

# The Brain Stem

December 2018

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*Froedtert & the Medical College of Wisconsin doctors and staff walked in the May 2018 Strain for the Brain event*

## Dear Friends:

Welcome to the December issue of The Brain Stem newsletter. This issue celebrates ways members of our Froedtert & the Medical College of Wisconsin family are “giving back” and the innovations made possible through these gifts. We are amazed and humbled by the commitment and generosity of our patient community.

The physicians of the Froedtert & the Medical College of Wisconsin Brain and Spine Tumor Program specialize in treating tumors in complex areas of the brain, spine and spinal cord, offering patients the best chance of fighting disease while preserving physical and cognitive abilities.

Valuable support for these programs comes from people like you who make personal donations and organize fundraising events that provide critical resources. We are able to conduct innovative research and novel clinical trials and invest in new technology – all of which provides world-class patient care.

Thank you for making these innovations possible.

Sincerely,

  
Joseph A. Bovi, MD

  
Jennifer M. Connelly, MD

## Organizers, Volunteers and Participants Discover Rewarding Experiences Through Fundraising Events

The Froedtert & the Medical College of Wisconsin Brain and Spine Tumor Program is grateful to the many people who support our program through fundraising events. These events run the gamut, from large numbers of participants to more intimate gatherings with activities ranging from timed races to wine tastings. The one universal element: Everyone who participates finds these events rewarding, often on many levels.

Heavin Bordwell Yopp, a board member of Chasing Chad, a nonprofit organization created in memory of her late husband, said she has appreciated seeing the financial success of fundraising efforts grow since the organization's first event in 2010. "At our first event, we raised around \$4,000. We had no idea that by 2016 we would surpass the \$100,000 mark," Heavin said. "This growth has occurred as more people who have been affected by brain cancer hear about Chasing Chad and want to join us in our mission."

The benefits of fundraising events extend beyond the dollars raised. Lisa Mabbott's mother lost her life in 2016 after fighting brain cancer for 12 years. After attending the Strain for the Brain run/walk for the first time two years ago, Lisa said, "I was surprised by what an emotional, powerful experience it was to see so many people together and to realize that all of them, like me, have been affected by a brain cancer diagnosis."

Some events provide a way to remember someone in a personal and fitting way. Jim Tietjen, a football coach for 27 years including 14 years as the head coach at Whitefish Bay High School, passed away from brain cancer in 2015. His family organized a touch football tournament in his memory. Many of his former players and their families attend each year to remember the man who taught them many lessons on and off the football field.

"Our dad always stressed the importance of being a part of something bigger than ourselves, and that's exactly what our fundraiser is. This is our way of honoring him, while also showing our appreciation for the world-class care he received through the Brain and Spine Tumor Program. Our event is the perfect combination of his favorite things: service, gratitude and football," Tietjen family members said.

Join us at these events that benefit the Froedtert & MCW Brain and Spine Tumor Program:

- Strain for the Brain – A 5K run/walk, which will be held on June 2, 2019, brings people affected by a brain tumor(s) together to fight this disease. Initiated by R. Michael Molloy, MD, a grateful brain tumor survivor,



*Peggy LeBrun, Heavin Bordwell Yopp, Jennifer Connelly, MD*

this event honors survivors and their families with special T-shirts at this community gathering that features Olympian Bonnie Blair, whose brother passed from a brain tumor, and a silent auction and raffle that is accessible online. Details at: [strainforthebrain.org](http://strainforthebrain.org)

- Chasing Chad Casino Night Gala – An evening of casino-style gambling, food and fun is organized by friends and family members of the late Chad Bordwell. It includes a program to honor all who have experienced a brain tumor and a silent auction. For details, visit [chasingchad.com](http://chasingchad.com)
- TietjStrong Fundraiser and Touch Football Tournament — This touch football tournament and silent auction event is held annually in memory of longtime Whitefish Bay football coach Jim Tietjen, who lost his battle with brain cancer in 2015.
- JB Hackerfest Golf Outing — This golf outing is held in July at the Rivermoor Golf Club in Waterford. It began as a friendly golf game with friends before a wedding and turned into a fundraiser for brain cancer research after a member of the wedding party, DJ Jansen, lost his life to the disease. For details, find the JB Hackerfest page on Facebook.
- The Joe Fedorczak Blue & White Memorial Charity Gala — Organized by the Wisconsin Chapter of the Penn State Alumni Association, this event will be held Saturday, April 6, 2019. The evening, which includes music, food, wine, silent auction items and fundraising, celebrates the life of Joe Fedorczak, the much-loved former president of the chapter who passed away from brain cancer. For details, visit [facebook.com/psuwisconsin](https://facebook.com/psuwisconsin) ■

## Chasing Chad Intern Profile: Thomas Reith

Originally from Rockford, Ill., Thomas Reith received a bachelor's degree in mathematics from Davidson College in North Carolina. He was an active member of the college's music department, where he studied classical piano and sang in the College Chorale. Thomas spent much of his junior year in Berlin, Germany, where he studied math and computer science at the Technische Universität. After graduating, he returned to the Midwest to work at Madison-based Epic Systems, which develops electronic medical records used in hospitals (including Froedtert & the Medical College of Wisconsin hospitals). Two years later, he enrolled at the Medical College of Wisconsin (MCW).

Thomas, now a second-year medical student at MCW, was the 2018 Summer Intern in Brain Cancer Research sponsored by the Chasing Chad Foundation. Thomas worked in the lab of Kathleen Schmainda, PhD, radiologist,

biophysicist and MCW faculty member, and used experimental magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) methods to investigate how brain iron content may be altered in patients with brain cancer. It is commonly accepted that iron drives tumor growth and that tumors display increased amounts of iron.

