Support Groups and Events

Froedtert & The Medical College of Wisconsin offer support groups and sponsor events of interest to brain tumor patients and their families.

**BRAIN TUMOR SUPPORT GROUP**
The Brain Tumor Support Group is for patients and family members who are looking for information and encouragement. Meetings are designed for open discussion of concerns related to brain tumors, with many sessions featuring speakers who focus on a variety of topics specific to this disease.

**CANCER CAREGIVERS SUPPORT GROUP**
This support group is for friends, family members or others caring for people with cancer. It promotes open communication of feelings, as well as providing relaxation and stress relief. Various topics of interest to the caregiver will also be presented. (This group is made possible by donations to the Froedtert Hospital Foundation.)

**YOUNG ADULT ONCOLOGY GROUP**
Children’s Hospital of Wisconsin offers the Young Adult Oncology Group for cancer survivors (during or after treatment) ages 18 to 39. This group provides survivorship support, education and offers social activities.

**THE BRAIN STEM VIA E-MAIL**
If you prefer to receive this newsletter electronically, go to froedtert.com, Health Resources, E-newsletters and subscribe to My Health News. My Health News is a monthly e-newsletter delivering information about health topics you choose. Be sure to check the “cancer box” to receive the latest issue of The Brain Stem. You can also view or print The Brain Stem any time by visiting froedtert.com/braininspire.

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**SAV E THE DATE: STRAIN FOR THE BRAIN**
Saturday, May 12, 2012, Veteran’s Park
Check in and registration: 8:00 a.m. - 9:45 a.m. (Timed runners need to register by 9:30 a.m.) Run begins: 10:00 a.m.; Walk begins: 10:15 a.m. (Timed runners need to register by 9:45 a.m.)

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**April 2012**

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**Brain Tumor Support Group**
Third Tuesday of each month
6:15 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.
Open discussion: 6:15 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.
Featured speaker: 7:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.
Clinical Cancer Center
Conference Room L, First Floor

**Cancer Caregivers Support Group**
Fourth Tuesday of each month
5:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.
Clinical Cancer Center
Conference Room J, Lobby Level

**April 24, May 22, June 26**
Various speakers are offered.

**Young Adult Oncology Group**
Meets monthly; dates and times vary
Sponsored by Children’s Hospital of Wisconsin, The Medical College of Wisconsin and the Froedtert & The Medical College of Wisconsin Clinical Cancer Center

More information: Kristin Bingen, 414-456-4148 or kbingen@mcw.edu.

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**Child Life Program Helps Children Cope**

Because a diagnosis of cancer affects the whole family, the Child Life Program at Froedtert & The Medical College of Wisconsin brings a unique perspective to the goal of family-centered care. While traditionally focused on children as patients, the adult-based Child Life Program helps children and grandchildren of adult patients cope with the changes brought on by the serious illness of a caring adult.

Child life specialists are trained in child development and have expertise in understanding how the stress of illness and hospitalizations impact the youngest members of the family. When an adult parent or grandparent is diagnosed with cancer or other serious illness or injury, their attention is most often centered on all aspects of the medical diagnosis and treatment, surgery and the implications of the illness on work and day-to-day living. Yet, one of the most difficult areas for these adults is finding the right words to explain to a child what cancer means and will mean to their family. This is the point where child life specialists become an integral part of the multidisciplinary health care team.
Child Life Program Helps Children Cope (continued)

Child life specialists provide developmentally appropriate language to explain what terms like cancer, radiation and chemotherapy mean, while sharing resources such as children’s books and activities to help family members include children or grandchildren in the experience. Importantly, research demonstrates that children who are included will adjust and cope in more positive ways, thus improving the functioning of the whole family throughout the experience. For children, having honest information and playing a role in helping a loved one fosters the ability to understand and manage the experience.

Child life specialists Suzanne (Sue) Berg, BS, CCLS, and Lois Pearson, M.Ed., CCLS, have had extensive experience in helping children and families through a variety of stressful experiences. Each has started child life programs and facilitated children’s support groups. Working collaboratively, Sue and Lois share a full-time position and provide services to patients in the Froedtert & The Medical College of Wisconsin Clinical Cancer Center and all of the inpatient units.

Whether particular symptoms or treatments are troubling for children to understand or medical care demands more extended or frequent hospital stays, the Child Life Program can help. Interventions might involve talking with the parent or grandparent to suggest specific resources and ideas to encourage family communication, or more direct interactions of a child meeting with a child life specialist and engaging in expressive art activities to improve coping.

There is no fee for the Child Life Program. These services are included in the patient-centered care that is such an important part of the Froedtert & The Medical College of Wisconsin philosophy of care. Sue and Lois are available Monday through Friday during business hours and are also available at other times by appointment. The Child Life Program can be reached at 414-805-1935, by paging 414-590-2577, or online at childlifespecialist@froedterthealth.org. More information is available at froedtert.com.

Pulsed Reduced Dose Rate Radiation Therapy (PRDR) for Recurrent Brain Tumors

Malika Siker, MD
Joseph Borri, MD
Christopher Schulz, MD
Medical College of Wisconsin Radiation Oncologists

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though great advances have been made in the treatment of brain tumors, many tumors recur (come back) in spite of best treatment including maximum surgical resection, targeted radiation therapy, and chemotherapy. Tumor recurrences present unique challenges, particularly in patients who have previously received radiation therapy and chemotherapy.

Because the majority of recurrences occur within or near areas of the brain that may have already received high doses of radiation, additional courses of radiation were previously thought to be unsafe. However, advances in technology have led to the development of new ways of delivering radiation therapy in brain tumor patients with recurrent tumors who have previously received radiation therapy. These new techniques have been found to be safe and effective, but require technical expertise and careful patient selection.

Radiosurgery, which delivers a focused, high dose of radiation in a single treatment, and brachytherapy, where a radioactive material is placed near the area of tumor recurrence, are potential treatment techniques, the PRDR technique can be applied safely in patients with large volume recurrences.

The Department of Radiation Oncology at Froedtert & The Medical College of Wisconsin is among few centers nationally to implement low dose rate irradiation, particularly in patients who have previously received radiation therapy. PRDR is a new technique of delivering radiation therapy in patients who have previously received radiation therapy. In this approach, external beam radiation therapy is delivered at a lower dose rate than conventional radiation therapy. It is thought that by administering radiation therapy at a lower dose rate, there is better sparing of normal tissues. Furthermore, there is some evidence to suggest tumors may be more sensitive at these lower dose rates leading to higher tumor cell kill. This combination of better normal tissue tolerance and greater cell killing is a win-win in the setting of re-irradiation. Unlike the above focal single treatment techniques, the PRDR technique can be applied safely in patients with large volume recurrences.

Potential patients are discussed at weekly multidisciplinary tumor boards where representatives from neurosurgery, neuro-oncology, radiation oncology, neuro-radiology and pathology are present. Each case is discussed individually and all potential re-treatment options are reviewed. If PRDR is recommended, a radiation oncologist then reviews the benefits, risks, and treatment alternatives with the patient. Radiation oncologists who focus on neuro-oncology are available at any time to discuss this technique. Our goal is to provide individualized, state-of-the-art care to help our patients make the best treatment decisions and prolong their lives while maintaining the highest quality of life possible.