

The Palchak Connection

Hope for a Cure... Begins with Research

∞ Fall 2020 ∞

THE JACQUALYN PALCHAK
CANCER FUND
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Flirting With and Beating Cancer

By Bill Cockshott
JPCF Board Member

I've flirted with cancer throughout most of my life. As a red-headed, pale faced kid, I grew up spending a lot of time in the sun. In my teenage years I spent summers at the beach with friends, our bodies coated in baby oil with white zinc oxide noses.

Around age 40, I learned the cost of all that time in the sun with checks for possible skin cancer and ensuing chemical skin peels. Ever since, I undergo semi-annual skin checks by my dermatologist. I've had spots frozen most everywhere on my body and a melanoma excised from my back, which thankfully was non-invasive.

My first serious battle with cancer was over 20 years ago when I was diagnosed with colon cancer. It began with a blood drive donation. Two times I "flunked" the finger prick test for iron. Seeking the root cause, I had my first-ever colonoscopy and later underwent a camera endoscopy whereby the patient swallows a pill-size camera that gives off hundreds of computerized images as it travels through the body. A second colonoscopy revealed I had cancer. I chose Dr. Palchak as my oncologist and he diagnosed me with stage IV colon cancer with tumors that had spread to my liver.

I began chemotherapy treatments. One of the best recommendations was, "Drink lots of water!" It helps flush the chemicals from your body. I followed that advice and it seemed to pay off as I only had a few instances of nausea. The extreme fatigue was the real challenge.

For additional treatment of the tumors, Dr. Palchak recommended I consult with surgeon Dr. Howard Hayashi who explained that there was a new ablation procedure performed by the radiologist. In short, the tumors are frozen during the surgical process. I would be



Sometimes Dreams Come True

by David Palchak, MD

Not all dreams are of love or fortune. One of my dreams as a college and then medical student was that we would someday treat cancers with drugs that are aimed at the genetic defects causing the disease. These treatments came to be called "targeted treatments".

In 1984 about a dozen cancer-causing "oncogenes" had been identified. As a 3rd year medical student, I wrote a library research paper on the function of the RAS oncogene and as a Hematology-Oncology Fellow I gave a talk on this same gene, which encodes an enzyme sometimes referred to as p21 (because of its molecular weight).

Effective targeted treatments are being identified at a remarkable pace now, although my favorite oncogene has been difficult to target. On September 24, 2020 the New England Journal of Medicine published the first article I've seen describing a clinical trial of sotorasib, a

drug that irreversibly blocks one specific cancer-causing form of p21 encoded by a KRAS oncogene harboring a G12C mutation (glycine replaced by cysteine at the 12th position of the p21 protein). 88% of patients with lung cancers harboring this mutation had their disease controlled for 6.3 months when treated with sotorasib.

PCR has access to a clinical trial for patients whose tumors harbor KRAS G12C mutations and we have a patient whose lung cancer harbors this mutation. She will (probably) become eligible after her next treatment for her metastatic lung cancer.

PCR Oncology is excited to participate in this promising line of research and grateful to all of you who have made this research possible by donating to the JPCF, which sponsors this research.

November Thankfulness

- ♥ I am thankful for every person who has touched my life this past year
- ♥ I am thankful for each step that gets me closer to beating cancer
- ♥ I am thankful for the new perspective I have on life
- ♥ I am thankful for the inner strength I never knew I had

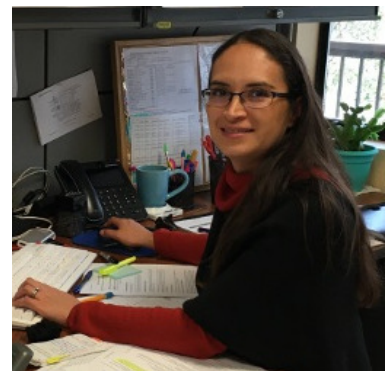
Our Newest Research Team Member

This past March, the PCR Oncology Research Team welcomed Ruth Mares, our newest research coordinator. She joins the team of Dr. David Palchak, Dr. Erick Hjortsvang and IRB Specialist, Lori Robertson.

