Nurse navigators are the “angels” of the Hartford HealthCare Cancer Institute. That’s the term many of the Institute’s patients use to describe the team of nurse navigators who strive to make their patients’ experience as seamless and stress-free as possible. The navigation team is in many ways the human face of the Institute, welcoming patients when they first arrive for treatment and staying by their side throughout their journey of care. Navigators assist patients at each of the five cancer center campuses across the Institute, combining clinical expertise with compassion and empathy.

When Anne Pappalardo’s husband, Ralph Pappalardo, was recently diagnosed with oral cancer, the couple felt lost and fearful about how to begin the treatment process. But as soon as they met Erin Mangan, RN, the nurse navigator at the Helen & Harry Gray Cancer Center at Hartford Hospital who was assigned to manage Ralph’s care, their anxieties began to ease. “I don’t know what we would do without her,” said Anne. “Erin is our ‘go-to’ person. She makes things happen faster, has coordinated referrals to other professionals, is able to answer all of our medical questions, and also offers emotional support. I know I can call her at any time, and she is there for us.”

Partnership a pioneering effort

Over the past several months, I have heard questions from many people across the Hartford HealthCare Cancer Institute about the status of our partnership with Memorial Sloan Kettering (MSK), particularly as it relates to the ongoing certification process.

The process began last fall and has proven to be rigorous and complex. It has centered around creating baseline data for the current state of care we provide, while developing a consistent standard across the Institute that will allow us to measure our improvement and give meaningful value to our alliance with MSK.

For months, teams of physicians from MSK have been working closely with our own physicians in the Cancer Institute to establish the baseline data. This attention to detail in this process demonstrates how the MSK/HHC partnership is designed to drive fundamental improvement at the caregiv-
er level. Really, it is a pioneering effort to incorporate the strengths of two vibrant organizations into a new and better model for delivering care.

The process of achieving MSK certification across all the five campuses of the HHC Cancer Institute has included assessments of 11 key cancer disciplines and six disease specialties. The partnership is accelerating the work of integration that has already begun to establish a single standard of care within the five campuses, thereby reducing variation and ensuring excellence across the spectrum of care.

Now that the programs offered across the HHC Cancer Institute have been carefully evaluated and analyzed, we are working to replicate best practice across each of the five individual campuses, and work with MSK to create and implement guidelines for care. Our collaboration with the MSK teams has been enormously productive and educational for all involved, and I strongly believe that both organizations will benefit enormously as a result of this process.

We are close to completing the certification process. I expect that our Institute will receive certification by the end of the summer, at which point the HHC Cancer Institute will officially become the first fully-certified member of the MSK Cancer Alliance. That will be an achievement we have all worked tremendously hard for, and for which we should all be extremely proud.

Donna Handley
Vice President of Operations, Hartford HealthCare Cancer Institute

Nurse navigators are there for patients, every step of the way

News from the Hartford HealthCare Cancer Institute

In this issue
- Nurse navigators: “Caring companions” of HHCCI
- Girl donates hats to cancer center
- Increasing accuracy in cancer care

See NURSE, page 6
Innovative researcher

Dr. Baselga is an internationally recognized physician-scientist with a special interest in translational and early clinical research as well as the identification of novel mechanisms of resistance to current cancer therapies. His laboratory research includes the development of novel molecularly targeted cancer therapies, with a special focus on breast cancer and therapeutic approaches to targeting the PI3K pathway. His work in the pre-clinical and early clinical development of therapies has helped introduce a number of new targeted agents, including trastuzumab and lapatinib. Recently, he led the early clinical development and pivotal clinical studies that resulted in approval by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration of two drugs for the treatment of breast cancer — pertuzumab for the treatment of patients with HER2-positive metastatic disease and everolimus for the treatment of advanced hormone-receptor-positive HER2-negative breast cancer.

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Our Nurse Navigators offer a warm welcome into a world of cancer care. They’ll talk you through difficult decisions. Schedule appointments. And literally hold your hand through your treatments, if it helps you feel more comfortable and confident. Noa and our team of Nurse Navigators are the friendly, familiar faces that connect all the cancer care and expertise offered by the Hartford HealthCare Cancer Institute — five cancer centers collaborating to make the most advanced cancer care even more effective...but never intimidating. To connect with one of our Nurse Navigators or learn more about our cancer treatments, call our Cancer Connect line at 855.255.6181.

Noa Mencher, RN
Nurse Navigator
The Hospital of Central Connecticut

On the cover
Erin Mangan, RN, right, a nurse navigator at the Helen & Harry Gray Cancer Center at Hartford Hospital, consults with her patient Ralph Pappalardo, center, and his wife, Anne Pappalardo, left.

