

## Personalized Medicine

*By Mary Meengs, MD, Medical Consultant*

Personalized Medicine is a frequently used phrase in recent years, applicable in many fields of healthcare, but most notably in oncology. You might think it means that the patient and his or her unique situation, biology, values and goals are at the center of treatment planning. Of course, this should always be the case, but in cancer-land, at the center of all treatment recommendations is actually the tumor, not the person. The National Cancer Institute defines Personalized Medicine (also called Precision Medicine) in cancer treatment as using “specific information about a person’s tumor (genes, proteins, receptors, e.g.) to help diagnose, plan treatment, find out how well treatment is working, or make a prognosis.” There certainly are aspects of the individual that are considered (like pre- versus post-menopausal status, age, and other health or environmental factors), but the tumor cells themselves hold most of the information that will determine effective treatment and prognosis.

Science is making rapid progress in identifying these various features. Like in the healthy cells that make up the rest of our bodies, genes code for proteins that perform essential functions. In tumor cells, these functions include helping the cancer survive, grow, multiply, and resist threats from both prescribed treatments and our own immune system. The more we learn about how a tumor cell accomplishes all the things it needs to do, and evades our efforts to destroy it, the more opportunities, or targets, there

are for new treatments. It really is warfare. How can we starve tumor cells of something essential to their survival, or block their ability to damage healthy tissue, or disable their strategies to resist our weapons? Breast cancer was one of Precision Medicine’s earliest areas. Once the tumor tissue is in the lab, the pathologist can tell us whether there are lots and lots of estrogen and progesterone receptors on the cells (“hormone receptor positive”) or not. These allow the hormones to stimulate growth. Also we learn whether or not there’s an excessive amount of the HER2/neu protein, which enables more aggressive growth. Each of these features tells us if these cells are a good target for a specific treatment (hormone blockers or Herceptin in the above examples), or whether these treatments would be wasted, and side effects not worth it for that patient. It’s similar to knowing whether a bacteria is susceptible to a certain antibiotic, or resistant to it.

More and more of these proteins, receptors, genes and mutations are discovered all the time. In 2004, a new test called OncoTypeDx helped predict risk of recurrence for early stage breast cancer patients, based on the pattern of genes in the tumor cells. This test is commonly used to help doctors advise their patients regarding potential benefits of chemotherapy. Recently this concept of “genomic profiling” has led to similar tests for prostate and other cancers.

As cancer treatment becomes more and more directed to these targets, an

### *Seventeenth Annual* **Fall Benefit Concert** **September 29, 2018**

7:00 PM (doors open at 6:30)  
 Calvary Lutheran Church  
 716 South Avenue, Eureka  
 Dr. Luther Cobb & Daniela Mineva  
 McKinleyville Community Choir  
 Cindy Moyer &  
 Chamber Music Group

Tickets \$20 ♦ Available at the door &  
 BGHP 825-8345 & Wildberries  
 Marketplace & Office of Drs. Cobb &  
 Mahoney

#### **Fall Concert Sponsors**

- ♦ Pacific Builders
- ♦ AFLAC Northcoast
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- ♦ Eureka Symphony
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- ♦ Redwood News

SEPTEMBER IS NATIONAL  
 GYNECOLOGIC CANCER  
 AWARENESS MONTH

OCTOBER IS NATIONAL BREAST  
 CANCER AWARENESS MONTH  
*Support Sales for Survivors in October!*  
 See pink insert inside.

***Postage/printing costs donated  
 by the Humboldt Independent  
 Practice Association (IPA)***

interesting trend has emerged. Many targets are not specific to just one type of cancer. For instance, other kinds of cancer cells might produce excessive HER2/neu protein, and therefore Herceptin is beginning to be considered for stomach and possibly other cancers, not just breast cancer.

Keytruda is a newer medication that blocks a protein on tumor cells that can disable the patient's immune cells from destroying the cancer. It can have remarkable benefit for patients with certain lung cancers, but only if the tumor cells have that specific protein (PD-L1) on their surface. Because PD-L1 proteins are found on many different types of tumor cells, Keytruda can also be used for certain patients with stomach cancer, melanoma, Hodgkin's Lymphoma, etc. In other words, presence or absence of a particular target is sometimes just as important in determining effective treatment as is the kind of cancer a person has.

