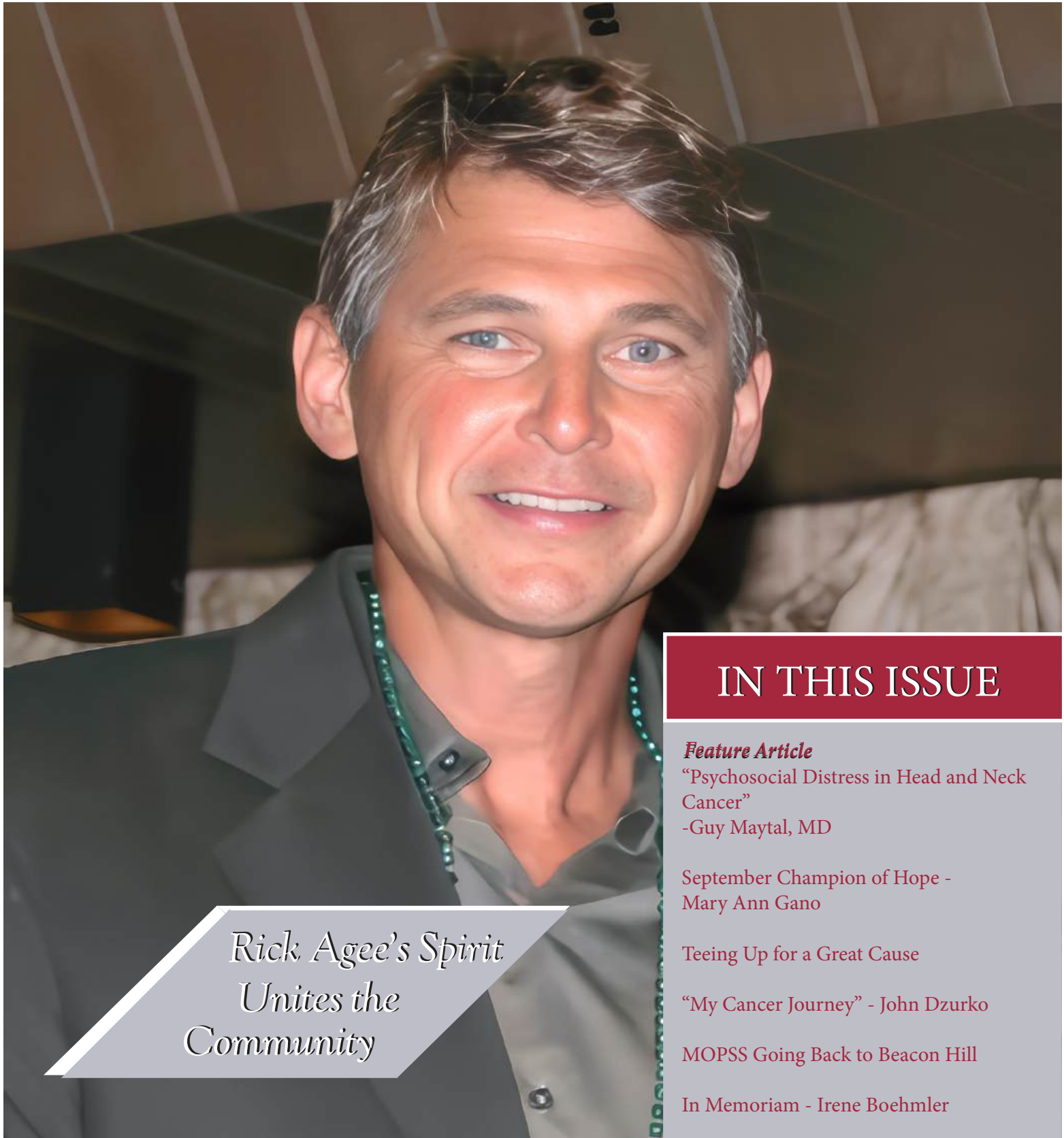


# NEWS FROM SPOHNC

SUPPORT FOR PEOPLE WITH ORAL AND HEAD AND NECK CANCER | EST. 1991



*Rick Agee's Spirit  
Unites the  
Community*

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*SPOHNC is dedicated to raising awareness and meeting the needs of oral and head and neck cancer patients through its resources and publications.*