How to reach us
By phone: Call the Cancer Connect line at 855.255.6181.
Online: Visit www.togetherahead.org
On Facebook: Like the Hartford HealthCare Facebook page at www.facebook.com/HartfordHealthCare.
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“There’s really no limit to what we can do for patients—or at least what we will try to do for them,” said Mangan, who has been an oncology nurse navigator for more than two years. She specializes in patients with neurological, head and neck, melanoma and sarcoma cancers, while other members of the navigation team specialize in other forms of cancer including breast, lung, gynecologic and urologic cancer.

Karen Cudworth, a Hartford Hospital navigator who is the manager of the HHC Cancer Institute navigation team, said the navigators’ role is highly rewarding because of the opportunity it provides to connect with patients.

“We are the ones our patients turn to for answers or guidance as they are working their way through the process, so it’s natural for us to develop a strong relationship or bond with them,” she said.

“That’s what attracted most of us to the role to begin with.”

Besides Cudworth and Mangan, the Institute’s navigation team includes Paige Woodruff, Barbara Gaughan, Marlene Silvis and Suzanne Brown at Hartford Hospital; Noa Mencher and Alicia Gadecki at The Hospital of Central Connecticut; Kathy Clements at MidState Medical Center; Donna Sionski at Backus Hospital, and Pat Zikorus and Lori Surber at Windham Hospital. Other members of the navigation team include Mary Ann Vanderjagt, a resource navigator at Hartford Hospital, and Debbie Walker, a survivorship navigator at Hartford Hospital.

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That guidance makes a big difference during the treatment process, which can include chemotherapy, radiation, surgery and other therapies that are often extensive and complicated, said Anne Hart, RN, BSN, a radiation oncology nurse at Hartford Hospital who works closely with Mangan.

“It takes an enormous team effort to help a patient and his or her family prior to and during radiation treatment, and I value Erin’s help in trying to provide the best care in the most optimal framework,” said Hart, who is part of the multidisciplinary head and neck team with Mangan and Dr. Clinton Kudwad.

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Increasing accuracy and efficiency in cancer care

Q. What are your main responsibilities as director of physics and radiation oncology for the HHC Cancer Institute?

A. My main responsibilities are to standardize the delivery of treatment across the five radiation oncology departments within the Institute. Secondly, I work with the radiation oncologists to implement any new treatment protocols at all sites in the Institute.

Q. How did you get into this field? What do you find rewarding about it?

A. I started in this field in 1982 when I worked a summer internship at Boston University’s University Hospital in the Department of Nuclear Medicine. It was there I first learned about radiation oncology and medical physics. I am a physicist, so the most rewarding part of my position is evaluating new equipment and then implementing that technology so that we can bring the highest levels of technology to our clinics in a safe manner.

Q. Advances in technology are constantly taking place in cancer care. What advances seem most promising to you?

A. The targeted therapies used in medical oncology, where a chemotherapy agent can be targeted to a monoclonal antibody and direct the agent to the tumor cells. In the area of radiation oncology, I am seeing exciting new advances in imaging that are making the targeting of the radiation extremely specific and accurate.

Q. You are currently working on hard-wiring the computer programs at all five Institute campuses onto a single electronic platform. What has the process entailed?

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Q. How close is the effort to be completed?

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Pink with pride

Engine Co. 3 of the Newtonville Fire Department shows its support for breast cancer awareness by wrapping one of the company’s fire engines in pink. Craig Stengsma, a captain with the company who is also a security officer at The Hospital of Central Connecticut, said the pink engine will be on display throughout the summer and autumn at high-visibility public events as a way to raise money for the new cancer center at HHC, currently under construction. The company will sell T-shirts at all the events, with proceeds going to support the new cancer center. “We’ve had a lot of families in our company who have been impacted by breast cancer, so this is something we felt strongly about,” Stengsma said. At their first public event in late April, the company sold more than $3,000 worth of T-shirts. This is a great way for us to keep the money local so we know it’s going to a good cause for people in our own community.”
**Cancer Institute director makes contribution to new breast cancer book**

Kiran Avancha, PhD, RPh, CPh, CCRP, who is director of cancer clinical research for the Hartford HealthCare Cancer Institute, has co-authored a chapter reviewing updated breast cancer research for a comprehensive new book on breast cancer published earlier this year.

The book, “Personalized Management of Breast Cancer,” is intended for physicians, surgeons and all clinicians who work in the field of breast cancer and features contributions from numerous leading experts across the world. Avancha co-authored a chapter titled “EGF receptor inhibitors: patient selection and clinical outcomes” with physicians from the University of Miami's Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center and the Cleveland Clinic.

The chapter reviews current developments in breast cancer research, including antibody and antibody conjugates; ongoing clinical trials with HER2-targeted agents; small molecule HER2/HER inhibitors other than lapatinib; and novel anti-HER3 agents. The chapter can be located at [http://bit.ly/1guF3TR](http://bit.ly/1guF3TR).

