2009

Survivor Turned Supporter

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Survivor Turned Supporter

Diagnosed with and successfully treated for breast cancer at Jefferson in 1984, Marianne Connolly returned when faced with a potential diagnosis of pancreatic cancer in 2005. Feeling blessed by her fortunate outcome and access to excellent medical care, Marianne and her husband Charles made a very personal decision to support Jefferson. They decided to contribute to research efforts that would translate into advanced treatment for patients with pancreatic cancer.

The Connollys have pledged $100,000 to support Jefferson's cutting edge clinical and investigative work in pancreatic cancer and its related diseases. Charles J. Yeo, MD, Samuel D. Gross Professor and Chair of Surgery, leads a multidisciplinary team of surgeons, radiologists, and gastroenterologists in the new Jefferson Pancreatic, Biliary, and Related Cancers Center. The Connolly gift helps Dr. Yeo and the Center pursue research discoveries and gain momentum in the ongoing fight against these diseases.

“We feel very fortunate for the incredible experience I had at Jefferson, most recently under Dr. Yeo’s care,” says Marianne. “It is a great gift that we can use my situation to assist others. By supporting Dr. Yeo’s research, we are able to turn a negative personal situation into something that provides hope to many people.”

“It is truly the generosity and the example set forth by the Connollys that will provide us with the resources necessary to fight this complicated disease,” says Assistant Professor Jonathan Brody, PhD, who runs a laboratory devoted to pancreatic cancer in the Division of Surgical Research. “With the Connolly’s commitment to our pancreatic group here at Jefferson, we will be able to explore the realistic possibility of providing individualized and enhanced treatment strategies to patients with pancreatic cancer. In short, without these resources, many of the group’s good ideas would never be tested or eventually put into practice with patients.”

While the Connolly’s generous pledge has made ambitious basic and translational pancreatic cancer research possible at Jefferson, several other fronts still require funding. One such project is the Jefferson Pancreas

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Tumor Registry, a longitudinal study which aims to arm researchers with a better understanding of the familial components of pancreatic cancer and to identify environmental and occupational exposures that may increase an individual's risk of developing the disease.

For more information, or to make a gift to the Department of Surgery, please contact Lara Allan Goldstein at 215-955-8797 or Lara.AllanGoldstein@jefferson.edu.
Surgical Solutions

Survivor Turned Supporter

Diagnosed with and successfully treated for breast cancer at Jefferson in 1984, Marianne Connolly set out when faced with a personal diagnosis of pancreatic cancer in 2003. Feeling blessed by her fortunate outcome and access to excellent medical care, Marianne and her husband Charles made a very personal decision to support research efforts that would translate into advanced treatment options for patients with pancreatic cancer.

“It is truly the generosity and the example set forth by the Connollys that will provide us with the resources necessary to fight this complicated disease.”

The Connollys keep pledging $100,000 to support Jefferson’s cutting edge clinical and investigative work in pancreatic cancer and its related diseases. Charles J. Yeo, MD, Samad S. Ghaferi Professor and Chair of Surgery, is leading a multidisciplinary team of surgeons, radiologists, and gastroenterologists in the new Jefferson Pancreatic, Biliary, and Related Cancers Center that is making individualized treatment options available to all patients. In short, without their resources, many of the group’s good ideas would never be tested or eventually put into use in clinical practice.

While the Connollys’ generous pledge has made ambitious clinical and translational pancreatic cancer research possible at Jefferson, several other efforts still require funding. One such project is the Jefferson Pancreas Tumor Registry, a longitudinal study which aims to arm researchers with a better understanding of the familial components of pancreatic cancer and to identify environmental and occupational exposures that may increase an individual’s risk of developing the disease.

For more information, or to make a gift to the Department of Surgery, please contact Lara Allen Goldstein at 215-951-9771 or Lara.AllenGoldstein@jefferson.edu

Marianne and Charles Connolly’s generous contribution to the Jefferson Pancreatic, Biliary, and Related Cancers Center is making individualized treatment options available to all patients.

