



## Survivorship Committee Ensures Continued Care

At MetroHealth Cancer Center, our patients develop strong bonds with their cancer care physicians. Because of that, many survivors continue to receive ongoing care in the Cancer Center, even decades after cancer treatment ends. At times, our cancer physicians are the only physicians the cancer survivors see. This arrangement, however, can have disadvantages.

One issue to consider is that survivors with early-stage cancers like breast cancer or melanoma are likely to be long-term cancer survivors. As they age and are further out from their cancer treatments, these survivors need providers to maintain their health and well-being. Primary care physicians and providers are more in tune with health maintenance and chronic disease management, like diabetes, hypertension and heart disease.

"While we love seeing our patients, we are probably not the best-suited physicians to provide primary care for our cancer survivors," said Benjamin Li, MetroHealth Cancer Center Director. "Furthermore, we don't have enough oncologists to provide both ongoing primary care to survivors and expert care to newly diagnosed cancer

patients who need the expertise of our cancer physicians.

Some primary care physicians may be uncomfortable with the complexity of providing care to cancer survivors. General practitioners need to be confident in recognizing and managing long-term treatment side effects, following new cancer guidelines and conducting proper cancer surveillance. To help address these challenges, the Cancer Center's survivorship committee is developing a model in which primary care can be delivered along with proper cancer surveillance.

### **The model will consist of the following elements:**

- Oncologists at the Center will identify MetroHealth primary care physicians who have an interest in cancer care. Oncologists and these primary care providers will work collaboratively to take care of cancer survivors' health maintenance needs and cancer surveillance.
- Primary care doctors will have access to ongoing cancer educational programs.
- The Center will develop a cancer-surveillance infrastructure within

MetroHealth's electronic health record that primary care doctors can access.

- Patients will be given the option to transition to primary care providers who have shown an interest in caring for cancer survivors.
- In the near future, some primary care providers will be based at the Cancer Center to offer both primary care and cancer surveillance. This will ease the transition for our patients, our cancer physicians and the primary care providers.

"The goal is to make sure that every cancer survivor has access to great primary care and cancer surveillance through their primary care providers," said Dr. Li. "The key is for patients to transition to primary care when they and their primary care providers are ready. This will also open access to cancer physicians for patients with newly diagnosed cancers."



**CONTRIBUTOR**  
**BENJAMIN D. LI, MD, FACS**  
 Cancer Center Director

**"The key is for patients to transition to primary care when they and their primary care providers are ready."**

# CANCER CENTER UPDATES

## Beyond Cancer Care Second Annual Survivorship Symposium

An event for cancer survivors and their families. Learn what “Living Beyond Cancer” means and the things you need to know.

- The importance of the Primary Care Physician in Survivorship Care
- Sexuality & Cancer
- Participate in art, music, fitness and healthy cooking demonstrations
- Connect with organizations and community resources that support cancer survivors

This is a free event, but registration is required.

For more information and to register, visit [metrohealth.org/cancer](http://metrohealth.org/cancer) or call 216-778-8557.

Thursday, June 6, 2019  
10 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.  
MetroHealth Medical Center  
Rammelkamp 170  
2500 MetroHealth Drive  
Cleveland, Ohio 44109

## FREE Community Health Fair

Saturday, June 8, 2019  
9 a.m. to 1 p.m.  
Cancer Center Pavilion &  
Outpatient Atrium  
MetroHealth Cancer Center  
2500 MetroHealth Drive  
Cleveland, Ohio 44109  
For information, call 216-778-8557



## Leading a Healthy Life After Cancer: The Importance of Primary Care

With a growing survival rate also comes a growing need for patients to receive long-term care, long after they go into remission. MetroHealth primary care physicians can provide that for them.

Cancer care has dramatically changed in the last several decades. Consequently, so has survival. In the 1970s and 1980s, less than 50 percent of patients diagnosed with cancer lived for five years. Today, this figure has grown to more than 75 percent.

That's why our oncologists and other providers educate our patients about survivorship and how to live well after a cancer diagnosis. A critical part of living healthfully during and after treatment is receiving the ongoing services of a primary care physician, who can better manage comorbid conditions — for example, diabetes and hypertension — that we so commonly see in our patients.

As such, we are developing a model that encourages our survivors to transition to MetroHealth primary care physicians who can better manage chronic disease and are knowledgeable in the long-term effects of cancer treatment and follow-up screening.

Another important component to our approach to living well after a cancer diagnosis is to address

our patients' sexual health. Notably, many of the treatments available for gynecologic, breast, urologic, and colorectal cancers can have sexual side effects that can be alleviated with the right care. An open and honest conversation with patients can ensure they receive the psychosocial and medical support they need to manage any treatment complications that may be impacting their sexual health.

Overall, survivorship is just as much of our responsibility as oncologists as early detection and prevention.

**Benjamin D. Li, MD, FACS**  
**Cancer Center Director**

# Sexual Health is a Vital Aspect of Cancer Care in Women

For women with cancer, sexual health is a complicated subject. Oncologists can help patients address challenges with body image, libido and intimacy, according to **Kimberly Resnick, MD**, Director of Gynecologic Oncology.



