



Memorial Sloan-Kettering
Cancer Center

Community MATTERS

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NEWS FROM MEMORIAL SLOAN-KETTERING CANCER CENTER

Resources

Blood/Platelet Donor Program

212-639-7643

Community Matters

212-639-3199

Physician Referral Service

800-525-2225

The Healing Power of the Pen

Memorial Sloan-Kettering's Visible Ink writing program helps patients who have experienced serious illness restore a sense of stability to their lives through the creative expression of their thoughts, feelings, hopes, and fears.

Visible Ink offers patients the opportunity to work individually with a volunteer writing professional on a project of their choice. The topic need not be disease related, and the form can range from a personal essay or letter to a novel in progress, poem, or screenplay. The program is free of charge and open to all interested Memorial Sloan-Kettering patients, regardless of their writing level or



Memorial Sloan-Kettering patient Liya Khenkin (left) received guidance on her writing project from Visible Ink coach Sherry Suib Cohen.

FREE COMMUNITY EVENTS

CancerSmart Lectures

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 11

Recent Developments in
Treating Kidney Cancer

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 18

It Takes a Team: Treating
Head and Neck Cancers

All CancerSmart lectures take place from 6:00 to 7:30 PM in the Rockefeller Research Laboratories building, 430 East 67th Street (between York and First Avenues). Please call 212-639-3074 or visit us at www.cancersmart.org to register for our lectures. To view previous CancerSmart lectures and discussions, please visit www.cancersmart.org/webcasts.

65+ Health Fair

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 11

11:30 AM – 1:30 PM

Let's Talk About It: Sexuality,
Intimacy, Aging, and Cancer

1275 York Avenue, Room M-107
(between 67th and 68th Streets)

Breast Cancer Awareness Month

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 20

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 21

10:00 AM – 4:00 PM

Knowledge is Power:

Breast Cancer Awareness Fair

Evelyn H. Lauder Breast Center and Memorial Sloan-Kettering Imaging Center
300 East 66th Street
(between First and Second Avenues)

experience. "Patients surrender a lot of personal control to their doctors during their illness," says Visible Ink program founder Judith Kelman, a successful author of 17 novels. "We give them an opportunity to be in charge. We tell them: 'This is your story. We'll help you tell it any way you want.'"

After Liya Khenkin was diagnosed with stage IV breast cancer in 2009, at the age of 30, she turned to Visible Ink and was paired with Sherry Suib Cohen, a full-time nonfiction writer. Ms. Cohen has coached more than 15 Visible Ink participants since the program began in 2008. When Ms. Khenkin showed Ms. Cohen her irreverent musings on funerals — especially her dislike of many common practices — she received enthusiastic support. The resulting piece, "Love, Loss, and What I Won't Wear to My Funeral," lays out Ms. Khenkin's unconventional rules for her own memorial service and was published in the 2011 Visible Ink program anthology.

Continued

The Healing Power of the Pen

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"I was apprehensive because I had never published anything so personal that I knew family and friends would read," Ms. Khenkin says. "Sherry made me realize that while our experiences, such as cancer, do not define us, they become part of who we are and give us better insight into ourselves. She encouraged me to trust my voice and gave me confidence to say what I feel and not be afraid of what people might think."

Program participants are matched with one of the 35 seasoned writers or editors who volunteer as coaches. Patient and coach then meet or communicate online or by phone to develop a writing project. For volunteers, Visible Ink offers a unique opportunity to work one-on-one with a patient on a collaborative, artistic project. While facilitating the creative efforts of patient participants, volunteer graduate writing students and writing professionals hone their own writing, teaching, and editing skills.

To date, more than 400 patients have participated in Visible Ink, producing more than 10,000 pages of written work. Participant work has appeared in *Bridges*, Memorial Sloan-Kettering's newsletter written by cancer survivors, and in national media, including *Newsweek* and the *New York Times*. Each spring Visible Ink presents a staged reading of selected submissions. Professional stage and screen actors give voice to patient writings through performances that also include music, images, and dance.

Memorial Sloan-Kettering patients who want to participate in Visible Ink can contact Judith Kelman at 212-535-3985. Anyone interested in volunteering as a Visible Ink writing coach can contact Ms. Kelman or Memorial Sloan-Kettering's Department of Volunteer Resources at 212-639-5980 to request an application. ☼

Major Advances in Melanoma

Memorial Sloan-Kettering researchers played a key role in the development of the drug ipilimumab (Yervoy™), which was approved in March by the US Food and Drug Administration for the treatment of patients with metastatic melanoma. It is the first drug ever shown to improve overall survival for patients with advanced melanoma.

Ipilimumab uses an approach known as immunotherapy, which exploits the body's own immune system to attack cancer. This specific type of immunotherapy was developed in 1996 by Memorial Sloan-Kettering immunologist James P. Allison. Since that time physician-scientists at Memorial Sloan-Kettering and elsewhere have worked to develop cancer treatment regimens using ipilimumab. In 2009 Memorial Sloan-Kettering medical oncologist Jedd Wolchok served as principal investigator of a phase II multicenter trial of ipilimumab for the treatment of melanoma, and participated in the phase III trial that led to the drug's approval.

Memorial Sloan-Kettering researchers were also involved in a



Jedd Wolchok (left) and Paul Chapman

major clinical study in 2010 of another drug that targets a specific genetic error inside a melanoma cell. The drug, called vemurafenib, was shown to shrink tumors that had the genetic error. In addition, the tumors that shrank stayed smaller longer and patients lived longer in comparison to those on standard chemotherapy. "This is the fruition of years of hard work in both the laboratory and the clinical research environment here at Memorial Sloan-Kettering, in collaboration with our colleagues around the world," says medical oncologist and study chair Paul Chapman. ☼

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