Ruth received her Bachelor of Science degree in Health Science Administration from Fresno State and served as research coordinator for UCLA's Pediatric Infectious Disease Program, as well as their Radiation Oncology Program for 9 years.

Ruth moved to the Central Coast in 2014 with her husband and two young sons to get away from the 'big city', preferring a small town way of life. She and her family live on 5 acres with many farm animals including mini horses, which they cart and ride in parades. She is bilingual in Spanish and her hobbies include cooking, gardening reading and wine tasting.

Ruth was excited to find a research position here in Arroyo Grande. She believes in the value of clinical trials to further advances in cancer medicine. Ruth has already settled in and is impressed with the number of trials the PCR program has access to through the NCORP (NCI Community Oncology Research Program). The JPCF is pleased to welcome Ruth to our community and to the PCR family.



Continued on pg 2



Beating Cancer

Continued from pg 1

the second person in SLO County to undergo this successful procedure and surgery.

My second major battle with cancer was last year. What began as minor discomfort in my armpit escalated to the point that I could barely lift my arm. I underwent a series of evaluations.

Dr. Palchak's diagnosis was classic non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma. He indicated that I might qualify for a National Cancer Institute (NCI) study if various criteria were met. I qualified for a medication that had been proven successful in the treatment of lung cancer. The study was to determine its effectiveness for lymphoma. Nationwide over 900 patients are being evaluated in this study.

Both my mid-treatment and end of chemo PET scans have been positive - No cancer! My follow up exams include on-sight blood samples for use by the NCI in its investigations. It's been about four months since completing my lymphoma treatments. I feel really proud to be part of a study knowing that my participation may lead to helping other patients.

My two cancer battles gave rise to another personal feeling - Maintain a positive attitude! Being treated and in remission for colon cancer and classical Hodgkin's Lymphoma makes me aware that I can and WILL win in the battle with cancer.

Bill is the President of the Arroyo Grande Lions Club and has served on the JPCF Board of Directors for many years.

Influenza Vaccines

Influenza season is around the corner and the time for influenza vaccination is now. Influenza is a severe, seasonal respiratory viral infection that kills about 30,000 people per year in the US. Influenza vaccine prevents about 60% of infections and is thought to lessen the severity of those it does not prevent.

The CDC now lists 8 different kinds of influenza vaccines, too many to describe here. Three types bear mentioning: The standard "**Trivalent Influenza vaccine**" is the original vaccine and is produced from influenza grown in chicken eggs. The "**High Dose**" influenza vaccine, which was tested and FDA approved for people 65 and older because it was 24% more effective than the standard vaccine. The disadvantage is that it was only approved for people above age 65. **Cell-based vaccines** are generated from virus grown in tissue cultures of mammalian cells and more closely resemble "wild" influenza virus than that found in the standard vaccine and may be more immunogenic. Moreover the quadrivalent cell-based vaccine protects against a 4th strain of influenza.

PCR Oncology has chosen a quadrivalent cell based influenza vaccine this year. Supplies are limited and we're vaccinating as many willing people as supplies permit.

Serving our Community since 2003

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GivingTuesday on December 1st

GivingTuesday is a generosity movement that demonstrates the power people and organizations have to transform their local communities. This happens each year on the Tuesday that follows Thanksgiving. The movement's goal this year is to inspire people to celebrate generosity by giving to the non-profit of their choice on December 1, 2020!

Donations do make a difference!

Our annual fundraising appeal campaign begins this month with letters being mailed to your homes and businesses highlighting the important benefits of local cancer research. We are also requesting your financial help to keep cancer research viable in our community.

Cancer research in clinical trials comes at a big cost, but it is the most important thing we do. Treatment alternatives offer patients choices and a variety of new options in their cancer treatment, which are available locally at PCR Oncology.

Your financial assistance will ensure the continuance of research treatment options for local cancer patients and their families. This is a great opportunity for you to support the valuable work we do all year long year.