This is a rapidly evolving field, as more targets and matching treatments are discovered. Some of those treatments have toxicities, to be sure, but more precise targeting tends to reduce side effects and spare healthy tissues, compared to conventional chemotherapy. Pathologists can now "profile" tumor cells with more and more specific details, allowing treatment to be tailored to the tumor. The hope is that this "personalized" approach will result in the best possible outcome with the least toxicity. It's exciting to realize that new discoveries are happening at an accelerating pace. There will never be a single "cure for cancer", but here's wishing it death by a thousand cuts of scientific progress.

*BGHP is fortunate to have Dr. Mary Meengs, as our part-time Medical Consultant. She has been on staff since 2010. She is a great resource for breast or gynecologic cancer patients wishing to have a better understanding of their pathology results or have a kind, knowledgeable professional to discuss decision options or prepare for a medical visit. We do not give medical advice or provide medical care, but clients can receive high quality, current information.*

## *From the Executive Director*

I am grateful to have a board of directors that takes their responsibility seriously to care for the well-being of BGHP and its mission to serve our community. We are currently in the process of gathering information for the next three years of our Strategic Plan.

We are a grassroots organization, so that means community involvement and input is like sunshine and fertilizer to us! We would love to hear from you, so I invite you to contact me.

Here are some of the questions we are using to create the plan for the next three years:

- What are the unmet needs of local people facing cancer? What might BGHP's role be to address the need?
- What does BGHP do well to help local people facing breast or gynecologic cancer?
- Does it make sense to continue doing these things or do we need to make specific changes?
- What would we like to see BGHP do that it is not currently doing?
- What would it take to do those functions? What are the pros and cons?
- Are there changes to the local, state and national health care systems that impact clients and therefore BGHP? What are they and what does BGHP need to do to address the change and needs of clients? How about the role of BGHP in relation to other organizations?
- What if someone left BGHP a gift of \$50,000, \$250,000 or \$2,000,000 in their will? What is our plan for this type of generous legacy giving? What needs would we want to prioritize?

The Board and I would appreciate input if you would like to participate. Please email me at [Rosegz@hcbhp.org](mailto:Rosegz@hcbhp.org) or call me at 707-825-8345 x-110.

As always, thanks for supporting BGHP! Rose Gale-Zoellick  
Executive Director

### BGHP Staff

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# The Power of Support & Camaraderie is Mighty

*By Madelin Amir and Rose Gale-Zoellick, BGHP Staff*

A woman wearing a long, beautiful scarf wrapped around her head walked through the front door of the Breast and GYN Health Project. She had heard positive things about the support group and decided today was the day to attend. She was ready! Her warmliner and BGHP staff had been supporting her every step of the way. Now that she was going through chemotherapy, she wanted to try another type of support.

As she stepped into the library, a woman who was also wearing a long, beautiful scarf stopped chatting with others, smiled at her and said, “I feel like I’m looking at my twin!” They both laughed because they knew exactly what she meant. In that moment, she knew it was going to be OK.

Staff, warmliner volunteers and support group members know how hard it can be to reach out to BGHP. We know it can bring all the fears and concerns to the surface...maybe even admit for the first time to ourselves that what we have is serious or even cancer. It is common for clients to confess that it took a couple of attempts to actually call or drop in. But when they do, they are greeted with warmth, compassion, someone who will listen to their story and concerns, and often someone who has experienced cancer themselves.

Everyone is different with different needs. BGHP staff and volunteers expect and respect this. When someone calls or comes to BGHP, we give them the time and space they need to tell their story. We listen for them to tell us their needs so we can “meet them where they are.” We let them know that we will be here for them for as much or as little as they find helpful on their journey.

One of the most useful tools that BGHP gives to people diagnosed with cancer is a medical records binder. Although it seems simple and possibly old fashioned, it was designed by people with cancer who knew what was helpful for them. Staff and volunteers help newly diagnosed people understand the importance of being the keeper of their own medical records, the keeper of their story. Organizing things in the binder often helps the internal chaos of the diagnosis seem less immense and overwhelming. It provides a little control, empowerment, and confidence.