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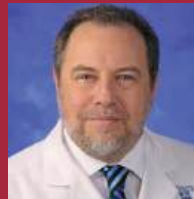
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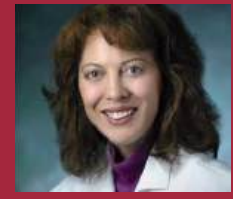
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# Psychosocial Distress in Head and Neck Cancer



**Guy Maytal, MD**

Dr. Guy Maytal is Forge Health’s Chief of Integrated Care and Psychiatric Services. In this role, he is leading Forge Health’s initiatives to provide the highest quality care to clients with coexisting medical conditions, and to enhance the interface of Forge Health’s mental health & substance use services with medical specialties – including primary care medicine, oncology, and others.

Most recently, Dr. Maytal served as Chief of Integrated Care and Psychiatric Oncology at New York-Presbyterian / Weill Cornell Medicine (2018-2023), where he provided clinical leadership in the development and growth of clinical services, provided expert consultation and clinical care for patients across a broad spectrum of diagnoses, and taught students and peers across multiple medical specialties. Previously, Dr. Maytal spent 11 years on the faculty of Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH) and Harvard Medical School, where he served in several leadership positions, including Medical Director of Psychiatry Ambulatory Services.

Dr. Maytal has written widely in his areas of clinical expertise, and has authored and co-authored peer-reviewed papers, review articles, and book chapters in various areas of psychosomatic medicine. Furthermore, Dr. Maytal is a dedicated and passionate teacher who is committed to training early-career clinicians as well as to the ongoing education of practicing clinicians. Dr. Maytal continues to serve as a Clinical Assistant Professor of Psychiatry at Weill Cornell Medical College and as a Distinguished Fellow of the APA since 2018.

When someone is diagnosed with head and neck cancer (HNC), it’s not just their body that’s affected. The emotional and psychological impacts can be just as significant as the physical ones. When a person says, “I have throat cancer,” it’s not just their throat that’s speaking—it’s the whole person, with all their feelings, life-roles, hopes, and sense of self. Yet, cancer treatment often focuses mainly on the physical aspects of the illness, often overlooking the emotional & psychological toll that it takes.

As a psychiatrist with over 20 years of experience working with cancer patients, I’ve seen firsthand the challenges that come with HNC. In this article, I will discuss some of the emotional struggles that can arise during this experience. I will also offer some practical advice on how patients and their loved ones can take care of their emotional and psychological needs during this difficult time.

## Understanding the Mental Health Effects of Head and Neck Cancer

Having head and neck cancer is tough. The treatment can be physically challenging – often including difficulties with eating as well as significant pain. And the long-lasting changes to one’s appearance, voice, or ability to eat can be especially hard to cope with. After all, when we interact with others, the part of the body that people always see is the head, neck, and face. HNC often has significant impact on the



## 5 Healthy Habit Tips for a Healthy Mind

- 01 Celebrate Every Win
- 02 Be Kind to Yourself
- 03 Don't Bottle Up Your Feelings
- 04 Remember: It's Okay to Not be Okay
- 05 Find Ways to Express Yourself



appearance of these areas. These challenges often lead to feelings of depression and anxiety, which are quite common. In fact, while oncology providers focus on curing the physical illness, for some patients the emotional impact can be even more distressing than the physical symptoms. And the emotional impact is sometimes minimized or ignored by medical providers.

Also, the emotional impact of HNC is often made more difficult because people going through HNC often have other psychological and social challenges. Medical research has shown that people with HNC have higher rates of previous mental illness, have more limited social supports, and have higher rates of alcohol or recreational drug misuse. Also, according to research, men are three times more likely than women to get head and neck cancer. But, on average, men are less likely to reach out for social support or mental health treatment. All this makes the already significant emotional toll of HNC that much more difficult.

