

2020 Annual Report

February, 2021

COVID's Effects on Cancer

The American Cancer Society just released its 2021 Cancer Facts and Figures report. They estimate that new cancer cases will be just under 1.9 million this year, and this does not account for the impact of COVID because the data is extrapolated from 2018 and 2019.

The report indicates that COVID indeed had a negative effect on the cancer community, specifically in reducing access to care, delays in screening and diagnosis, as well as the postponement of treatment. All of these factors, the ACS notes, are likely to result in later stage cancer diagnoses as well as increases in preventable cancer deaths. The full impact will not be realized for years to come.

Cancer Support Team and its Westchester community health care partners have seen evidence of this impact already. We hear anecdotally that last year, mammograms, colonoscopies and other testing was way down, even when facilities reopened. In addition to fear of getting the disease, loss of a job and health insurance was also a reason why individuals put off getting tested.

It is no surprise therefore that CST's patient count for 2020 is down from 2019 levels. However,

CST still assisted 608 patients and families last year, and while our in-person visits were lower, our telemedicine visits were way up. All told, our clinical staff conducted 3,799 "visits" with our patients. CST's volunteer drivers made 655 trips taking patients to life-saving treatments, and our financial assistance program gave over \$51,000 with 168 separate grants.

The other good news is that despite the pandemic, donors were very generous to our cause. Though we held no in-person events, our *#GivingTuesdayNow* virtual fundraiser in May as well as the telethon-style *Progress and Promise* held last fall brought in over \$140,000. In addition, CST secured two new grants. We are so grateful to everyone who helped us help cancer patients and their families, especially this past year, when so many had so much need.

For a good view of how all the dollars raised were spent, please look at the pages within this newsletter. It has been a challenging but very rewarding year as you will see.

With much appreciation and sincere thanks,
Tania Weiss

OUR IMPACT IN 2020



608

patients served



3,799

patient visits
including virtual visits



655

trips to life-saving
treatments



\$140,000

raised through
virtual fundraisers

NURSING AT ITS BEST

By training, nurses are educators, and CST nurses who specialize in oncology certainly have a lot to teach -- from the language of cancer, to dealing with side effects, to managing anxiety and fear. "This year our nurses have been needed more than ever," says Elish McGrath, RN and CST's Director of Patient Services. "The pandemic added an additional layer of confusion and stress to an already stressful situation."

As a licensed home health care agency, CST nurses normally visit patients in person at home or in the community. "In-person visits were pretty challenging this year, especially when the COVID case numbers were high. So, we moved to telemedicine using Facetime or Skype," McGrath adds, "while technology is helpful. It is not the same. It is hard to build trust and rapport over the computer or phone."

Despite the obstacles, in 2020 CST nurses made over 2,300 visits, to nearly 450 patients, most



Nurse Patty Vaughn makes patient delivery

electronically. They distributed 78 Chemo Comfort Kits to patients undergoing chemotherapy and made over 110 referrals to community partners helping patients in many different ways: finding free wigs, online yoga and meditation classes, meal deliveries, and grants for financial assistance, to name just a few.

"We are counselors, advocates, and partners," says McGrath. "Sometimes what we do best is listen. Our patients know we are there for them, and have their best interests top of mind. This is nursing at its best."



**2,300 NURSING VISITS, TO NEARLY
450 PATIENTS, MOST ELECTRONICALLY**

CASE MANAGEMENT & SOCIAL WORK

"It is hard to focus on healing when you are not sure how to pay the rent," says Celina Duran, CST's case manager. "This past year many patients needed help dealing with the economic fallout from the pandemic as well as dealing with their cancer."

"COVID added a lot of emotional trauma as well," adds Judy Delehanty, CST's social worker. "Being in quarantine, separated from family and friends, also fear of getting the disease. This made having cancer all the more challenging."

An essential part of CST services is assisting patients

with both the financial and emotional issues that often accompany a cancer diagnosis. Though one-on-one counseling was often done over the computer, and benefit applications completed by telephone, our professional staff made sure that CST patients got the help they needed.

