I would like to dedicate this Annual Report to the many cancer patients and cancer survivors that we treated in our community. For two surveys in a row, we have garnered the Outstanding Achievement Award with commendation from the Commission on Cancer by the American College of Surgeons (COS-ACS). We were especially pleased to show off another trophy after our survey from last year. We look forward to maintaining this tradition at the next survey in just another two years from now.

Our Inpatient Cancer Care Unit on 4North remains the heart of our Cancer Program where most of our cancer care is delivered. We are proud of our health care providers including the physicians and nurses who manage our cancer patients ranging from acute cancer treatments with chemotherapy and/or radiation to palliative and end of life care. We have focused our inpatient care with major emphasis on pain management, palliative care, and integrative therapies to provide dignity and comfort to our cancer patients.

Our Cancer Conference is the forum in which we learn. It gathers on a weekly basis to review oncologic cases participated by a multidisciplinary team comprised of nurses, physician assistants, surgeons, medical oncologists, radiation oncologists, pathologists, and radiologists. Special lectures were conducted by nationally recognized experts as well as by our own medical staff. NCCN cancer treatment guidelines were routinely reviewed during the case presentations to ensure that the highest standards of quality are met.

Community outreach activities continue to be an important part of our cancer program. Outreach opportunities included prostate cancer screening and oral cancer screening as well as activities to promote breast cancer awareness. We are especially proud of our Breast Cancer Navigator Program. We conducted a study to examine the needs of the breast cancer survivor and we may expand or enhance certain programs to help this special population.

I would like to thank all of you in the Cancer Program at Mercy Medical Center to realize its high potential. Once again, we are proud to achieve this recognition bestowed by COS-ACS but we must not forget why we strive to meet the highest standards everyday. It is to improve the outcomes of patients in the different facets of their journey with cancer.

Kenneth K Ng, MD
Chairman of the Cancer Program
In the latest demonstration of Mercy Medical Center’s delivery of the highest standards of patient care, Mercy Medical Center was presented with the 2013 Outstanding Achievement Award by the American College of Surgeons’ (ACS) Commission on Cancer (CoC). Mercy Medical Center is the only hospital on Long Island to receive this national honor for surveys performed last year. The award acknowledges cancer programs that achieve excellence in providing quality care to cancer patients.

This designation demonstrates that Mercy Medical Center, a member of Catholic Health Services, meets the highest national standards for state-of-the-art cancer prevention, early diagnosis, pre-treatment evaluation, staging, optimal treatment, rehabilitation, surveillance for recurrent disease, support services, and end-of-life care.
By Maggie Glier

The Cancer Care Unit is located on 4 North at Mercy Medical Center. It is a 10 bed Acute Care Oncology Unit. This specialized unit provides quality care for the oncology patient in all phases of the disease. Mercy Medical Center offers a multidisciplinary approach to patient care. This includes Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center Physicians, Oncology Physicians with privileges, as well as other consulting specialty physicians, a dedicated Oncology Physician Assistant, Oncology Registered Nurses, An Oncology Social Worker, Case Managers, A Registered Nutritionist, Pastoral Care Team, Palliative Care Team, Pain Management, Patient Care Associates, and a group of wonderful volunteers.

The team meets daily to create an individualized plan of care. This multidisciplinary approach focuses on the Physical/psycho/social/spiritual needs of both the oncology patient and their families/significant others. Mercy Medical Center also admits and cares for the hospice patient. The entire oncology staff is specially trained and sensitive to the needs of hospice patients, their families, and significant loved ones. Family and friends have 24/7 access to the Unit. The Unit provides comfort lounges that expand into a bed for overnight visits.

The Oncology Unit has a Patient Library in which Patients have easy access to their records at Memorial Sloan Kettering. Website access can also allow easy access to the American Cancer Society, National Cancer Institute, and other various sites for information and support. We offer Complimentary Therapies such as Music Therapy, Art Therapy, Soft Touch Therapy, Pet Therapy, Relaxation Therapy, Guided Imagery, & Hand/Foot massage Therapy.