### Major Depressive Disorder

Almost everyone with head and neck cancer experiences feelings of depression and anxiety. The diagnosis itself is overwhelming, and the treatment process can

be full of uncertainty and stress. Concerns about survival, the potential for physical changes, and the impact on personal relationships can all contribute to these feelings. The truth is that it's normal to feel down or anxious after an HNC diagnosis, but sometimes these feelings can become overwhelming.

When we talk about "depression" in a medical sense, we're referring to Major Depressive Disorder (MDD). MDD is a serious condition that goes beyond just feeling sad.

People with MDD may struggle with a persistently low mood, loss of interest in activities, trouble sleeping, changes in cognition, low energy, and even thoughts of suicide. Untreated MDD can lead to delays in getting treatment, worse medical outcomes, and even to higher rates of suicide.

Furthermore, research has shown that people with HNC have higher rates of Major Depressive Disorder even compared to other cancers.

In other words, there is nothing "normal" or "expected" about MDD during cancer. Fortunately, as I'll discuss below, there are good treatments for MDD that can help people feel better and resume a more normal life.



## Did You Know?



Recently, our SPOHNC community completed a poll in our closed facebook group.

**46%**

of participants voted "**stay positive and take one day at a time**" as most helpful advice for recently diagnosed patients.

Join our closed facebook group if you or your loved one is a patient/survivor of oral, head and neck cancer. Find community and support.



## Suicide

Although it's a difficult topic to discuss, it's important to talk about the risk of suicide in people with HNC. Studies show that suicide rates are higher among people with HNC – both people in treatment and HNC survivors – as compared to the general population. This increased risk is often linked to depression, pain, ongoing alcohol use, and the psychological impact of changes in appearance and physical function. If you or a loved one is experiencing suicidal thoughts, it's essential to reach out for help. Don't be afraid to talk about these feelings with your healthcare team—they are there to support you.

## Body Image Issues

Changes in appearance due to HNC treatment can deeply affect how a person feels about themselves and how they think others see them. Scars, altered facial structures, or changes in speech can lead to a loss of confidence and self-esteem. These changes can lead people to distance themselves from friends and loved-ones. Body image concerns can also contribute to feelings of depression and anxiety. It's important to recognize that these feelings are valid and common.

For some people with HNC, these thoughts and feelings improve over time. But for other people they persist. In those situations, it is helpful to talk about these worries with caregivers and medical providers. With the right support and treatment, these concerns about body image can get better.



**Reaching out to a friend can remind you - you are not alone.**

## Coping Strategies and Support

Dealing with HNC can feel overwhelming. At times, people may feel like they are the only ones dealing with these worries, or that the issues are too much to bear. But there are effective ways to manage the psychological and emotional challenges of head and neck cancer.

## Practical Considerations

Often, people with head and neck cancer are worried about practical aspects of life. For many people, addressing these issues directly helps reduce their worry and distress. This includes addressing financial concerns – like understanding insurance coverage and planning for any income changes. It also includes work-related issues. Requesting accommodations at work or even taking a medical leave of absence can relieve a great deal of stress and worry for many people.

## Physical Care

HNC can lead to difficulties with speech, pain, and eating – each of which can cause a lot of distress. HNC patients experiencing this distress often find that taking action to address these issues can reduce anxiety about them. Working with a speech therapist around issues of speech and swallowing, talking with healthcare

providers about pain, and working with a nutritionist can help improve these symptoms. Additionally, having the experience of taking an action to improve their situation often helps people with HNC feel more normal and independent.



Finally, gentle exercise – any amount of physical activity – can improve mood and overall sense of well-being.

## Psychological Counseling

Talking to a mental health professional, such as a psychologist or counselor, can help you manage your emotions and develop coping strategies. Psychotherapy can provide you tools for dealing with depression or anxiety, improve your ability to communicate with loved ones, and help you gain insight into your relationships. In therapy you may learn about relaxation techniques like deep breathing exercises and meditation to help you relax in difficult situations.



