

2021 Chairman's Report

Focusing on the Future

Despite the challenges of two Covid surges in 2021, the University of TN Medical Center Cancer Institute continued to maintain access, capacity, and innovation for those with a cancer diagnosis. The Cancer Institute and hospital leaders supported and encouraged the pursuit of new therapies and multidisciplinary approaches to cancer care. As a Cancer Center, we are transitioning into 2022 with a focus on new and innovative therapies, an emphasis on wellness and personal health, and continuing to encourage reengagement with cancer screening.

One of the most impactful additions to the Cancer Center in 2021 was the opening of the Transplant and



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Cellular Therapy Program lead by Drs. Kelly McCaul and Renju Raj. This program reintroduced bone marrow transplant services back to our region. The cellular therapy team has been actively treating individuals with leukemia, lymphoma, amyloidosis, and other diagnoses that need cell-based therapies. Prior to this program, most individuals had to travel to other cities for these transplants often requiring weeks away from home and family. The cellular therapy team is actively pursuing more advanced therapies that may help treat cancers beyond leukemia and lymphoma including the ability to treat tumors with an individual's own immune system using cells called Tumor Infiltrating Lymphocytes (TILs). This therapeutic approach provides an alternate route to treat tumors especially when first line chemotherapies and immunotherapies are not effective. The Transplant and Cellular Therapy Program will have an increasing impact on our community and will allow individuals from our region to stay closer to home for their cancer treatments.

Many in our community and health care organizations have recognized that one of the impacts of the Covid pandemic was and is the worsening and neglect of individual health and wellness. For many, the concern for exposure, busy emergency rooms, and challenges accessing health care resulted in cancer screening appointments being missed, annual physical exams postponed, and the focus on mental health diminished. As we transition to 2022, it is increasingly evident that individuals need to resume cancer screening exams. For most cancers, early detection results in a high percentage of cure. Further, early detection identifies cancers when fewer treatment modalities are needed to achieve a cure.

The University of Tennessee Medical Center

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CANCER INSTITUTE

An increasing number of health care publications are reporting that cancer screening has decreased over the last two years and more individuals are presenting with advanced cancers. At the University of TN Medical Center, we offer screening for many cancers including breast cancer, colon cancer, prostate cancer, lung cancer, cervix cancer, skin cancer, and liver cancers. Additionally, reengaging your primary care provider for an annual physical exam will also include blood tests and urine tests that can further screen for potential abnormalities.

Many individuals have also reported feeling worsening symptoms of stress, isolation and a disconnect from their community. The Cancer Institute offers an Integrative Health program to help and assist individuals struggling with a cancer diagnosis as well as symptoms of stress, anxiety, and isolation. Let us move into 2022 with a goal to value and prioritize our physical and mental health including reconnecting with your health care team.

On a final thought, one of the impacts of the pandemic was the financial stress and hardship for many, especially those working in industries that relied on travel, in-person events, and entertainment. We have observed an increasing number of individuals struggling to provide food for their themselves and their families, afford travel to their cancer treatment appointments, and afford the treatments themselves. The Cancer Institute offers several funds that help support those in need. For example, The Stephen's Gift Fund is dedicated to those in need of food and transportation especially during their cancer treatments. Consider donating to this fund or other Cancer Institute specific funds which allow us to continue to care individuals beyond their cancer treatments. Consider volunteering at the Cancer Institute or supporting a neighbor, church member, colleague, family member as they navigate the journey towards a cancer cure.

Above all, prioritize the importance of your own health and wellness.

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