients

¼ cup orange juice  
1 Tbsp honey  
1 tsp cumin  
1 tsp paprika  
½ tsp salt  
¼ tsp pepper  
1 lb cod or other white fish  
1 Tbsp olive oil  
½ cup strawberries, diced  
1 mango, diced  
½ jalapeño (optional)  
¼ cup cilantro, chopped  
¼ cup red cabbage, chopped  
1 lime, juiced  
8 corn tortillas

**Prep time: 10 minutes**

**Cook Time: 15 minutes**

**Serves: 4**

## Directions

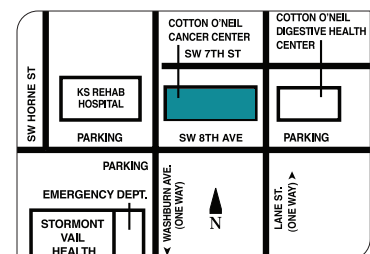
Combine orange juice, honey, cumin, paprika, salt, and pepper in a large container. Add fish and marinate for 10 minutes.

Heat olive oil in large skillet. Add fish and cook for 4-5 minutes on each side, brushing marinade onto the fish as it cooks.

While the fish is marinating, make the fruit salsa. Combine strawberries, mango, optional jalapeño, cilantro, cabbage, and lime juice. Store in the refrigerator until ready to use.

Once fish is cooked, heat corn tortillas in microwave for 15 seconds, wrapped in a paper towel or clean dish towel.

When you are ready to eat, make your taco. Add fish to the corn tortilla and top with fruit salsa.



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