

MEDICAL



Contributed photo

The breast tumor conference, modeled after Harbin Clinic's lung tumor conference that began five years ago, brings together radiation oncologists, medical oncologists, general surgeons, pathologists, radiol-

ogists, plastic surgeons, tumor registry personnel and a breast cancer nurse navigator. Standing at left is Dr. Melissa Dillmon, a medical oncologist, and Dr. J.C. Abdou, radiation oncologist, at Harbin Clinic.

Conference of caring

Weekly meetings help doctors address breast cancer patients' special needs

By Phil Vinall
Specialist of the Rome News-Tribune

Often, when a close friend or relative is diagnosed with breast cancer, we urge them to seek treatment at a major university medical center. It's understandable that we want the best care for our loved ones, however, the belief that such centers are the only places to find multidisciplinary, state-of-the-art treatment is mistaken.

This is particularly true for patients living in Rome, who can receive the same level of care offered by a highly educated staff in a patient-oriented, community-based cancer center much closer to home.

Each Friday at 7 a.m., 11 to 15 specialists gather in a conference room at Harbin Clinic to conduct their breast tumor conference. The conference, modeled after Harbin Clinic's lung tumor conference that began five years ago, brings together radiation oncologists, medical oncologists, general surgeons, pathologists, radiologists, plastic surgeons, tumor registry personnel and a breast cancer nurse navigator.

For 60 minutes, this highly trained group of specialists discusses and develops individual treatment plans for each patient in their care — patients that have recently been diagnosed with breast cancer.

This conferencing technique is not unique to Harbin Clinic, but what stands out is its approach. Large university medical centers conduct similar conferences, but not every patient is discussed. At Harbin Clinic, physicians take a prospective approach and evaluate each patient's

situation individually. The objective is to ensure that everyone involved in the patient's care has access to all the information needed to develop and carry out the best possible treatment plan.

Despite the early hour and the extra time commitment the conference requires, all the participants look forward to these sessions. "Multidisciplinary conferences allow us to review each patient's individual diagnosis and personal scenario. That way we come up with the best treatment options based on the most recent available data according to recommended national treatment guidelines (e.g., the National Comprehensive Cancer Network)," said J.C. Abdou, MD, a radiation oncologist at Harbin Clinic. "It gives us the chance to hear firsthand from our colleagues not only what treatment plan they recommend, but why they recommend it."

Sharing Information

Cancer requires a variety of health care specialists to interact with the same patient. Thus, it's important that they share information and that what they tell the patient is consistent. The field also is changing rapidly, with new treatments and procedures being introduced constantly. The conference is a source of continuing education, as well as a way to promote enhanced communication among the members of the health care team. Melissa Dillmon, MD, a medical oncologist at Harbin Clinic, sees enhanced communication as a benefit to both patients and the health care team. As part of their preparation, the attend-

ees often research medical literature and present information about new treatments and/or the results of recent clinical studies. For patients, there is the peace of mind that comes from knowing that everyone on their treatment team is in agreement and that the final treatment plan is based on the accumulated experience of multiple specialists.

Paul Brock, MD, a general surgeon at Harbin Clinic, believes strongly in the benefits of patient-focused, community-based care. "Unlike many large centers where patients only see their doctors every few months for follow-up," Dr. Brock said, "our patients are our neighbors. Our children go to school together; we see them in church, at the library and at Little League games. We just feel a different level of responsibility."

Creating a 'road map'

A diagnosis of breast cancer is scary, and it brings a real fear of the unknown for most patients. One of the most important things to come out of the conference is the patient's "road map." Once a treatment plan has been determined, it is up to the breast cancer nurse navigator, Ann Hook, to communicate it to the patient. Hook, a registered nurse and a two-time breast cancer survivor, understands her patients' feelings. In conference and throughout her relationship with her patients, Hook's primary role is to serve as an advocate by identifying patient issues and bringing them to the attention of the entire team.

Please see CONFERENCE 5

Doctors coming to discuss Parkinson's

Berry to host conference in November

From staff reports

The third annual Southeastern Parkinson Disease Conference will be Nov. 6-8 at Berry College's School of Mathematics and Natural Sciences.

The faculty includes Hayley Carpenter, director of outreach, Parkinson's Action Network, Washington, D.C.; Ken Cater, Birmingham, Ala., a Parkinson's advocate; Drs. Marion Evatt and Alan Freeman, Emory University Medical Center, Atlanta; Dr. Joel Greenberg, Savannah Neurology; Dr. Robert Gilbert, Peachtree Neurological Associates; Marina Gilman, Emory Voice Center; Kay Mixson Jenkins, founder Parkinson's in the Park; PAN state coordinator; JoAnn Leheay, RN; Medtronic Corp.; Linda Cooper-O'Leary, Parkinson's disease advocate, recipient of Milly Award for Outstanding Advocacy; Dr. Ronald Pfeiffer, University of Tennessee-Memphis Medical Center, director of the comprehensive movement disorders program; Gay Rice, Rice Rehab of Dalton; Ronnie Todaro, director of national programs, Parkinson Disease Foundation; and Peggy Willocks, Tennessee, Parkinson's disease advocate.