Our patient linens and blankets are warmed to enhance a person’s comfort level.

Mercy Medical Center has a Certified Clinical Nurse Navigator who meets and assists with breast biopsies; if the patient has a positive diagnosis the navigator will follow up the patient after discussing the patient with the doctor. The navigator will offer information on access to clinical trials, explain clinical aspects of care, insurance, referrals for spiritual needs, transportation issues and offer emotional support.

Mercy Medical Center provides a high standard of care. Performance Improvement Initiatives are ongoing on a monthly basis. Continuous Nursing Education and evidence based practices are the standard at Mercy Medical Center.

Mercy Medical Center & it’s Oncology Unit has acknowledged the challenges that a cancer diagnosis can bring to the patient & families. In response to the patient & families needs during this difficult time, we are creating a comfortable living room so that families can feel at home and be close to their loved one.

Mercy Medical Center has now contracted with a Certified Registered Nurse who will collaborate with patients on a personal level to meet their special needs. Example: wigs, sleeves, scarfs.
By Pat Amoroso

The nursing staff on 4 North oncology continues to be committed to providing compassionate, quality care to our oncology patients. Our multidisciplinary team works to meet the needs of our patients and their families. Nursing education, as a part of that team, works with the nursing staff on our oncology unit. With the encouragement received from our nursing director and a successful Commission on Cancer Outstanding Achievement award, we are moving ahead to achieve a goal of 100% of our eligible nurses becoming certified in Oncology. Certification has been shown to be a factor in the assurance of the standards of knowledge, skills, and abilities in nursing specialty areas that contribute to improved patient outcomes.

The nursing staff has attended review classes and is utilizing the hospital’s LMS (Learning Management system) to cover topics pertinent to the care of the cancer patient. These areas include health promotion, screening and early detection, scientific basis for practice, treatment modalities, symptom management, psychosocial dimensions of care, oncologic emergencies, survivorship, palliative and end of life care, and professional performance. Additional lectures have also been presented on survivorship and shared with the Memorial Sloan Kettering staff as well. We are looking forward to celebrating the success of our newly certified nurses.

We have new nurses joining our staff and have expanded our orientation program to include a site visit to Memorial Sloan Kettering @ Rockville Centre. Our goal is to better understand the multiple phases of cancer treatment as the patient experiences it. The nurses visit the medical oncology unit to observe the support provided to the patient through targeted therapies and adjunct treatments. They also visit the radiation therapy area to observe the patient education process. During these visits our nurses are building relationships with the Memorial Sloan Kettering staff that are also a part of the patients’ continuum of care. Our new nurses will be taking the online Chemotherapy and Biotherapy course provided by ONS (Oncology Nursing Society) prior to completing a competency in administration of chemotherapy.

Survivorship plans of care are the product of increased cancer survival and the need to communicate treatments and surveillance across the continuum. Mercy has been working to formulate these plans and include them as part of the electronic medical record. A work group has been formed and with management’s leadership we are looking forward to the creation of a system wide plan of care.

A successful evidence-based presentation at Pharmacy and Therapeutics has lead to a pharmacy preparation of sodium bicarbonate mouthwash which can be offered to patients suffering from mucositis. Although we have alternative preparations available, various forms of mucositis will respond to different treatments and we want to provide the best alternatives with evidence based care.

Our nursing staff strives for excellence in patient care as well as care for their families. The education department provides support in this endeavor as we seek innovative methods to involve and inspire our nurses to excellence in patient outcomes.
Advancements in oncologic treatments are leading to increased cure rates and survival among cancer patients. Approximately 13 million adults in the US currently have a personal history of cancer. How to serve this population best has not been well-defined. Survivors often report high levels of distress, poor health-related quality of life, and unmet psychosocial needs, as well as lack of preparation in managing their future medical needs. The Cancer Subcommittee conducted an anonymous survey by mail to document the needs and goals of breast cancer survivors. We designed a written questionnaire including questions regarding demographic data, medical history, health and lifestyle, current symptoms, and desired referrals. Through our Cancer Registry, we sent the survey to 500 breast cancer survivors who had completed treatment at least three months prior to the survey, and were believed to be cancer free.