# Do you experience symptoms of depression? Find out here.

Remember to consult your healthcare team if you're experiencing symptoms.

- 1 Poor concentration
- 2 Feelings of excessive guilt or low confidence
- 3 Hopelessness about the future
- 4 Disrupted sleep
- 5 Changes in appetite or weight
- 6 Feeling very tired or low energy



**Did you know?** Studies show exercise can improve mood.

Source: World Health Organization, John Hopkins Medicine

Also, if you are struggling with alcohol or recreational drug use, psychotherapy can help you with that too.

For HNC patients dealing with Major Depressive Disorder, the best treatment is a combination of psychotherapy and with medications to help you feel better. Some people prefer only psychotherapy, while others want only medications. It's OK to start with one or the other since they both can help MDD, but for more severe depression the combination is best. You can work with a psychiatrist to find a medication regimen that will help you without interfering with your cancer treatment or cause significant side effects.

## Head and Neck Cancer Support Groups

Joining a support group for people with HNC can provide a sense of community and understanding. Sharing your experiences with others who are going through similar challenges can be incredibly comforting

and empowering. Having the experience that "I am not alone" and sharing experiences with "people who 'get it'" can offer emotional support as well as practical advice. Sometimes people with supportive friends and family worry about "burdening" them with too much talk about cancer. So even if you have supportive loved ones, a support group can be a space where you can express yourself without these worries.

## Engaging with Family and Friends:

Open communication with family and friends about your needs and feelings can strengthen your connection with them and improve your overall mood. This can be difficult to do at times, but any amount of communication is better than none – especially when it comes to talking about worries and fears.

Additionally, doing things you enjoy, like hobbies or social activities (even in modified forms), can help you feel more like yourself during this challenging time.



## Interested in joining a chapter group?

We offer virtual and in-person chapter support groups! Call or email our national office to be connected to your community and receive support today.

1-800-377-0928  
info@spohnc.org

## Spiritual Support

Many people have spiritual or religious practices that are important to them. Continuing to engage with them can provide comfort and a sense of purpose during difficult times. Most hospitals also offer a chaplaincy service that caters to different faiths and also provide non-religious support.

## Conclusion

Head and neck cancer affects more than just the body—it can have a profound impact on your emotional and psychological well-being. Remember, these feelings are common and treatable. By addressing the emotional side of HNC, you and your caregivers can take a more holistic approach to your care, helping you navigate this journey with greater strength and support.

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## Recipe

AUTHOR: DOREEN M., MA

### ingredients

- 1 1/2 cup ham
- 1 can cream of mushroom soup
- 1/4 cup milk
- 1 tsp. minced onion
- 1/8 tsp. pepper
- 1 cup sharp american cheese, grated



### nutrition

Calories 482, Protein 25(g),  
Carbohydrate 46(g), Dietary Fiber 5(g),  
Total Fat 22(g), Saturated Fat 11(g),  
Cholesterol 70(mg), Sodium 1604(mg)

## HAM-POTATO BAKE

### directions

- Boil 4 lg. potatoes (4 cups) in water until cooked.  
Dice & set aside.
- Finely chop ham & combine with cream of mushroom soup, milk, minced onion, pepper, & 1/2 cup cheese in bowl, mix well.
- Finely shred 1 cup carrots.
- Layer potatoes, carrots & ham mixture in a 2 qt. baking dish.
- Mix breadcrumbs with remaining 1/2 cup cheese, melted butter & sprinkle over mixture.
- Bake 350F. for 45 min.
- Garnish with sprigs of parsley.
- Yield 4 servings.

# Teeing Up for a Great Cause

The 9th Annual Rick Agee Memorial Golf Tournament, planned and executed by the Rick Agee Foundation for the 3rd year in a row took place on June 22, 2024 at Cliffs Resort Golf Course at beautiful Possum Kingdom Lake. The event benefitted SPOHNC, and a Texas Tech University Scholarship Fund in Rick's name.