Not everyone wants or needs a support group. Seven different groups/support groups are offered at BGHP for people with cancer. We know it can feel daunting to think about meeting with a group of strangers, but more often than not, most women find a lovely tribe of kindred spirits on a similar journey. They are usually at various stages of treatment and diagnosis, and are a wealth of personal experience. They can support and find humor in very unfunny topics, like some of the unpleasant side effects of chemotherapy. Group members listen with compassion and deep understanding of difficult decisions involved in a cancer diagnosis.

New people to group can expect to experience the knowing nods or quick quips of “Yup, been there, done that and lived to tell the tale.” There is also shared laughter and tears in the face of cancer. No one needs to do the cancer journey alone if they don’t want to. The power of support and camaraderie, in a group or not, is mighty!



***Just Curious*** — would you be willing to ***follow*** us on **FaceBook**?

How about **Twitter**? And could you ***like*** us?

How about ***retweeting*** and ***sharing*** our posts?

We want to get our story out there—we want to reach people—and  
we need your help to do it!!

We will post things on Facebook and Twitter several times a week and are learning the ins & outs of  
Instagram and we ask **you** to pass the word along.

**Be our ambassadors to the rest of the community!**

### Vacation Raffle Winners

- Ruth Broderick, Eureka
- Mary Lee, Slingerland, NY
- Tim Talbert & Pat Farmer, Fortuna
- Melanie Johnson, Trinidad

*Thank you everyone! Together we raised \$93,500 this year!*

### Sign up for BGHP's Monthly eNews: Creating Opportunities for Healing through Volunteering

- Calendar of Activities
- Volunteer/Survivor Spotlight
- Thank you's galore!
- Lots of ways to lend a hand
- Wish list of items for services

Get added to the Project's monthly eNews mailing list! Call BGHP's volunteer coordinator at 825-8345 or email [volunteer@hcbhp.org](mailto:volunteer@hcbhp.org) and we will happily add you. It's easy to unsubscribe at any time. It is also easy to sign up via our website [www.bghp.org](http://www.bghp.org)



**BGHP is a registered charity with AmazonSmile.**

Amazon donates 0.5% of the price of your eligible AmazonSmile purchases to BGHP. Just search for

**"Breast and GYN Health Project"** when prompted. It's easy! Visit: [smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com)



Thank you Safeway/Albertson's Foundation for the grant for outreach and client services.

Thank you Safeway customers for register contributions in May.

## bidding FOR GOOD™

### On-Line Auction

**November 9th through 18th**

Donate items, find good deals & support BGHP without leaving your home!

Watch our website and Facebook for more information. Please contact Rose at [Rosegz@hcbhp.org](mailto:Rosegz@hcbhp.org) with questions or donation offers.



When you shop at any of the Ray's Food Place or ShopSmart stores throughout Humboldt County in October, please "Round Up" at the register. Also, consider signing up for the "Access" pass for a percent of your purchases go to BGHP all year long.



### Are you interested in donating your vehicle?

Consider donating it to *Breast and GYN Health Project*. It's hassle-free and your generosity is appreciated. Call Maureen, at BGHP, for more information, or call 1-855-500-RIDE (7433)



### RESOURCES FOR MAMMOGRAMS, PAP TESTS & OTHER WOMEN'S HEALTH EXAMS

Women without insurance or with high patient costs and who may meet income guidelines can call BGHP to learn more about the following programs:

#### **CDP- Every Woman**

**Counts:** All local hospitals and many doctors' offices/clinics participate.

**Family PACT:** Many doctors' offices/clinics participate.

**Mad River Hospital's Free Mammography** grant from the National Breast Cancer Foundation.



## CALENDAR OF ACTIVITIES

*(This is a partial list – please see [www.bghp.org](http://www.bghp.org) and Facebook for more)*

Sept 10-14	Eureka Natural Food BGHP 'Change 4 Change' Week
Sept 29	Fall Concert, Calvary Lutheran Church, Eureka
Oct 4	McKinleyville High School Girl's Volleyball 'Dig Pink' Games
Oct 13	Party in Pink Zumbathon at Adorni Center
Nov 9-18	Hope & Holidays Bidding for Good On-Line Auction
Nov 27	#GivingTuesday – National Day of Giving



