

Community M A T T E R S

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NEWS FROM MEMORIAL SLOAN-KETTERING CANCER CENTER



Earth Day Sort-a-Thon

We are always looking for ways to reduce our environmental impact. In April, Memorial Sloan-Kettering staff volunteered their time to sort donated materials at Afya in honor of Earth Day. Afya, based in Westchester County, collects reusable materials from hospitals and other community organizations and sends them to health clinics in developing countries. As part of our efforts to support a healthy environment and reduce waste, we donated more than 10,000 pounds of materials to Afya in 2012. Memorial Sloan-Kettering's institutional green initiatives were recently recognized with a 2013 Partner for Change with Distinction award from nonprofit organization Practice Greenhealth. ☀

MSKCC Resources

Blood/Platelet Donor Program
212-639-7643

Construction Information
212-639-4444

To Make an Appointment
800-525-2225

Online Support Groups and Educational Programs Offer Many Benefits

Participating in a support group or an educational program can be a beneficial way for people with cancer, and their caregivers, to cope with physical and emotional concerns that arise during and after diagnosis and treatment. However, attending meetings can be difficult, especially for those who are dealing with a serious illness, live far from their care center, or are busy juggling the demands of work and family life.

These individuals were the motivation for creating Memorial Sloan-Kettering's Virtual Groups Program. The program offers a number of real-time, moderated, online support and education groups for people with cancer and their families. The programs are confidential and free. Recently Memorial Sloan-Kettering extended its Virtual Groups Program and now offers several online groups to people being treated outside Memorial Sloan-Kettering.

Rachel Schneider was working as a clinical social worker at Memorial Sloan-Kettering when she realized that many people who wanted to participate in support groups and educational programs were not able to, especially because of the difficulties they had getting to the hospital's Upper East Side campus. "When we started the online program three years ago, people thought it was ahead of its time," she explains. "No one else was doing live, moderated, interactive programs, which serve a very different function from things like message boards and chat rooms."

To join a Virtual Group, participants log in to a secure webpage, which allows moderators and presenters to share written information and images. They then enter their telephone number, and the system calls them

back directly, allowing them to speak with other participants and the moderator over the phone.

All of the groups are moderated by Memorial Sloan-Kettering professionals, including social workers, nurses, genetic counselors, and physicians. Moderators may present educational information and help lead the discussions. The groups generally last between an hour and 90 minutes, and are offered at various times throughout the day.

"It's amazing to be able to bring people together, regardless of geographic location, to benefit from each other's experiences and the expertise of professional staff."

—Rachel Schneider, creator and manager of the Virtual Groups Program

Virtual Groups offers regular support groups for caregivers and for patients with cancers such as esophageal, testicular, and pancreatic cancers, as well as sarcoma. The platform is also used to host educational sessions. Topics include male and female sexual health, clinical genetics, preparing for a stem cell transplant, and preparing for surgery for various types of cancer.

Patient confidentiality and privacy are important components of the program. Patients are encouraged to use only their first name and last initial when identifying themselves. "Most people really appreciate that these groups are anonymous, and they say that they are able to share things that they might not otherwise share. Those who participate describe a reduction in social isolation," Ms. Schneider says.

For more information about upcoming Virtual Groups, please visit www.mskcc.org/virtualgroups. ☀

Living with Cancer *Free Conference* July 20 · 9:15 AM to 3:30 PM

Members of the community are invited to attend the 23rd annual Living with Cancer Conference on Saturday, July 20, hosted by Memorial Sloan-Kettering. Each year, this free, full-day conference attracts hundreds of people who are living with cancer, their families and friends, and healthcare professionals, and offers information and practical tips on the day-to-day challenges of living with cancer. Topics to be addressed include current and future trends in treatment, meditation and yoga, nutrition, spirituality, caregiver roles and responsibilities, survivorship, and legal resources. Early registration is suggested due to limited space. For further information, please call conference organizer CancerCare at 212-712-8368. ☀

Free Head and Neck Cancer Screening Results

New York State Assembly member Dan Quart of District 73 paid a visit to Memorial Sloan-Kettering's free head and neck cancer screening held in April. A total of 181 people were screened over three days, with 23 abnormal findings identified. Community members also received free nutritional and smoking cessation counseling. ☀



Mr. Quart (second from left) is pictured here with surgeons Snehal Patel and Bhuvanesh Singh, and nurse Janet McKiernan.



Memorial Sloan-Kettering
Cancer Center

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Construction Update

Memorial Sloan-Kettering and The City University of New York/Hunter College jointly propose to develop an outpatient cancer care facility and education complex on East 74th Street and the FDR Drive. Community Board 8 voted in favor of our plans for the new complex in May. The next step in the public approval process for this project is review by the City Planning Commission in July and August. More information on the project can be found at www.mskcc.org/74Street.

This spring Memorial Sloan-Kettering took ownership of 327 East 64th Street (formerly the Hertz Garage building). We plan to develop the site into a Laboratory Medicine Building that will consolidate all MSKCC lab services in one facility. Laboratory testing is particularly important in cancer treatment because it is used to measure a therapy's effectiveness and to identify any side effects or infections that may arise. This as-of-right construction project is expected to be completed in mid-2016.

Save the Date

**Living with Cancer
(Free Conference)**

Saturday, July 20th
9:15 AM to 3:30 PM

Rockefeller Research
Laboratories building
430 East 67th Street
(between York and First Avenues)

For more information,
call 212-712-8368.