ON THE WEB

To get more information and to register, visit:

www.gaparkinsons.org

Program Topics include clinical trials, medication management, sleep disorders, surgical treatments, non-motor symptoms of Parkinson's disease, nutrition and supplementation and voice and swallowing issues.

Registration fee of \$75 per person includes admission to all conference programs, lunch Friday and Saturday, a formal Gala Dinner with live entertainment Friday night and a "Meet & Greet" reception with heavy appetizers Thursday night.

Registration will increase to \$100 per person on Oct. 1. Attendees can get more information and register at www.gaparkinsons.org or by calling 706-413-3264.

The SPDC began as a single day seminar in 2006 with 105 people in attendance. In 2007, the conference was changed to a 2½ day program and nearly 200 people from across the United States attended. Attendance is expected to greatly surpass the 2007 numbers.

Have you looked into Health Savings Accounts?



Health Savings Accounts (HSAs) were created in Medicare legislation signed into law on December 8, 2003

What is an HSA?

A Health Savings Account (HSA) is a tax-exempt trust or custodial account established exclusively for the purpose of paying or reimbursing qualified medical expenses of you, your spouse and your dependents

Who is eligible to have an HSA?

You are eligible for a regular HSA contribution if, with respect to any month, you:

- Are covered under a high-deductible health plan
- Are not also covered by any other health plan that is not a high deductible plan.
- Are not enrolled in Medicare;
- Cannot be claimed as a dependent on another person's tax return



Does Greater Rome Bank offer HSAs? Yes!
For more information call Paula Jasper at

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Minimum deposit required to open \$100.00 - Bank cannot make final determination on whether or not account owner qualifies for an HSA



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Floyd Health Department to give free flu shots Oct. 9

Free clinic contingent upon vaccine on-hand, and while supplies last

From staff reports

The Floyd County Health Department will offer free flu shots to the public at a special flu shot clinic Thursday, Oct. 9, at the health department, 16 E. 12th St., according to health department Nurse Manager Pat Townley.

Townley stressed that the free flu shots will only be available while the supply lasts and that if the health department's entire inventory of influenza vaccine for the upcoming flu season is depleted on the day of the free clinic, flu shots will not be available at the health department during the remainder of the 2008-2009 flu season.

According to Northwest Georgia Public Health Public Information Officer Logan Boss, the free flu shot clinic in Floyd County will be one of 10 such clinics conducted throughout northwest Georgia counties in October "to test and practice our emergency preparedness capability, in particular our ability to distribute and administer large quantities of medicine to the entire population, quickly and efficiently, in case of a public health emergency such

as pandemic influenza."

According to Boss, funding for the flu shot clinics, including the cost of the influenza vaccine itself, comes from a federal grant intended to strengthen public health's ability to conduct such a massive distribution project as well as to educate the public about pandemic influenza, seasonal influenza and how the two different types of influenza (flu) are inter-related.

"We try to educate the public before every flu season about the importance of getting a flu shot," Boss said, "because seasonal flu is a serious disease. Each year in the United States, on average, 5 percent to 20 percent of the population gets the flu, more than 200,000 people are hospitalized from flu complications and about 36,000 people die from flu."

According to Townley, the free flu shot clinic will "involve, and, quite frankly, be possible only with the support of, all of our community partners, such as emergency management and public safety, with whom we're always training."

Please see FLU 3

FLU SHOT Q&A

Q: If I get vaccinated in October, will I be protected all season?

A: Yes. The protection (immunity) provided by the flu vaccine lasts about a year, so vaccination in October will continue to provide protection for the duration of the United States flu season, which can last until April or May. Getting vaccinated as soon as vaccine is available may be most important for children being vaccinated against flu for the first time, who need to get two doses of flu vaccine at least 4 weeks apart.

Q: Will this year's vaccine protect me against the flu?

A: The flu vaccine protects against the three main flu strains that research indicates will cause the most illness during the flu season. This year's influenza vaccine contains three new influenza virus strains.

They are:
A/Brisbane/59/2007 (H1N1)-like virus;
A/Brisbane/10/2007 (H3N2)-like virus;
B/Florida/4/2006-like virus.

The 2008-09 influenza vaccine can protect you from getting sick from these three viruses, or it can make your illness milder if you get a related but different strain of flu virus.

Please see Q&A 3

Her specialty is Caring



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Please see FLU 3