



Memorial Sloan-Kettering
Cancer Center

Community M A T T E R S

Vol. 9 No. 4 • Winter 2009

NEWS FROM MEMORIAL SLOAN-KETTERING CANCER CENTER

Resources

Blood/Platelet Donor Program

212-639-3666

Physician Referral Service

800-525-2225

Construction Information

212-639-4444

Help in Any Language

Having cancer is hard enough, but imagine having cancer and not being able to communicate with your doctors and nurses. For the many patients who speak a language other than English, this potential barrier is addressed by Memorial Sloan-Kettering's Language Assistance Program.

The Center's Language Assistance Program facilitates communication with patients by providing language interpretation services for patients and families with limited proficiency in English. The Language Assistance Program fulfills, on average, more than 1,500 requests monthly for interpretation services. Interpreter services can be arranged at any time of day, for



MSKCC's Language Assistance Program staff are fluent in Spanish, Russian, Mandarin, Cantonese, Portuguese, and Italian.

any language (including sign language), for communication with any staff member, and for inpatient or outpatient care, including telephone and video communications off-site.

The most common foreign languages spoken by MSKCC patients are Spanish, Russian, Mandarin, and Cantonese, followed by Italian, Korean, and Greek. To fulfill requests for languages not covered by hospital staff and during after hours and on weekends, the Language Assistance Program contracts with interpretation agencies to provide telephone and video services. MSKCC's inpatient room telephones are also equipped with features designed to assist the hard-of-hearing in a hospital setting and admitted patients can request assisted listening devices, TTYs (a typewriter-like device that allows people who cannot hear to communicate over the telephone), and caption decoders (which display on screen the text of a television or video segment). "It is enormously satisfying to help patients better understand their course of treatment, and interpretation services is a critical component," said Eduardo Tabio, Language Assistance Program Manager at MSKCC.

New York State Department of Health regula-

continued

Taking an Accounting of the Community

Every ten years an accounting of US residents is required by the Constitution. The information is used to determine the distribution of congressional seats and the allocation of \$3 trillion in federal funds each decade. In the first quarter of 2010 the US Census Bureau will mail out to every household a short questionnaire seeking information about who resides in America.

The 2010 Census questionnaire asks only a few questions of each person, including name, gender, age, date of birth, and race. Government officials will use the information collected to evaluate the number of schools, hospitals, senior centers, and other civil services that are needed based on population size. Hospitals such as Memorial Sloan-Kettering look at census data to

plan for future healthcare needs, to monitor racial disparities in health, and to identify geographical settings that may require additional healthcare resources.

To help people fill out the census form, Language Assistance Guides are available in 59 different languages. In addition, the Census Bureau provides large print assistance guides, braille assistance guides, and a language reference dictionary to help ensure forms are filled out.

Be prepared in March 2010 to fill out and mail back the 2010 Census questionnaire. To learn more about the 2010 Census, visit www.census.gov or contact the New York City 2010 Census Partnership and Data Services office at 212-356-3100. ☼

Help in Any Language *continued from page 1*

tions require all hospitals to provide free interpretation services to patients with limited English proficiency or with a hearing or vision impairment, and translate documents in the languages that represent more than 1 percent of a hospital's patient population. This is no small feat for hospitals in New York City, where nearly one-half of all residents speak a language other than English at home and one-quarter report that English is not their primary language.

Hospitals must ask patients about their language preference, provide interpretation services for free in the language requested, ex-

plain or translate written materials, provide this assistance for as long and as frequently as needed, and post signs to inform patients that free interpretation service is available. Though patients may bring adult family members to their visits to serve as interpreters, the law requires that hospitals make professional interpreter service available. Carlos Pájaro, Language Assistance Program Senior Spanish Interpreter (who also interprets in French, Portuguese, and Italian), commented "The use of qualified interpreters is essential to safeguarding patient privacy and to assuring full disclosure of medical information to patients." ☼

CONSTRUCTION UPDATE

Through the end of the year construction will continue on the second phase of the Mortimer B. Zuckerman Research Center on East 68th Street between York and First Avenues. Heat and air conditioning equipment will be tested for efficiency. Progress is also being made to lay sidewalk and street paving, and to insert additional segments of canopy glass. ☼

2010-2012 Community Service Plan Available

Memorial Sloan-Kettering's Community Service Plan provides information about Memorial Hospital's outreach programs, services, and activities. To view this comprehensive report online, visit www.mskcc.org/communityserviceplans, or call 212-639-3199 to request a copy by mail or to comment on the report. ☼



SAVE THE DATE

Cycle for Survival

Founded by Memorial Sloan-Kettering patient Jennifer Goodman Linn, Cycle for Survival is an indoor team cycling fundraiser that has raised more than \$2 million in support of MSKCC research on rare cancers.

Rare cancers are far more prevalent than the term implies. The National Institutes of Health defines a rare disease as one with a prevalence of fewer than 200,000 in the United States. However, hundreds of different cancers are classified as rare, and in the aggregate they affect millions of people. Among those cancers classified as rare are such well-known forms of the disease as pancreatic cancer, sarcoma, uterine cancer, cervical cancer, brain cancer, metastatic melanoma, gallbladder cancer, stomach cancer, and all pediatric cancers.

Proceeds from the 2009 Cycle for Survival event will fund several projects at MSKCC, including trials to test drugs to treat sarcoma and pancreatic cancer. The event will take place on **Sunday, January 31, 2010**, at two Equinox fitness club locations in New York City. For more information visit www.cycleforsurvival.org or e-mail cycleforsurvival@mskcc.org. ☼

GO GREEN! MSKCC grows greener every day. Help us to reduce paper waste by signing up to receive *Community Matters* via e-mail. Please send your name, home address, and e-mail address to communitymatters@mskcc.org with a request for the online version of this quarterly newsletter.

MSKCC would like to wish our friends and neighbors a healthy, joyous, and peaceful holiday season.

Printed on Recycled Paper

M A T T E R S Community

www.mskcc.org
1275 York Avenue • New York, NY 10065
Department of Public Affairs

Memorial Sloan-Kettering
Cancer Center



NonProfit Org.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Permit 278
White Plains NY