"Enhancing the lives of cancer patients, that's what we do," says Delehanty. "And we do not do it just because it is CST's mission, we do it because we are personally dedicated to making their lives better in whatever way we can."

SNAPSHOT OF LAST YEAR:

60

received
one-on-one
social work
counseling

104

worked with
CST's case
manager

17

legal & pooled
trust assistance
referrals

70

discussed
Medicaid and
how to apply

38

learned about
Social Security
disability
benefits

30

had help
with SNAP
(Food Stamps)

150

community
partner
referrals

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE GRANTS

Having cancer is never easy. Having cancer in the middle of a world-wide pandemic with enormous economic ramifications is so much harder. To say 2020 was challenging for cancer patients is an understatement.

THE NUMBERS TELL PART OF THE STORY

168

grants provided to
financially needy
patients

140 grants distributed in 2019.

20%

\$51,231

total amount
distributed

\$35,291 total distributed in 2019.

45%

"The increased need was apparent almost immediately," comments Tania Weiss, CST's executive director. "We received so many applications where the patient and family had no income whatsoever because of layoffs or having to stop working due to the fear of getting COVID while having cancer."

In early 2020, CST raised the amount given per applicant up to \$500. "We also looked for additional funding," notes Weiss. Soul Ryeders and Miles of Hope have underwritten a large part of CST's financial grant program for many years. "They've been very generous, but we knew this year we'd need more help."

Last fall, CST received two new grants to be used for

cancer patients in financial need. Old Oaks Country Club Foundation gave CST a \$15,000 grant, and the Community Fund of Bronxville, Eastchester and Tuckahoe gave CST an additional \$10,000 grant to be used to assist not only patients who reside in the BET area but also in the neighboring communities of Mt. Vernon and Yonkers as well.

"Even with the new funding, we always rely on donations from our individual donors," says Weiss. "Those gifts help ensure we have the funds available to donate to every cancer patient who needs a financial assistance grant." Adds Weiss, "Those donors deserve our recognition as well, and we know we will need everyone to be very generous again in 2021 because the pandemic is not going away anytime soon."

FINANCIAL GRANTS BREAKDOWN



77
household
bills



31
medical bills
& co-pays



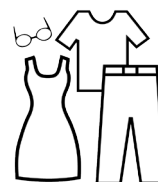
18
food & nutritional
supplements,
transportation
(outside CST area)



17
housing
& utilities



14
other (equipment,
childcare, life
alert, etc.)



11
personal
items &
garments

NEW NURSES JOIN CANCER SUPPORT TEAM

Last December, CST welcomed two new registered nurses -- Frances Glynn who replaced a long-time RN who retired, and Caridad Aponte who replaced CST's bilingual nurse. They both shared some thoughts with CST's executive director, Tania Weiss about why they wanted to join the Team.

Weiss: Let us start with how you both got involved in nursing?

Glynn: I felt that I wanted to do something where I worked with people. I loved science. My aunt was a nurse; and I have two sisters that are nurses; nursing is in the family.

Aponte: I was asked by a neighbor to take care of his sisters who never married and lived alone. He had asked that I just keep an eye on them since I lived in the same building. That was how I realized I was pretty good at being hands on, and I enjoyed it. After they died, I became a nursing assistant, and my nursing passion grew even more. Then I became a nurse, got my degrees, and eventually that led to me being here today.

Weiss: You've both been in the nursing field for over 20 years. What experiences have shaped you?



Frances Glynn, BSN
CST Registered Nurse

my family, I went into home care, and soon after I was recruited by an assisted living facility. That was a great experience working with the families, working with the residents, but I always felt oncology was my place. That's where I belonged.