**Rick Agee, dear friend and former member of SPOHNC.**

70 golfers including Rick's friends, colleagues and family enjoyed a day of camaraderie, friendly competition and raffles! Following golf, everyone gathered in the cool clubhouse for food, fun and adult beverages. head, and neck cancers, and supports education through scholarship opportunities. Rick was a friend to everyone, and helped anyone who needed it. His optimistic spirit and courage during his battles with cancer continues to serve as an inspiration to this day. When friends of Rick's get together, they inevitably laugh and smile as they recount stories about Rick's athletic achievements, friendly pranks, or outdoor adventures.

The total of funds raised exceeded last year, and far exceeded this year's goal. Thank you to all who participated in some way. Special thanks to Kerry Agee, the entire Agee Family, Jack and Maryellen Mitchell, the Rick Agee Foundation Board of Directors, and the Floratech crew, for your unwavering support as always. SPOHNC appreciates you!

This year, guests were treated to a live auction, with Kerry Agee's son, Ben, serving as auctioneer. The bidding was hot for great prizes like suites at a Dallas Stars game and a Dallas Mavericks game with hospitality, both donated by Southwest Nursery, Texas Rangers game tickets donated by Bill Smith and Kevin McCarthy and 4 nights at Tablerock Lake in Branson, donated by Brad McKissack. There were two Hole In One winners!

Floratech crew, Kerry's sister Alese, and Mom and Dad were busy all day ensuring that everything ran smoothly.

The Rick Agee Foundation promotes research, awareness, and direct support for those affected by oral,

## 2024 Rick Agee Memorial Golf Tournament Memories



Congratulations for raising...

**\$40,000**

We appreciate the Rick Agee Foundation's efforts!





**Rick Agee's Family Continues His Legacy: Proudly Supporting SPOHNC in His Memory.**

Are you newly diagnosed and in need of guidance?

View a preview of our guidebook "We Have Walked in Your Shoes" for basics about the types of treatment and common side effects. It also offers a section to list your healthcare team, a personal calendar and journal, diet and nutrition information, and a list of resources. Visit our store on our website [www.spohnc.org](http://www.spohnc.org) to view a preview, or purchase!



Available digitally\*

## Head and Neck Cancer News

### Saliva test offers hope for head and neck cancer patients

Aug 16 2024 – UMiami Miller School of Medicine

School of Medicine, UC San Diego Health and collaborating cancer centers.

But what if a mouthwash-based test to detect biomarkers can help physicians predict disease recurrence in head and neck cancer patients?

Their findings, published on August 15th, 2024 in the peer-reviewed journal JAMA Otolaryngology – Head & Neck Surgery, could improve how physicians predict and detect recurrence with these cancers.

That futuristic scenario seems closer to reality after a new study by researchers at Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center at the University of Miami Miller

“Our study suggests biomarker detection in saliva collected from



an oral rinse after initial treatment offers potential to readily assess recurrence risk. Elevated levels of either of two biomarkers were associated with disease return.”

- Elizabeth Franzmann, MD, Study Co-Corresponding Author, Professor and Director, Head and Neck Research, Miller School of Medicine, University of Miami

## Men More Susceptible

Head and neck cancers account for nearly 4% of all cancers in the U.S. and are more commonly diagnosed in people over age 50, according to the National Cancer Institute. Men are more than twice as likely to be diagnosed with the disease.

Primary treatment options include surgery and radiation, which can affect speech, swallowing and appearance, severely affecting a patient’s quality of life. These effects can be even worse after recurrence.

Moreover, recurrence is not always easy to catch. “It can be very difficult to determine if what you’re observing is just post-treatment changes or a cancer recurrence,” explained Joseph Califano III, MD, director of UC San Diego’s Hanna and Mark Gleiberman Head and Neck Cancer Center and the study’s co-corresponding author. “Good biomarkers could help

remove some of the guesswork.”