We received 101 completed surveys. The average age of responders was 67 years. Additional demographics showed that 46% are married, 76% are white, and 57% are Catholic.

Other findings included, with respect to current health practices:
99% have seen a primary care provider, and 76% have seen a gynecologist.
6% obtained genetics counseling.

In response to questions about physical symptoms:
35% are concerned about the long-term side effects of chemotherapy.
22% have muscle or bone pain.
31% felt that a referral to a pain specialist would be helpful.

Regarding mental health and spirituality:
10% of responders have sought treatment from a mental health provider.
15% are taking medications for depression or anxiety.
18% have insomnia.
37% responded that religious and / or spiritual beliefs helped them cope with cancer.

We are encouraged by this population’s adherence to follow up with a primary physician. It is anticipated that a Survivorship Plan for each individual patient will become more commonly used in transitioning from oncology treatment to long-term primary care, and we hope that our findings may inform future projects to increase referrals and access to the above services.
Community Outreach

By Joseph Lanzetta
Community Outreach Coordinator

Mercy Medical Center continued its efforts in Community Outreach which included professional and public education programs highlighting all aspects of cancer care from prevention to treatment. Specific areas included were breast, prostate and oral cancer.

Prostate Cancer is the most common cancer in American men, with the American Cancer Society estimating nearly a quarter million cases will be diagnosed during the year. Dr. Eric Thall, Mercy Medical Center’s Director of Urology, provided prostate cancer screenings which included Prostate Specific Antigen (PSA) blood tests and digital rectal examinations. Dr. Dean Berman, staff otolaryngologist at Mercy, provided free screening for the early detection of oral cancer. Mercy promoted breast cancer awareness throughout the year. Mercy encouraged the surrounding community to attend American Cancer Society’s “Look Good Feel Better” program early in the year. During the month of October Mercy offered various “Think Pink” activities for its employees. On October 19th Mercy employees participated in the Making Strides against Breast Cancer Walk at Jones Beach.

Mercy Medical Center was involved in eight Healthy Sundays, a Catholic Health Services of Long Island Community Outreach program. Healthy Sunday’s network provides preventative health screenings and education to members of the medically underserved communities on Long Island. Partnering with more than 35 parishes and community centers across Nassau and Suffolk, the initiative continues to grow offering the expertise of hundreds of CHS volunteers.

On June 19th Mercy Medical Center celebrated annual Cancer Survivor Day by hosting its fourth annual Cancer Survivor Day celebration. Over 75 cancer survivors and their families gathered at the St. Agnes Parish Center. This year’s keynote speaker was Ms. Jeannie Rettura, a 28 year Cancer Survivor and a member of the Adelphi New York State Breast Cancer Hotline and Support Program.
Mercy Medical Center marked National Cancer Survivors Day with its fourth annual gathering of former cancer patients and their families. This celebration was held on Thursday evening June 19th in the St. Agnes Parish Center. The featured guest speaker was Ms. Jeannie Rettura, a 28 year Breast Cancer survivor and a member of The Adelphi New York State Breast Cancer Hotline and Support Program.

Dr. Aaron Glatt, Executive Vice President and Chief Administrative Officer of Mercy Medical Center, welcomed the guests and shared the news of Mercy Medical Center receiving the 2013 National Outstanding Achievement Award from the American College of Surgeons Commission on Cancer. Mercy Medical Center is one of a select group of only 74 U.S. Health Care Facilities, and the only hospital on Long Island, to have earned this distinguished award for surveys performed for 2013. This designation demonstrates that Mercy Medical Center meets the highest national standards for state-of-the-art cancer prevention, early diagnosis, pre-treatment evaluation, staging, and optimal treatment, and rehabilitation, surveillance for recurrent disease, support services and end of life care.

