

Cancer a chronic — not terminal — condition

Florida Cancer Institute

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Although we don't have a cure for many types of cancer, medical research has provided us with a number of new modalities for controlling it, just as we now control other incurable conditions like diabetes and emphysema," observes Gerald J. Robbins, MD, of Florida Cancer Institute.

Dr. Robbins explains that in the 1960s and 1970s, physicians and researchers directed their efforts primarily toward the eradication of cancer cells.

"Surgery and radiation therapy still play an extremely important role in treating most cancers. Chemotherapy can also be used to effect a cure," notes Dr. Robbins. "Hodgkin's disease, non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, certain leukemias, and testicular cancer can be successfully treated with chemotherapy, but many cancers — breast cancer and lung cancer are good examples — cannot."

Part of the problem, says Dr. Robbins, is in the very nature of chemotherapy.

Chemotherapy selectively targets and destroys fast-growing cells, and cancer grows rapidly.

"The problem is that many normal cells also grow rapidly," informs Dr. Robbins. "Blood cells, hair cells, and cells in the digestive system are replaced daily, and these cells

Researchers are now studying how these abnormal cells sustain and replicate themselves. Their findings are leading to the development of new medications that interrupt cancer cells' essential functions and prevent tumor growth.

"We have controlled breast cancer for decades with hormonal manipulation using tamoxifen and aromatase inhibitors that prevent cancer cell growth," points out Dr. Robbins. "The idea of controlling cancer by blocking its growth factors isn't new, but research into this area is becoming increasingly important."

Medications have been developed that block a tumor's ability to form blood vessels. If a tumor cannot form blood vessels, it will not be able to receive nutrients that are delivered through the bloodstream. Without these nutrients, the tumor can't grow.

Studies are also being directed into the mechanism of *apoptosis*, the natural process by which cells age and die. Some types of cancer develop because this process is somehow interrupted, causing mu-

tant cells to remain viable and displace new, healthy cells. "These treatments selectively target the physiology of cancer cells," emphasizes Dr. Robbins, "and they don't have the same side effects on the rest of body that people usually associate with chemotherapy."

"Basic scientific research like this doesn't often make headlines," he acknowledges, "but this is the core of eventually finding a cure. The more we can learn about how cancer works, the more we will be able to control it, prolonging people's lives and increasing the quality of their lives." **FHCN—Billie S. Noakes**

Your hometown team ...

The oncologists at Florida Cancer Institute welcome questions regarding the newest advances in cancer care. For further information, call the institute, located at 8763 River Crossing Blvd. in New Port Richey, (727) 842-8411, or at 13906 Lakeshore Blvd., Suite 330, in Hudson, (727) 863-8563. You may fax questions to (727) 847-2923.

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too are destroyed by chemotherapy, leading to hair loss, low blood counts, and a host of gastrointestinal maladies."

A new approach

Dr. Robbins reminds that cancer is, quite simply, the disordered growth of defective cells. Left untreated, these cells enlarge and crowd out normal cells until the mutant cells overtake entire organs or divert nutrients intended for normal cells. Eventually, the body can no longer function.

The staff of Florida Cancer Institute invite you to visit their website at www.floridacancerinstitute.us.



Gerald J. Robbins, MD, is board certified in medical oncology, hematology, and internal medicine. He received his undergraduate education at the State University of New York, New Paltz, and earned his medical degree at the Medical College of Virginia, Richmond. He completed a residency in internal medicine and a fellowship in hematology and oncology at the University of Connecticut, Farmington, and served as Assistant Professor of Clinical Medicine at Eastern Virginia Medical School. Dr. Robbins holds staff privileges at Regional Medical Center (Bayonet Point, Brooksville Regional Hospital, Community Hospital of New Port Richey, North Bay Hospital, Oak Hill Hospital, Morton Plant Mease Health Care), Countryside, and Spring Hill Regional Hospital. His professional associations include the American Society of Clinical Oncology, American Society of Hematology, American College of Physicians, FLASCO, American Cancer Society, American Medical Association, European Society of Medical Oncology, American Society of Therapeutic Radiology, and Internet Society of Geriatric Oncology. He also serves on the board of directors for the American Cancer Society and hosts "Cancer Connections," a weekly radio talk show on WGUL 860AM and 106.3FM.

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Mammography helps protect breast health

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month, and it's a perfect reason for women, especially women over 40 years of age, to schedule a mammogram," suggests board-certified radiologist William L. Nyman, MD, of Radiology Associates of West Pasco.

The American Cancer Society estimates that more than 21,000 women will be diagnosed with breast cancer in 2006.

Currently, mammography is the best way doctors have of detecting breast cancer in its earliest stage, when it is most curable.

"Simply put, a mammogram helps us to save lives," says Dr. Nyman. "If we can detect cancer before it becomes a palpable lesion in the breast, we can begin treatment earlier and use modalities that are less disruptive of a woman's lifestyle. This results in prolonged lives and a higher quality of life for women living with breast cancer."

Dr. Nyman explains that annual mammography for women over 40 years of age is important because benign and malignant structures can have a very similar appearance on mammograms. Some early lesions may only be detected by the observation of

subtle changes in the mammogram from year to year.

"For this reason, women should consider developing a relationship with a reliable imaging center where their records will be maintained and available each successive year," suggests Dr. Nyman. "If an imaging center closes its doors or no longer offers mammography, or if a woman moves to a new commu-

nity or selects a new imaging center, it may be difficult to acquire these images later for important comparisons. Women should remember to obtain their mammograms and medical records and bring this important information to their imaging center of choice." Radiology Associates of West Pasco is well established in the community and offers an excellent choice for ensuring long-term availability of women's images and records.



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October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month

Protect your health — schedule your annual mammogram

Remember: You should avoid using underarm powders, antiperspirants, and deodorants when you have your mammogram. Powder may resemble breast calcification on these images, and antiperspirants and deodorants can cloud delicate imaging films.

For information, please call (727) 847-5122

Dr. Nyman adds that Radiology Associates is accredited by The American College of Radiology, which sets high standards for everything from patient care to the training and continuing education of the radiologists and staff, the maintenance and calibration of the imaging equipment itself, as well as the storage of records and images.

This assures women of the highest-quality images, gathered by skilled technologists and interpreted by highly trained radiologists.

"Mammography is not always definitive in detecting breast cancer," reminds Dr. Nyman, "and a woman can aid in detection by being diligent

about performing regular breast self-examinations.

"Women's breasts change during the month. Both mammography and breast self-exams should be performed just after a woman's menstrual cycle starts," he informs, "because many benign lumps form in breast tissue before a woman's period and may diminish naturally afterward."

"When women take an active role in performing self examination and scheduling their annual mammograms, it increases our chances of identifying early lesions that were completely undetectable before this tool was developed. Radiology Associates of West Pasco will continue to make this important test available to the women in our community." **FHCN—Billie S. Noakes**

William L. Nyman, MD, is board certified in diagnostic radiology by the American Board of Radiology. He completed his undergraduate studies at Wayne State University, Detroit, MI, and received his medical degree at Michigan State University, East Lansing. Dr. Nyman completed his residency in diagnostic radiology at William Beaumont Hospital, Royal Oak, MI, and a fellowship in angiography and interventional radiology at Louisiana State University, New Orleans. Dr. Nyman is a partner in Radiology Associates of West Pasco and is affiliated with Regional Medical Center, Bayonet Point.