Franzmann, whose research lab is focused on finding an inexpensive, noninvasive screening test for these cancers, emphasized the importance of early recurrence detection. “These patients suffer terribly,” she said. “The more we can minimize those effects by catching recurrence early, the better we can mitigate patient morbidity and mortality.”

## Assessing Recurrence Risk

Previously, Franzmann and her team had studied how biomarkers in oral rinses can assess a person’s risk for developing oral or oropharyngeal tumors, the most common types of head and neck cancers. They found a link with two key biomarkers – CD44, a tumor-initiating molecule, and total protein levels.

In this new study, the researchers studied whether those two biomarkers could predict recurrence in already-diagnosed patients. Their clinical trial evaluated the effects of CD44 and total protein levels in 160-plus patients across multiple cancer centers. Patients were provided oral-rinse samples for use up to 18 months after their initial treatment.

To measure biomarker presence, the researchers used laboratory tests and experimental lateral-flow tests, technology similar to stick-based pregnancy and COVID-19 tests.

“Our laboratory assays showed an association between biomarker levels and later recurrence,” Franzmann said. “Compared to patients with normal protein levels three months after treatment, patients with about twice as much total protein had an estimated 65% greater risk of recurrence.”

She added that patients with CD44 levels that were triple the normal level had an estimated 62% percent greater recurrence risk.

## Focus on Rapid Tests

The study also generated early data on a rapid, point-of-care test to measure these biomarkers, with the findings expected to help hasten its development.

“It would be really useful if we had a test that was inexpensive and could be performed and resulted while the patient was in the office,” said Franzmann. “That’s the area we are focusing on.”

She and collaborators noted that although additional research is needed, biomarkers show great promise for refining risk prediction in patients with head and neck cancers. Better risk prediction, in turn, has the potential to save lives by reducing the need for harsh, invasive treatments. Thanks is extended to Vigilant Biosciences for their contribution to this work.



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## MOPSS Going Back to Beacon Hill



Following the work of Nancy Leupold who founded SPOHNC, Massachusetts Oncology Patients, Survivors, and Supporters (MOPSS) will continue to advocate for all head and neck cancer survivors across the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Thomas Healy, Founder of MOPSS, along with its Steering Committee, will guide this effort with head and neck cancer survivors and supporters. Our mantra “we are the voice for head and neck cancer survivors” will be heard louder to more State Representatives and Senators at the State House.

If you know of someone that has gone through this cancer have them call MOPSS at 781-686-3774 or email us at [mopssma@gmail.com](mailto:mopssma@gmail.com). More information can be found at [www.mopss.org](http://www.mopss.org).



Cynthia Basile, our chapter administrator, pictured with our future SPOHNC intern Nova, celebrated her birthday at SPOHNC on August 20! Thank you for everything you do for SPOHNC. We appreciate you!



# My Cancer Journey

- John Dzurko



“Do you have a sore throat?” the dentist asked during a routine checkup.

“If it’s cancer, it’s gonna be a marathon, not a sprint. Don’t get discouraged,” my primary care doctor reassured me.

“Are you sure you want me to talk to you with your daughter in the room? This is serious,” the ENT said.

“Stage 4, tonsil cancer. Three eight hour sessions of chemo and thirty seven rounds of radiation,” from the otolaryngologist.

“We are gonna throw the kitchen sink at you because of your age. If you can survive the treatment, you’ll

survive the cancer.” My radiation oncologist tried to bring a positive spin to the situation..

“Where is the poster child?”

The exam room door opened as I threw up into a bucket. My poster child status was ruined.

“There is a seventy-five percent chance that your hearing will be permanently affected,” he told me. I could barely hear him and thought, more like a hundred.

“John, today you can ring the bell.”

“I can’t believe it’s been ten years, John, this will be our final exam.”

These are just a few of the many

phrases that stick out when I think of my experience with stage 4 squamous cell carcinoma. Squamous cell carcinoma is a form of skin cancer but it isn’t uncommon for it to appear in the tonsils, like it did in my case. I never realized you could get tonsil cancer until it happened to me.