A prayer service was offered by Seemi Ahmed, Chaplin at LIJ, Sr. Mary Aschenbach, Vice President of Pastoral Care at Mercy Medical Center and Rabbi Barry Dov Schwartz of Mercy Medical Center.

Dr. Kenneth Ng, Chairman of the Cancer Program at Mercy Medical Center graciously shared some remarks with the guests. He words were heartfelt and compassionate as he expressed his utmost admiration and congratulations to the survivors in attendance.

The 75 honored survivors and guests were treated to dinner and music. To celebrate and honor the survivors, Mercy Medical Center presented each with a keepsake necklace designed by Geraldine Lanzetta and donated by the foundation established in her memory, “For Always.” The evening festivities also included complimentary hand massages given by the Mercy ambassadors and the opportunity to win gift baskets donated by various departments from Mercy Medical Center.

Plans are already underway for 2015’s Survivor Day celebration taking place on Thursday, June 18th which will include a Mass celebrated in St. Agnes Cathedral.
Physical therapy plays a significant role in assisting patients with cancer. A physical therapist or a physical therapy assistant, is on site daily on the Cancer Unit 4N. Gait training is one of the key elements during these treatment sessions. Transfer training, therapeutic exercise, pain modulation and safety techniques for patients and their caregivers are also provided. In addition to treatment, patient and family education are provided.

Inpatient physical therapy and speech/language pathology services are available by request of the attending physician, and may be accessed by entering an order in the patient’s record. A consult may also be requested of a staff Physiatrist by writing an order in the patient’s record, or by calling extension 2633. Patients may be considered for comprehensive inpatient rehabilitation at Mercy Medical Center upon referral to the Physiatrist. Care Management is available to refer patients to skilled nursing facilities for restorative rehab services.

Outpatient physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech language pathology and physiatry services are available in Mercy Medical Center’s outpatient rehabilitation department located in the Lower Level of the Bishop Mcgann building. Appointments for these services may be made by calling 516.705.3772.
Mercy Medical Center is a proud participant in a worldwide clinical trial called the International Early Lung Cancer Action Program (I-ELCAP) since 2010. Early detection lung cancer screening utilizing low-dose CT scans assists doctors in finding early lung cancers, when they are small and still curable. According to IELCAP research, published in the New England Journal of Medicine in October 2006, over 80% of patients who have a lung cancer detected by CT screening can be cured. When the lung cancer is found early, and the patient receives treatment right away, the cure rate rises to 92%. Without early detection screening, over 95% of lung cancer patients eventually die from their lung cancer, usually within a few years of when they are diagnosed.

The Department of Imaging Services at Mercy Medical Center has screened over seven hundred forty (740) patients who are age 50 and over and have a 20 pack year history of smoking. Lung cancer was detected in six (6) patients. Two of these patients are now cancer free. The other four are currently finishing treatments including radiation and chemotherapy. Seventy eight (78) patients were recommended for a follow up. Eighteen received PET/CT Scans. Of these patients there was one cancer diagnosed. One (1) of these patients also went for a bronchoscopy which was negative for cancer.

Thirty eight (38) patients were given a 3 month follow up CT scan. Three (3) of these patients were given IV Contrast. One was determined to have cancer. Eleven of these patients were put on antibiotics and then scheduled for follow up scans. Two of these patients were recommended for biopsy.

Of the total number of patients three hundred forty three (343) patients returned for their annual follow up and a hundred twenty (120) returned for their year two follow up. Forty eight (48) returned for their third year follow up.

There have been numerous publications that document the findings of the I-ELCAP participants’ work. Among these findings:
Curability of Stage I lung cancers is 80-90%
Annual CT screening allows at least 80% of lung cancers to be diagnosed at clinical Stage I
CT screening creates a counseling opportunity that results in greater smoking cessation
CT screening also provides quantitative and prognostic information on emphysema and coronary artery calcifications
Research is ongoing, incorporating larger pools of patient data. This reaffirms early findings and offers suggestions of new directions for future research and recommendations. We at Mercy Medical Center will continue to monitor and report the results of this study as it evolves. With our state of the art CT scanners we are currently looking into expanding screening to other populations now that insurance companies recognize the value of early detection of lung cancer. This can only broaden the horizon for additional screening in other organs and eventually a final cure for the Big C.
Nurse Navigator
Jeanne Colamussi, RN CBPN-IC (Certified Breast Patient Navigator in Imaging & Cancer). Currently working in the Woman’s Imaging Center, assisting Radiologist and Breast Surgeons with Ultrasound Guided and Stereotactic Biopsies. My role as a Patient Navigator is to identify any barriers to care that a patient may have and help support and guide them through the continuum of Cancer care from diagnosis to survivorship.

