Oncology & Hematology Specialists, P.A.

OHS’s New Mountain Lakes Location Provides Supportive & Integrated Care

With opening of OHS’ two-floor offices in Mountain Lakes, the practice continues its long tradition of providing patient-centered medical care with the most current treatment protocols, while integrating holistic therapies designed to support the whole person. “From the moment a patient walks in the door, we want him or her to feel the personal touch that permeates our whole practice,” Dr. Farah Bari explained. When OHS’ lease at its Denville office was set to expire, it gave the practice the opportunity to do “what we do so well,” which is to make patients feel that “it’s all about them.” The Mountain Lakes office was designed with an eye toward alleviating patient stress and anxiety.

One of the major changes that the practice made was eliminating the traditional consultation offices with desks, computers and chairs and replacing them with comfortable chairs and sofas, like a living room, so that the patient, caregivers, and the physician could have a conversation without any distractions. Upon arrival to the practice, new patients are greeted by the patient navigator and brought directly to the consultation room. The patient navigator will help the patient complete new patient intake forms and share information about the practice and the physicians.

The physician then joins the patient for the initial consultation. During that meeting, the patient navigator will take notes so that the physician can have a face-to-face conversation about the diagnosis and treatment plan. Dr. Bari believes that this approach allows the patient to begin to bond with, and trust, his or her doctor, and it allows for better communication and understanding among the patient, caregivers and the physician. OHS’ physicians routinely give their patients their cell phone numbers. “If patients feel comfortable calling or texting as soon as he or she has a problem, we achieve better outcomes. We can address an issue quickly and hopefully avoid a trip to the emergency room,” Dr. Bari said.

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DigniCap® Scalp Cooling System Helps Cancer Patients Save their Hair

Women receiving chemotherapy for breast or other cancers say that one of the hardest things about treatment is hair loss. Breast cancer patients lose a huge part of their feminine identity as a result of breast surgery, and hair loss can add to their devastation and grief. With hair loss comes the understanding that they are really sick, which not only can impact their mental and emotional health, but also that of their partners, children and family. It can be quite disconcerting, or even frightening, for family members to see a person whom they have known to look a certain way, without hair, looking unwell.

With the introduction of the DigniCap® Intelligent Scalp Cooling System, available at On-
New Office (Continued from Page 1)

The practice also designed a bright and airy infusion room and spacious laboratory to minimize, to the extent possible, the patients’ exposure to the “medical side” of treatment. “We want all of the spaces to be as warm and welcoming as possible.” On the second floor, there is a yoga and meditation room, as well as two treatment rooms for massage and Reiki therapy. OHS provides meditation and yoga classes at no charge to patients, funded by its charitable foundation.

A cosmetologist is slated to join OHS to provide nail and hair services, as well as mini-facials, to patients. Dr. Bari recognized that female cancer patients, in particular, often experience a loss of their self-esteem and feminine identity due to side effects from chemotherapy, such as hair loss and nail loss or discoloration. This is the reason that OHS was the first practice in New Jersey to offer the DigniCap® Intelligent Scalp Cooling System. These additional services are meant to make patients’ lives easier during a difficult time.

In the coming weeks and months, OHS plans to bring additional therapies, such as art therapy and music therapy for patients, as well as to expand its in-house pharmacy. Dr. Bari hopes that with this move and expansion, the practice will be set for years to come, providing patient-centered medical care with a personal touch.

DigniCap® Saves Patients Hair (Continued from Page 1)

However, Karen brought an electric blanket with her, which helped. “I just had to grin and bear it,” Karen said.

Karen also pointed out that she needed to treat her hair “gingerly,” while in treatment. She used a gentle shampoo only twice per week and could not blow-dry or use any other styling appliances. She slept on a silk pillowcase to minimize hair shedding. While she did lose some hair, particularly in spots where the cap did not completely cover her head, she does not regret her decision. She kept at least 50% of her hair. “I am so happy that I did it.” When she was done with therapy, her hair grew back quickly and just as thick – in about two months. Without DigniCap®, it can take up to a year for patients to grow their hair following chemotherapy.

DigniCap® being used during infusion.
(www.dignicap.com)
OHS Welcomes Christie Oakes, Patient Navigator

In July 2017, Christie Oakes joined OHS as a Patient Navigator, a role designed to ensure that new patients of the practice have a single point of contact to answer non-medical questions or concerns. Christie works to decrease new patients’ anxiety and support them as they go through their treatment. Though not a clinician, Christie is uniquely positioned for this role, as she is a breast cancer survivor and an OHS patient, as well.