As often happens with cancer patients, many aspects of my life changed quickly. The speed and lack of control can only be compared to the biggest, baddest roller coaster, driven by the grim reaper, flying off the tracks only to land back on the tracks somehow. When you exit the ride, dizzy and disoriented, you want life to be just like it was before you got on but, that’s not the way it works. You can’t ride that roller coaster and walk off unaffected.

My treatment was not uncommon for those in my situation, three 8-hour sessions of chemotherapy and thirty seven radiation treatments. I never knew the kitchen sink could be so heavy! The treatment destroys healthy cells along with the cancer cells. I was

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simultaneously getting sick while I was getting cured. During the treatment, you have no idea how you are progressing, that isn't determined until months after your treatment ends and your body starts to heal. But the side effects from the treatment came on from the start and increased exponentially. Dry mouth, loss of appetite and sleep, swollen tongue, loss of taste, hearing and sometimes even depression. As hard as those were to deal with the fatigue is what really took me out.

During treatment, all of my focus had to be placed on myself, which was one of the hardest things for me. Although I resisted, eventually, I had no choice. If I didn't focus all my energy on myself, this wasn't going to end well. Being a father and husband is about the only thing in my life that didn't go away, although it changed. My kids are great, when I barely had energy to be a father, they brought in their energy to me. That renewed my sense of living and reminded me why there was no way I'd give up. I remember one specific time while on morphine trying to read a bed-time story but started experiencing hallucinations. That one didn't work out so well, my wife finished that story for the kids.

Then there was my wife, where the kids gave me the energy and desire to move on, she gave me the support and care needed to get through the

treatments and heal. She became both parents for our kids, cooking, cleaning, going to school events and all the busy things young parents do, all while taking me to my treatments, and handling all of my needs with grace and reassurance. She single-handedly created a bond with me that I never imagined could be possible. She took that "in sickness and health" phrase from our wedding vows seriously!

Beyond the ultimate goal of getting cured, I set two additional goals. The first was that I didn't want a feeding tube, although I was literally hours away from having it inserted, I did not need one. The second was I wanted to walk every day to my treatment. I was too stubborn for a wheelchair. Looking back, it seems that a wheelchair would have been better than having my wife basically drag me around while in my mind I was walking.

One of the most surprising things is how close you get to the other patients in the waiting rooms and treatment areas. They become your



cancer buddies. You see them daily and give them encouraging words, they respond in kind. Some of these people I got to know pretty well, but now have lost touch. A good sign, that life has returned to normal for all of us.

Like all things in life, treatment did end. I'm one of the fortunate ones to hear the words "the treatment worked, now it's time to get your body healed." It reminds me of an

ancient proverb when two tigers fight, one dies, the other is badly injured. Yes, I survived but am still injured from my experience. Injured, yet stronger. At the end I got to ring the bell that all survivors get to ring. That bell was a symbol of my strength. Being surrounded by my family, knowing my treatments were over was one of the most joyful times in my life.

After treatments ended I went in for many check-ups with my team of doctors. Eventually, one retired, one moved to another job but the third tracked me for ten years. Life was moving on and that is a good thing. Then came that day where my remaining doctor said "I can't believe it's been ten years, John, this is our final check up." Those words were scary and refreshing to hear. Like most of my cancer journey, every step of the way balances the good and the bad (or scary). I'm lucky to be left with only moderate hearing loss, a slightly dry mouth and issues swallowing. All of those can be overcome.

I understand everyone's journey is different and I hesitate to say that parts of mine were positive because I don't want to appear insensitive to those who have different outcomes. There were as many outcomes in cancer as the number of people that have it.

Now, I'm blessed to be able to give back to a great organization like SPOHNC. Without organizations like this, the tough journey of so many patients would be all but impossible.

For those of you having a similar experience, I urge you to lean on others. Family, friends, support groups, like SPOHNC specifically, can help you and the ones you love. All the best to you and thank you for reading this part of my life's story.