Oncologists need to consider the physical side effects of cancer treatments as well as the psychosocial factors that play a role in sexual health. “Most important, we need to have an open conversation with our patients on this topic and provide support,” said Dr. Resnick.

## **Remember how treatments impact sexual health.**

Providers can sometimes focus on how treatment benefits patients while overlooking sexual complications. For example, a radical hysterectomy can impact sexual function. A vulvectomy or vaginectomy can alter external

genitalia. Cancer medications can cause nausea, vomiting, hair loss, decreased libido, vaginal atrophy and hot flashes. Radiation can severely scar the pelvis.

## **Consider psychosocial factors.**

The psychosocial support women receive can make a difference in their sexual health. “Women who have supportive partners tend to do better,” said Dr. Resnick.

However, considering how the patient’s partner feels is also important. Sometimes guilt about a cancer diagnosis can arise, especially

with sexually transmitted HPV-associated malignancies. Partners may also be wary of resuming sexual intercourse because they are afraid of physically hurting the patient.

## **Have a conversation with your patient.**

Studies demonstrate that providers don’t feel like they have adequate training to talk about sexual health with patients, according to Dr. Resnick. Moreover, patients may be embarrassed to discuss the topic. However, Dr. Resnick finds one simple question, “Are you sexually active?” is all that’s needed to start a productive conversation.

## **Oncologists can then talk to patients about strategies to make intimacy more comfortable, such as:**

- Employing biofeedback and relaxation techniques during intercourse.
- Using estrogen for menopausal symptoms such as vaginal atrophy.
- Expanding the definition of intimacy to include more than intercourse.
- Using pelvic floor exercises to strengthen muscles.
- Seeing a psychologist to discuss body image.
- Maintaining open communication with sexual partners.

If for any reason a provider still isn’t comfortable talking about sexual health, “you can refer the patient to someone who is,” said Dr. Resnick.



**CONTRIBUTOR**  
**KIMBERLY RESNICK, MD**  
Director, Gynecologic Oncology

## Funds for a Worthy Cause

MetroHealth’s BREAST/Amigas Program (Bringing Education, Advocacy and Support Together), which works to improve the breast health of uninsured and underinsured women, was recently awarded just over \$49,000 in Komen Northeast Ohio (NEO) funding. The donation is being used to provide free screenings, diagnostic breast imaging services, breast health education and patient navigation to women in Cuyahoga and Lorain counties.

Thanks to the Komen NEO funds, the BREAST/Amigas Program will also host its first community health fair this fall at Sacred Heart Chapel in Lorain County, in partnership with Window of Health. These services are vital to the Lorain County community, which experiences high rates of breast cancer deaths and late-stage diagnosis.



“We are very excited to extend our services to women in Lorain County with the Komen NEO funds,” said **Camille Garcia**, Manager, Community Health Outreach. “Our program is working on developing relationships with community resources in Lorain County to help address some of the barriers to care for these individuals.”

The BREAST/Amigas program has received over \$1.6 million in Komen NEO funding since the program was approved in 2005.

To learn more about cancer care services at MetroHealth, visit [metrohealth.org/cancer](https://metrohealth.org/cancer).





## The 16th Annual OutRun Ovarian Cancer 5K Run/Walk

Please join the OROC MetroHealth Team! To register, visit [hermesccleveland.com/roadracing/events/oroc.asp](http://hermesccleveland.com/roadracing/events/oroc.asp) and search MetroHealth, or call 216-623-9933.

The event will feature live entertainment as well as activities for the whole family. The pre-registration fee for OROC is \$25 for adults and \$15 for youths 10 and under.

**7:00 a.m. – Race Day Registration and Late Packet Pickup**

**7:45 a.m. – Celebration Rally**

**8:00 a.m. – Survivors Tribute**

**8:15 a.m. – Survivor Group Photo**

**8:30 a.m. – 5K Race Start and 1-Mile Family Fun Run Start**

**9:30 a.m. – Awards Ceremony**

**Saturday, August 3, 2019**  
**Rock & Roll Hall of Fame**  
**1100 Rock and Roll Boulevard**  
**Cleveland, Ohio 44114**



## Cleveland MORE THAN PINK WALK

We would love for you, your family and friends to join our MetroHealth Team for the walk. To register, visit [komenneohio.org/mtpwalk](http://komenneohio.org/mtpwalk) and search for the MetroHealth team.

Adults can take advantage of our early bird rate and register for only \$10 until June 29. After this date, adult registration will be \$20.

If you're unable to attend the walk, please consider donating to our team. Your support will fund breast cancer screening, treatment and education programs that save lives in our community!

**8:00 a.m. – Registration and t-shirt pickup opens.**  
**Sponsor and vendor fair opens**

**9:45 a.m. – Opening Ceremony**

**10:00 a.m. – MORE THAN PINK Walk™ begins**

**10:45 a.m. – Event conclusion and wrap-up**

**Saturday, August 10, 2019**  
**Wade Oval**  
**10820 East Blvd**  
**Cleveland, Ohio 44106**



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**MetroHealthCLE** at



[metrohealth.org](http://metrohealth.org)  
[metrohealth.org/cancer](http://metrohealth.org/cancer)