Thomas's research suggests that in patients with aggressive tumors, increased iron levels may also occur in healthy brain regions. These results contribute to the understanding of cancer pathophysiology and may have potential implications for tumor detection.

Thomas is passionate about mathematics and technology. He is grateful to the Chasing Chad Foundation for giving him an opportunity to combine these interests within the medical field, which he hopes to do in his career. ■



*Thomas Reith*

## Brain Cancer Imaging Research

Peter S. LaViolette, PhD, MS, Radiologist and Biomedical Engineer; Director, Radiology Quantitative Imaging Laboratory; Medical College of Wisconsin

In a continuing effort to find and treat brain cancer effectively, we're studying the microscopic anatomy of cells and tissues using our newly developed imaging techniques for locating brain tumors. In the study, we're documenting the location of brain tumor tissue samples removed by our neurosurgeons with state-of-the-art surgical navigation equipment. This involves comprehensively studying the tissue samples aligned to magnetic resonance imaging (MRI). This study has given us the ability to determine the tumor characteristics shown on images acquired before, and it has helped us better understand what the images show about the true nature of the tumor tissue. Additionally, tumor samples have been banked for future histological study. The study is being conducted in collaboration with Kathleen Schmainda, PhD, radiologist, biophysicist and MCW faculty member, using the resources of her lab.

In addition to the above study, we have been honored and humbled by several patients approaching Jennifer Connelly, MD, neuro-oncologist and MCW faculty member, about donating their brains for research following

their fight with brain cancer. Members of our Pathology Department perform autopsies on the donated brain tissue, giving us the unique opportunity to precisely measure and correlate the true histology underlying brain tissue images with an unprecedented level of accuracy. This research, which started as a grassroots effort driven by patient interest, has evolved into one of the largest brain cancer-focused brain tissue banks in the U.S. Our patients' willingness to participate has given us the ability to calibrate our imaging techniques to better help future patients and those currently in treatment. This research project has been recognized internationally with awards and is funded with a large five-year grant through the National Cancer Institute. The unique combination of our brave patients and MCW clinicians and researchers has made our brain tumor imaging program truly world-renowned. ■



*Peter S. LaViolette,  
PhD, MS*

## ORGANIZE YOUR OWN FUNDRAISING EVENT

You can organize your own fundraising event to benefit the **Medical College of Wisconsin, Froedtert Hospital Foundation** and our research and patient care programs. When you have an idea for hosting a fundraising event, please contact Ashley Fait at **414-955-5828** or [afait@mcw.edu](mailto:afait@mcw.edu).



# Support Groups and Events

The Froedtert & the Medical College of Wisconsin Cancer Network offers support groups and sponsors events of interest to brain tumor patients and their families. For more information about our support groups, please visit [froedtert.com](http://froedtert.com), or call 414-805-3666 or 800-272-3666 (unless otherwise noted).

## BRAIN AND SPINE TUMOR SUPPORT GROUP

The Brain and Spine Tumor support group is for patients and family members looking for information and encouragement. Meetings are designed for open discussion of concerns related to brain and spine tumors with many sessions featuring speakers who focus on a variety of topics specific to these diseases.

## YOUNG ADULT ONCOLOGY GROUP

Children's Hospital of Wisconsin offers the Young Adult Oncology Group for cancer survivors (on and off treatment) ages 18 to 39. This group provides survivorship support, education and social activities.

## 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 are also presented. This group is made possible by donations to Froedtert Hospital Foundation.

## EPILEPSY SUPPORT GROUP

This support group is open to people with epilepsy, their family members and caregivers. Each month, a guest speaks on topics of interest related to seizures.

# CALENDAR

### Brain and Spine Tumor Support Group

Third Tuesday of each month  
Froedtert & MCW Clinical Cancer Center at Froedtert Hospital campus  
Meets monthly. Times and locations vary.

For information, please see the listing in the Hope Clinic at the Clinical Cancer Center, or call 414-805-3666 or 800-272-3666.

### Cancer Caregivers Support Group

Fourth Tuesday of each month  
(No meeting in December)  
5:30–7 p.m.  
Clinical Cancer Center at Froedtert Hospital campus  
Conference Room J, Lobby Level  
Various speakers are offered.

For more information, call 414-805-3666 or 800-272-3666 for this group.

### Young Adult Oncology Group

Meets monthly. Dates and times vary.  
Sponsored by Children's Hospital of Wisconsin, the Medical College of Wisconsin and the Clinical Cancer Center.

More information: Kristin Bingen, 414-955-4148 or [kbingen@mcw.edu](mailto:kbingen@mcw.edu).

### Epilepsy Support Group

Fourth Wednesday of each month  
(No meeting in November or December)  
6:30–8 p.m.  
Froedtert Hospital  
2NT Conference Room  
North Tower, Second Floor

For questions, concerns or suggestions, please call Linda Allen, RN, Epilepsy Program coordinator, at 414-805-3641 or LeeAnn Lathrop, MSW, social worker, at 414-805-2894.

**Froedtert Health** complies with applicable federal civil rights laws and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability or sex. **Attention:** If you speak another language, assistance services, free of charge, are available to you. Call: 414-805-3000 (TTY: 1-800-947-3529) **Español (Spanish):** ATENCIÓN: si habla español, tiene a su disposición servicios gratuitos de asistencia lingüística. Llame al: 414-805-3000 (TTY: 1-800-947-3529) **Hmoob (Hmong):** LUS CEEV: Yog tias koj hais lus Hmoob, cov kev pab txog lus, muaj kev pab dawb rau koj. Hu rau: 414-805-3000 (TTY: 1-800-947-3529)

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