[or www.bghp.org](http://www.bghp.org)

# Giving Back Painlessly

*Suzi Hendry, Board Member*



***As a volunteer with BGHP for 15 years, and now a board member,*** I have pondered how to donate regularly to this worthy cause as well as other nonprofits that I care about. I am recently retired and learning to live on a fixed income that can fluctuate depending on my investments. At the annual meeting with my financial planner, we talked at length about switching gears from “investing” mode to “spending” mode – or how to draw down yet make my funds last until my last breath.

A light went on for me when I discovered that I could donate to my preferred charities annually by having proceeds from an investment paid directly to that organization. It saves me from paying income taxes on that amount and gives back to my community at the same time. I learned that it was possible to sell a stock or

portion thereof and have the amount directly diverted to that charity. At age 70 ½, I can make a tax-free IRA distribution to a nonprofit. That’s a WIN-WIN for both of us!

This led to learning more about estate planning and donating specific assets or property to BGHP for the future. Of course, this gets more complicated and requires that your trust/will provide for this request. One should definitely consult an attorney and financial planner to proceed.

How else could I donate to BGHP? Yes, the vacation raffle tickets are fun to purchase and attending the Zumbathons are great exercise. With social media I can celebrate my birthday by setting up a birthday fundraiser through Facebook to ask friends to donate. As I try to downsize, I can hold a garage sale and donate proceeds to BGHP. Effortless ways to

donate are to add BGHP to your AmazonSmile account for a portion of sales to be donated, or shop locally at the upcoming Sales for Survivors locations in October. Any way that works best for your financial situation will be greatly appreciated!



## **YOUR LEGACY GIFT WILL PROVIDE HOPE FOR THE FUTURE**

BGHP has a fund at Humboldt Area Foundation which makes it easy to leave a legacy gift. Your investment in healing, compassionate support and hope will make a difference for cancer patients in the future. If you have already included BGHP in your estate plans, insurance policies, retirement plans or other planned giving, we thank you!

*To learn more, contact:*  
Rose Gale-Zoellick at 707-825-8345 or Humboldt Area Foundation, 442-2993

## ***Information is Power .... New Books in BGHP's Library***

*How to Help Someone with Cancer: 70 Ways to Help Cancer Patients & Their Families*

By Shannon Benish

*Breast Cancer Survivorship Handbook* as well as *Breast Cancer Support Partner Handbook*

Both books are by EduCare, written by Judy C. Kneece, RN, OCN

*The Five Invitations: Discovering What Death Can Teach Us About Living Fully*

By Frank Ostaseski

## ***A new website and app...***

*Belong.Life* – Beating Cancer Together is a new social media site and app which is endorsed by American Cancer Society, among other entities. It has many features which clients report are useful.

# Volunteers Make Our Community a Better Place

There are over 200 of you, BGHP Volunteers...

Board Members & Warmliners

Community Advisory Board Members



Support Group Reminder Callers

Fall Concert Performers

Committee Members and Meeting Minute Takers

Bulkmailers & Clerical Assistants

Volunteer Support Group Facilitators

ChemoKit and Medical Record Binder Makers

Health Fair Tablers

Yard Caretakers & Lawn Mowers

Hat Knitters and Sock Sewer



Web Site & Database & Data Wranglers

Many who do mission-critical fundraising

And even more special tasks...

Thank you!!