Breast Imaging Navigator
Susan Coletta, R.T. (R) (M) CB-NI (Radiology, Mammography Certified Breast Imaging Navigator).
Sue has worked at Mercy Medical Centre since 2001, She started in the Radiology as clerical staff and advanced herself to working in the Woman’s Imaging Center as a Mammography Technologist and Patient Navigator

Spiritual Care

“There are only two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is a miracle.” (Albert Einstein)

By Sr. Mary Alice Aschenbach, VP Pastoral Care

It seems rather unique that such a scientist as Albert Einstein would speak about such an experience as a miracle. However, since one of the meanings of the word miracle is “a wonder, a marvel,” perhaps it is not so unique. An important part of spirituality is to learn to focus on the present, to take it in, to relish it, to stop and see the wonders and marvels (the miracles) around each of us. When one does this, one is nourished and energized and healing on many levels can occur. Spirituality teaches us that our inner spirit may also need healing, as well as our body. Our pastoral staff spent over 800 hours talking with our patients who had cancer and their families. We shared in the wonders and marvels that our patients experienced in life. The time spent often opened up the realization that for many – “everything is a miracle;” for that seemed to be how our patients and families were living their lives. And so we encourage all to live life “as though everything is a miracle.” We had the privilege of hearing 1150 patients speak of the miracles in their lives.
ACCESSION REPORT - 2013

1106 Patients Accessioned
410 Analytical Cases
696 Non-Analytical Cases
The Cancer Committee guides the cancer related activities of Mercy Medical Center; a multidisciplinary group of physicians and health care professionals.

Cancer Committee Members 2014

Physician Members

Kenneth Ng, MD Chairman
Mohammed F. Ali, MD Medical Oncology/Cancer Conference Coordinator
Arlyn Apollo, MD Medical Oncology/Cancer Liaison Physician
Pamela Drullinsky, MD Medical Oncology/ Coordinator Quality of Cancer Registry Data
Richard Gewanter, MD Radiation Oncology/ Cancer Conference Coordinator
Gary Herzog, MD Radiology
Rosemary Purrazzella, MD Pathology
Muhammad Ramzan, MD Internal Medicine/Palliative Care
Perry Stein, MD Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation
Eric Thall, MD Urology

Non-Physician Members

Sr. M.A Aschenbach Director of Pastoral Care
Pat Amoroso, RN Nursing Education
Dawn Tropeano American Cancer Society
Jeannie Colamussi, RN Patient Navigator/Clinical Research Coordinator
Karen Cunningham, MA, RD, CDN Director of Food & Nutrition Services
Kathleen Fee Director of Volunteer Services
Maggie Glier, RN, BSN,MHA Director of Nursing, Oncology Nursing
Joseph Lanzetta Community Outreach Coordinator
Dympna Idone, RHIA, CCS-P, CTR Assistant Director-Health Information Management
Kathleen Kennedy, MS, RT®,(CQ) Senior Director of Imaging & Physician Support Services
Kathleen Linehan, RN Quality Improvement Coordinator
Mark Macchia R. PH. Pharmacy
Therese McCormack, RHIT, CCS Director of HIM
Katarzyna Gruner, RN Cancer Program Administrator
Ann Alter, CTR Cancer Program Coordinator
Pam Stengel, NPP, MS Oncology Nursing
Beth Vlahavas, RN, MSN Behavioral Health
Vice President of Patient Care Services/Chief Nursing Officer