~jdzurko2426@gmail.com

# September Champion of Hope

Mary Ann Gano, RD, LDN - York, PA Chapter Facilitator



Our September Champion of Hope is very well known and much loved in the York, Pennsylvania head and neck cancer community. Mary Ann Gano, RD, LDN, has been the Facilitator of the York, Pennsylvania SPOHNC Chapter support group for over a decade!

SPOHNC recently received a call from Mary Ann, where she shared some unexpected news. We were

excited for Mary Ann, but sad for her group, as she told SPOHNC Executive Director, Mary Ann Caputo that after many years of enjoying her career as a Registered Dietician, she decided it was time to enjoy her retirement years. Her friends and family are elated! Mary Ann has made such a difference in the lives of so many. She is well deserving of this leisure time for certain and deserving of the honor of being named our September Champion of Hope.

Mary Ann has been facilitating the SPOHNC Chapter group for a long time, and as you can imagine, bonds form over that time, especially when survivors return month after month, to share their lives and their experiences with others who join. It becomes like a family. Mary Ann said she was (as she put it) going to miss "her boys!". One of the things she mentioned on her call was that she only missed 3 meetings in 16 years!

Her support group recently threw her a fabulous going away/

retirement party and she happily shared a photo with us of this bittersweet occasion. The group will continue to meet, with a new Facilitator and the core group in attendance. Currently, the group is still meeting virtually, since the pandemic.

**"I'm going to miss my boys!"**

Mary Ann, we wish you all the best in your retirement. SPOHNC thanks you, from the bottom of our hearts, for your devotion, your tireless commitment to supporting others, and for the special care you gave to your SPOHNC Chapter support group. We know you had a hand in their survivorship plans and they are grateful to you for all you did to encourage them over the last many years. It is our honor to name you as our September 2024 Champion of Hope.

## Check out our cookbooks!

★★★★★

**Cookbooks for Patients and Survivors with Swallowing Challenges**

"The perfect food for a cold, winter's day and especially those of us who have difficulty swallowing. Thank you SPOHNC!" -Patrice, Survivor

"I bought this book this summer and it saved me from starvation and boredom...and cravings!!" - Nancy, Survivor

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## Join Our Online Community

Find support with other patients, survivors and caregivers in our closed Facebook group.

"I'm so grateful that this group exists and we can share our experiences here." -Eileen

Use your camera to **SCAN HERE:** and Join!



SPOHNC is deeply saddened to share the news of the passing of Irene Boehmler, on June 8th, 2024. Irene is the wife of SPOHNC's longtime treasurer, and dedicated volunteer, Walter Boehmler. They shared 62 wonderful years together, creating memories with their family.

Irene was a devoted mother to their 3 children James (Carolyn), Barbara (Mitchell) and Diane (David). She was also a loving grandmother to Alyssa, Amanda, Tommy, Joey, Daniel, Alex, Steven, Katie and Tara and a dear sister to Marion Leupold and the late Karl Leupold. Karl was the husband of SPOHNC's Founder, Nancy Leupold. Irene loved the outdoors. She particularly enjoyed the tranquility of her summer home in the Poconos. She appreciated a good book or puzzle. Her sense of humor, strength and love will forever be remembered by all who knew her.

Walter was a dedicated and kind caregiver to Irene for many years. They never let any limitations get in the way of their travels, and the fun times they shared together. The Boehmler family took many vacations together, enjoying long distance travel, cruises and all sorts of great adventures.

# *In Memoriam* Irene Boehmler



*Your memory is a  
treasure we hold in our  
hearts, forever cherished.*

Irene will be missed by her dear family and friends and all who knew her. Please keep the Boehmler family in your thoughts and prayers, today and always.





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"My Dad was recently diagnosed with oral cancer, base of tongue. Have already ordered a couple of your books, one of which he refers to as "the bible".  
- Amy B. (Caregiver)

"I love the articles in the newsletter - it is an easy way to educate my family on what is going on with me. So THANK YOU for all the work you do!!"  
- Thelma M. (Survivor)