David Tichyanski, MD, has joined the Division of General Surgery as the Director of the Bariatric and Metabolic Surgery Program. He specializes in totally laparoscopic bariatric surgery and is associated with Alvin Kuhl, CNOR-DC. For a schedule of free patient seminars, go to www.jeffersonhospital.org/bariatric.

David Tichyanski, MD

Surgical Solutions

Minimally Invasive and Robotic General Surgery: An Option for More Patients

When Florence Jackson, 73, had some difficulty breathing early one evening, her husband insisted she see her doctor. She mentioned it to her on month checkup, and notes that years earlier she had suffered from acid reflux, which is known to increase an individual’s risk of developing cancer. A breast weight test revealed an obvious cancer. A breast weight test revealed an obvious cancer.

In southern Delaware, where Florence lives, there was no facility that could do an endoscopic ultrasound. She was referred to Jefferson, where she was treated by Ernest (Gary) Rosato, MD, Director of the General Surgery Division, and Associate Professor Benny Weksler, MD, MBA, a thoracic surgeon. She was diagnosed with Stage 2A cancer of the esophagus, but the surgery offered her an excellent treatment plan. Prior to any surgery, Florence underwent chemotheraphy and radiation therapy at the Tunnel Cancer Center in Delaware to shrink the tumor as much as possible. Then, at Jefferson, she underwent a laparoscopic esophagectomy, which is an invasive, open approach to surgery with a relatively short recovery.

Jefferson is the only hospital offering a unique team approach which provides the patient with the expertise of two surgeons trained in minimally invasive surgery (MIS). Dr. Weksler operates on the part of the esophagus in the chest and Dr. Rosato operates on the portion of the esophagus in the abdomen.

“My experience with Jefferson was none other than outstanding,” says Florence. “In addition to the kindness and respect for me as an individual, it was a great comfort to have such an experienced, compassionate team with a successful track record.” Florence’s stay in the hospital was only 10 days, and she was pleased that she was “back to normal” within just 10 days of returning home.

Dr. Ernest (Gary) Rosato, Director of the General Surgery Division, and Florence Jackson are pleased with her quick recovery and good prognosis following a minimally invasive esophagectomy to treat Stage 2A esophageal cancer.

Jefferson is also the only hospital in the Philadelphia region performing a high volume of laparoscopic esophagectomies—23 during 2008, and the Department expects to double that number in 2009. A study of those cases demonstrates a decrease in morbidity over open surgeries. Dr. Rosato explains the benefits of the procedure: “When conventional ‘open’ surgeries, the incisions are large and painful, and the hospital stay is longer.” He says, “The laparoscopic surgery results in shorter recovery and patient hospitalization.

Dr. Benny Weksler, who is Board Certified in Surgery and Thoracic Surgery, is a leader in the innovative technique of robotic surgery: “Like laparoscopic surgery, “Dr. Weksler explains, "robotic surgery is done via only a few small incisions. However, instead of holding the surgical instruments, the surgeons sit at a central panel and utilizes robotic arms to move the instruments.” He notes that robotic surgery is far safer because it offers greater precision, smaller incisions, decreased blood loss, and less pain for the patient.

The only robotic system approved by the Food and Drug Administration is da Vinci® Surgical System, named after the famous artist who invented the first robot. “We are the only facility in Philadelphia using robotic surgery for thoracic operations,” says Dr. Weksler. In 2008, Jefferson performed seven operations utilizing this exciting new technology. That number will increase in 2009 and already includes four robotic esophagectomies for patients like Florence Jackson.

Benny Weksler, MD, MBA, Director, Minimally Invasive and Robotic Thoracic Surgery Program

Update

The Surgeon Speaks

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Minimally Invasive and Robotic General Surgery: An Option for More Patients

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