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UPCOMING GOLD GATHERING

Living with Neuropathy

Friday, May 10
4:00–5:30 p.m.

Gynecologic oncologist Dr. Peter Argenta will talk about the challenges of living with neuropathy, treatment options and new research.

717 Delaware Building
Room 105

717 Delaware Street SE
Minneapolis, MN, 55414

Parking at the Oak Street Ramp will be validated.

Please RSVP by May 1
goldMN@umn.edu

Cancer Survivorship Conference on May 11

This FREE conference focuses on maintaining wellness. Survivors and their support system will learn how to better advocate for themselves. Register ahead of time: z.umn.edu/4811

Happy Spring!

I would like to thank you all for your continued participation in this study. We are in the process of writing up the first research summaries (papers) of the data and I am happy to share some preliminary results with you. We are learning a lot. For one, we found that about 1 out of 5 women with gynecologic cancers report symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). This is similar to what has been found in other cancers. A cancer diagnosis can evoke a strong emotional reaction and may be experienced as a traumatic stressor. However, clinics do not routinely screen cancer patients for PTSD symptoms. We are hoping these data can help change clinical practice.

We have heard from some of you that are doing really well questioning whether you should continue to be part of the study. We absolutely want and need your responses. Our goal is describe the range of experiences of individuals diagnosed with gynecologic cancers. Based on the surveys there are many people who have numerous



long-term emotional and physical effects from their cancer, and many who do not have negative effects. This is an important finding and we hope to determine risk factors for some symptoms like significant emotional distress or tingling in hands/feet (neuropathy), which we can only do if we have people in the study with and without symptoms.

Be well,

Rachel Vogel, Ph.D.

Principal Investigator



Choose a Support Group that Fits You

Support groups can have many benefits. You may feel better about yourself, find a new life focus, have better pain control, make new friends, improve your mood, cope better with your cancer, learn more about cancer, and better deal with the needs of others in your life.

Support groups can:

- Give you a chance to talk about your feelings and work through them
- Help you deal with practical problems, such as getting to or from doctor visits, or problems at work or school
- Help you cope with side effects of treatment

The number one reason people join a support group is to be with other people who have “been there”—not because they do not receive support from friends and family. Some research shows that joining a specific type of support group improves quality of life and enhances survival.

Is a support group right for you?

For some people, hearing about others' problems can make them feel worse. “I went to the [group] meetings for a while,” one woman reports. “I would come out and be so depressed. Why? Because you think you're sick, and you hear the stories; they're like horror stories. I cried enough at home, and I didn't want to go to a group and cry more.”

Could a support group help you? If you answer yes to most of the questions that follow, you may want to try one out. To find groups that meet near you, ask your doctor, nurse, social worker, or local cancer organization.

- Do you enjoy being part of a group?
- Are you ready to talk about your feelings with others?



- Do you want to hear others' stories about their cancers?
- Would you like the advice of others who have gone through cancer treatment?
- Do you have helpful advice or hints to offer others?
- Would reaching out to support other cancer survivors make you feel better?
- Would you be able to work with people who have different ways of dealing with cancer issues?
- Do you want to learn more about cancer and post-treatment issues?

Choosing a support group

If you are thinking about joining a support group, here are some questions you may want to ask the group's contact person:

- How large is the group?
- Who attends (survivors, family members, types of cancer, age range)?
- How long are the meetings?
- How often does the group meet?
- How long has the group been together?
- Who leads the meetings: a professional or a survivor?
- What is the format of the meetings?

- Is the main purpose to share feelings, or do people also offer tips to solve common problems?

If you are not happy with a support group you join, you may want to try finding another group with different members or concerns. Support groups vary greatly, and one bad experience doesn't mean they are not a good option for you.

If a support group does not interest you, think about finding another cancer survivor with whom you can discuss your cancer experience. Many organizations can pair you with someone who had your type of cancer and is close to your age and background.

Source: National Cancer Institute, Facing Forward Series: Life After Cancer

Minnesota Support Groups

- [Gynecological Cancer Support Group in St. Paul](#)
- [Minnesota Ovarian Cancer Alliance \(MOCA\)](#)
- [BRCA Group](#)
- [Gilda's Club](#)