Glynn: My first nursing job was on an oncology unit here in Westchester at St. Agnes Hospital many years ago. I worked on the oncology Bone Marrow-STEM Cell Transplant Unit. From there, I went to Memorial Sloan Kettering, where I worked in GI medicine. After having



Caridad Aponte, BSN
CST Registered Nurse

Aponte: My brother died of lung cancer. So, I have first-hand knowledge of what families go through. My most recent nursing experience was doing case management for worker's compensation patients -- being an advocate for them. I am a nurturer and whether it is an accident or cancer, nurturing remains the same. I am now learning a little bit more about the cancer disease process, the treatment options, the effects on a patient's psyche. My passion in understanding disease is the psychological component. And I find that I am very comfortable with having that conversation.

Weiss: What attracted you to CST?

Glynn: There's so much that happens outside the clinic and hospital, and the families and patients will often feel lost and overwhelmed. I hope to bring my patients comfort, support, knowledge. I hope to advocate for them. I hope to assist them in any way possible -- them and their loved ones, throughout the cancer journey. When I saw the ad for CST, it was like my gosh, what a beautiful, amazing thing that's happening there. I knew I wanted to be part of it.

Aponte: I believe that disease is cured with a holistic approach, and the family is part of that -- a support tool. When you know you are loved, it just affects everything. I want to make sure our patients feel that. I am just a passionate person; I'm very empathetic, and I bring that to the Cancer Support Team, but then again, I don't necessarily need to have it because it's contagious. Everybody here at CST is literally very, very empathetic - not only to the patients, but to the mission of Cancer Support Team.

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Choose Cancer Support Team as your charity.
Then each time you shop, we will receive a small donation.

Thank you!

A VOLUNTEER DRIVER STORY

If it is the first or third Wednesday of the month, chances are good that Terry Hourigan, a CST volunteer driver, is waiting outside Michael's apartment in Mt. Vernon. He is there at 11 AM sharp to take Michael to his chemotherapy appointment.



Terry Hourigan, CST Volunteer Driver

"I worked in homecare nursing for cancer and AIDS patients over nineteen years," says Terry. "As a cancer survivor myself, I can understand what many patients are experiencing. Empathy that comes from experience can be offered with surprising ease. I've learned people in distress can always use more." Despite bad weather, or now even the COVID

pandemic, Terry has been Michael's driver for three years already. "He needs the help, as all of our patients do."

When the pandemic first started, CST had to put protocols in place to keep both the driver and patient as safe as possible. Though some volunteers decided to stop driving for a few months, last year CST was still able to provide 655 rides to nearly 40 patients. Quite a remarkable achievement. CST recognizes the dedication of volunteers like Terry and wants all who volunteered to drive to know just how much their help is appreciated and needed.

CST Spring Giving Day

watch for details

CST FUNDRAISING GOES VIRTUAL

Cancer Support Team knew it had to do something last year to raise greatly needed funds. With the pandemic, the agency had to cancel not only the spring gala but the annual fall educational luncheon as well.

So, CST decided to produce a telethon-style virtual event. This proved a huge success. Many watched the live online program to learn more about cancer treatments today and in the future from two world-renowned researcher/oncologists, Dr. Elizabeth Comen from Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center and Dr. Richard Carvajal from the Columbia University Herbert Irving Comprehensive Cancer Center.

The event included videos and patient testimonials, live segments showed staff members manning the phones as well as a thermometer and scrolling wall of donor names. "We set a high goal for the night, and prayed," says Phil Orlando, an advisory board member and one of the co-hosts of the night.



Tania Weiss, CST Executive Director and Phil Orlando, CST Advisory Board Member

"We were thrilled when we hit our \$100,000 goal just seconds before going off the air," adds Tania Weiss, CST's executive director and the other co-host.

"There were over 220 donations ranging from \$25 to \$10,000," Weiss continues. "We are so grateful to each and every person who helped us. This truly was a Team effort!"

HEARTFELT THANKS TO OUR 2020 DONORS

Cancer Support Team heartily thanks the many individuals, corporations, foundations and government agencies who support our services and programs through their generosity. Every effort has been made to ensure that names appear correctly in the appropriate donor category. In case of error or omission, please contact us at the CST office, 914-777-2777.

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