## ***Congrats to BGHP Volunteers!***

Recently, Dr. Mahoney won the California Medical Association's Plessner Award for Exemplary Work by a Rural Physician

Sue Lee Mossman won the Soroptimist International of Eureka's 2018 Ruby Award for all she does to help women and girls in our community



Felicia Oldfather won Humboldt's American Association of University Women's 2018 Women's History Month Award for her impact on our community

Linh Pham won HSU's 2018 Student of the Year. Her volunteer work with BGHP was cited among her community contributions

## We are Forever Grateful to Our Contributors & Supporters

*Thank you to 1385 individuals and businesses who generously donated since March.*

*Space allows a partial listing of foundation, business and event supporters.*

- All you Monthly Donors
- AmazonSmile shoppers
- Arcata Artisan's Cooperative for Arts! Arcata partnership
- Behrens & Hitchcock for wine
- BiCoastal Media
- Beta Sigma Phi Gamma Epsilon
- Buddy's Auto Center's Pink Tow Truck in Arcata and Willow Creek
- California Cancer Crushers for Wings for A Cure proceeds
- Donors to the Mary Scott Angel Fund & Integrative Wellness Fund
- Employees & Employers participating in Matching Programs- Bank of America, General Electric, PG&E, and Umpqua Bank
- Eureka Natural Food for 'Change for Change' partnership
- Drs. Cobb and Mahoney for all the ways they support the Project
- Healthcare Providers
- Heidi Bourne for the Mindfulness Meditation Classes
- Humboldt Herbals for "I Love Me" Tea in ChemoKits
- Humboldt Redwood Company for the ChemoKit grant
- Humboldt Unitarian Universalist Fellowship Social Action Committee
- Kalos Salon cleaning & styling wigs
- KHUM/Lost Coast Communications
- KHSU
- Friends of the late Laura Lamers for donations from National Knit in Public Day
- Lost Coast Brewery for Pints for Non-profits event
- Mad River Radio Group
- Melendy Family for the Facebook Birthday fundraiser & car donation
- Mingtree Realty of McKinleyville for The HAR Golf Tourney Nomination
- National Breast Cancer Foundation for educational materials
- North Coast Grantmaking Partnership
- Omicron Omega Chapter 382 of Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society of Nursing
- Sandi Petersen Photography for the Mother's Day Photo Shoot event
- Pflingston Family for art donation
- Patricia D. & William B. Smullin Foundation for client services grant
- Safeway Foundation for client services grant
- Sales for Survivors Sponsors & Participating Businesses
- Scrapper's Edge
- ShopSmart & Ray's Food Place (C&K Markets) for register donations
- Six Rivers Running Club for Atlanta Walk & Run Partnership
- Soroptimists International of Eureka and Humboldt Bay
- The Central Office
- Times Standard for media support
- Union Labor Health Foundation for a patient navigation grant
- Vacation Raffle trip donors, sponsors, volunteers & ticket buyers
- Vehicle donations via C.A.R.S. (Charitable Adult Rides & Services)



AFLAC Northcoast-Raffle Sponsor  
Pulling a winning raffle ticket



*To receive a copy of our 2017 Annual Report with a complete listing of contributors, please contact us at (707) 825-8345.*

## Support Groups

Meetings held at the Project Office, 987 8th St., Arcata, unless otherwise noted. Meeting times may change.  
Call 825-8345 to confirm or to add your name to the reminder call list.

### **Arcata Breast Cancer Support Group**

2nd & 4th Thursdays, 4:30-6:00 p.m

### **Gynecologic Cancer Support Group**

2nd & 4th Tuesdays, 3:00-4:30 p.m.

### **Young Women's Cancer Support Group**

2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesdays, 5:00-6:30 p.m.

### **Mindfulness Meditation for People with Cancer**

Please call to be added to list

### **Advanced Disease Group**

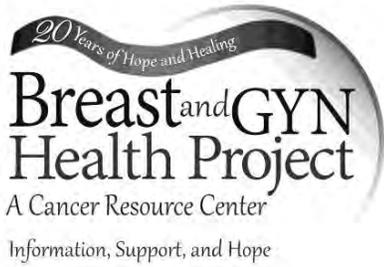
For those living with Stage IV Disease.  
Every Monday, 1:00-2:30 p.m.

### **Write/Heal/Live: Expressive Writers Group**

1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Mondays, 3:30-5:30 p.m.

### **Lymphoma & Leukemia Group hosted by BGHP**

1st Tuesday, 4:00-5:30 p.m.



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X

Client Services Drop-in Hours  
Mon-Fri, 9 a.m. - 2 p.m.  
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Administration, 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.

OR CURRENT RESIDENT



*Special Thanks to these Sponsors for Underwriting this Newsletter*