Christie was diagnosed at age 36 with hormone receptor negative, HER2 positive breast cancer in 2015. Christie also tested positive for the BRCA2 gene mutation. Christie had a bilateral mastectomy and reconstruction, chemotherapy and immunotherapy. She also chose to have her ovaries removed. She did not collect her eggs because she did not want to run the risk of passing the BRCA2 mutation on to her own children. “There are plenty of children in the world to adopt,” she said, “if life takes me in that direction.” Christie is able to support new patients because she has gone through the treatment herself. She shares her story and offers insight based on her experiences. She understands what it is like to feel sick from chemotherapy or to experience neuropathy. She knows what it’s like to lose her hair or to not want to eat anything. “When you’re on chemo,” she counsels, “you can have the diet you want.” Most importantly, she listens to patients; she’s a shoulder to lean or cry on. She describes herself as a “big hugger.”

Christie sits in on new patient consultations, if the patient does not object, and take notes so that the doctors can talk to the patient directly without the computer’s distraction. She guides patients through their labs if tests are ordered. She assists patients in making follow-up appointments. She checks in with patients to ensure that additional diagnostic tests or screenings are scheduled and completed. Christie describes herself as a “patient concierge.” She loves her new job. “Life is short. We need to be happy.” She is happy to share her experience and help patients “feel that they are always taken care of.”

OHS Offers Enhanced Genetic Screening for Hereditary Cancers

Why one person develops cancer and another doesn’t isn’t always known. Research has shown that certain risk factors may increase a person’s chances for developing cancer, such as exposure to certain chemicals, tobacco use, age and family history.

Oncology & Hematology Specialists, P.A. has joined with Myriad Laboratories to enhance its hereditary cancer-screening program. OHS is evaluating the personal and family medical history of each new patient to assess if the patient meets the criteria for the program. Red flags may include multiple cancers on the same side of the family, any one cancer diagnosed at age 50 or younger or a rare cancer such as ovarian or male breast cancer at any age.

If an OHS physician determines that a patient may be at risk for hereditary cancer, according to guidelines set by the National Comprehensive Cancer Network and United States Preventive Services Task Force, the patient will be offered the opportunity to undergo genetic education through Myriad, and genetic testing, using Myriad’s myRisk Hereditary Cancer test. This test detects mutations in genes associated with an increased risk in breast, ovarian, pancreatic, prostate, endometrial, colon, gastric and melanoma cancers. Patients who previously tested negative for Brca1 and Brca2 mutations are likely candidates for the remainder of the Hereditary Cancer Panel.

The test results usually are available in less than two weeks and allow patients and their families to make informed choices about their care. Individuals found to have hereditary cancer or cancer predisposition are candidates for increased surveillance and prevention options.

(Article by Christine Corrigan)
OHS now offers three wellness programs, at no charge to patients, funded through its charitable foundation - Meditation, Yoga for Healing, and Healing Touch therapeutic massage. These programs are provided by Betsy Aiello Sanders. Betsy is certified in Meditation, Yoga, and Healing Touch and is a Third Degree Reiki Master.

By meditating, patients and caregivers have an opportunity to quiet and nourish the mind, body and soul, which can help them achieve peace in the midst of medical treatment. Meditation can encourage and develop concentration, clarity, and emotional positivity. Likewise, Yoga for Healing can increase range of motion and flexibility, manage pain, and control weight gain and improve body image.

Through Healing Touch, Betsy offers 15 to 20 minutes of light, therapeutic massage while patients are receiving chemotherapy. One session is the equivalent of three hours sleep. During Healing Touch massage, Betsy may use essential oils, such as frankincense and lavender, as well as coconut oil or shea butter. The massage may result in increased blood circulation, decreased inflammation, and may strengthen the immune system. In addition, Betsy offers a guided meditation, Yoga Nidra or "yogic sleep," which is the equivalent of eight hours sleep, as well as Reiki, a healing energy modality.

Meditation, Yoga for Healing and Healing Touch offer patients a way to reduce anxiety and fears, lower blood pressure, calm the nervous system, boost serotonin levels, improve sleep and promote healing.

(Article by Christine Corrigan)