Avancha has conducted extensive research at H. Lee Moffitt Comprehensive Cancer Center on drug design and development, and on synthesis and high-throughput screening of proteasome inhibitors in targeted treatment for multiple myeloma and various other cancers.

Prior to joining Hartford HealthCare, he oversaw investigational drug services for University of Miami Health System and Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center. He is the cofounder and the former chief scientific officer of ClinSynC Clinical Research Organization, an oncology-based clinical research and development center in India.

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**Hats (and cards) from the heart**

The memory of Mary-Grace Glinski’s third-grade teacher lives on at the Helen & Harry Gray Cancer Center at Hartford Hospital, thanks to a collection of hats and hand-drawn cards the 10-year-old girl donated to warm the heads and hearts of patients.

Mary-Grace’s teacher, Cynthia Shea, passed away earlier this year after a hard-fought battle with cancer, leaving her students at Northeast School in Vernon feeling sad and empty. For Mary-Grace, those feelings of loss were not how she wanted to remember her beloved teacher, so she took it upon herself to do something positive to honor her memory.

For the past several weeks, Mary-Grace encouraged everyone in her school community to donate hats that she could give to cancer patients. She was inspired to collect hats not only by her teacher’s experience with cancer, but also by other patients she had seen on TV who had lost their hair during chemotherapy.

“It looked to me like they would be cold in the winter when they lost their hair,” Mary-Grace said. “I thought it would be good to give them something to warm them up.”

The donations from Mary-Grace were accepted by Dr. Andrew Salner, medical director of the Hartford HealthCare Cancer Institute and the Gray Cancer Center, who praised the third-grader for her generosity.

“I think it would be good to give them something to warm them up.”

— Mary-Grace Glinski, Northeast School third-grader

The hats and cards would mean a great deal to patients like her.

“A lot of us who have lost our hair prefer a hat to a wig,” she said. “It just feels warmer and more natural, and these hats come with so much love and generosity to them, it will make them even warmer.”

The donations from Mary-Grace were accepted by Dr. Andrew Salner, medical director of the Hartford HealthCare Cancer Institute and the Gray Cancer Center, who praised the example that Mary-Grace set for others.

“Mary-Grace’s generosity is a reminder of the power of kindness and compassion in the face of challenging circumstances,” Dr. Salner said. “It is so important for our patients to know they have support.”

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“It is so important for our patients to know they have support.” Dr. Salner said. “And what better support than to receive something from the heart of a child?”

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**A show of support**

**Diane Lafferty, an oncology social worker at Middle State Medical Center, had her head shaved to show her support for the cancer patients in her care and solidarity with cancer patients everywhere. She also raised more than $5,000 to support the cause by taking part in the annual St. Baldrick’s Foundation fundraiser to support research for childhood cancer. Lafferty had her head shaved at Ordinary Joe’s Sports Pub in Oakville alongside seven other “shavees,” her sons and many other family and friends. Lafferty herself is a 24-year cancer survivor who went through chemotherapy but did not lose all of her hair. “As an oncology social worker, I know what my patients have to go through, but this is different. I am totally humbled by the amount of support I have received,” Lafferty said. “I want to do what I can for the children affected by cancer.”**

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**Physicians, nurses and other staff at the Helen & Harry Gray Cancer Center at Hartford Hospital gathered in the cancer center’s atrium in March to say farewell to Robert Siegel, MD, an oncologist who practiced at the hospital for more than 22 years. Dr. Siegel left to become medical director of the Cancer Center at St. Francis Hospital in Greenwich, N.C. From left: Anne Hart, RN; Dr. Siegel; Social Worker Hillary Keller; Debbie Walker, APRN; and Bobbi Hansen, a retired RN who worked alongside Dr. Siegel at the Gray Cancer Center.**

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**Mary-Grace Glinski, second from left, gives a collection of hats to Dr. Andrew Salner, medical director of the Hartford HealthCare Cancer Institute and the Gray Cancer Center for patients who lost their hair during chemotherapy.**
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She also asked her fellow students to create cards of support and encouragement to give to patients at the Cancer Center. Last month, Mary-Grace and her family came to the Cancer Center to deliver a box containing more than 100 hats she had collected and another box full of hand-drawn cards to give to patients.

"Oh my, what a good heart you have, honey," said Jean Cretella, a patient at the Cancer Center who was moved to meet the little girl when she saw her come in with the donations. She gave Mary-Grace a kiss and a hug and told her that the hats and cards would mean a great deal to patients like her.

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Farewell to Dr. Siegel

Dr. Andrew Salner, medical director of the Gray Cancer Center, delivered a farewell address alongside Dr. Siegel at the Gray Cancer Center. He praised the contributions from numerous leading experts across the world. Avancha co-authored a chapter titled "EGF receptor inhibitors: patient selection and clinical outcomes" with physicians from the University of Miami’s Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center and the Cleveland Clinic.

The chapter reviews current developments in breast cancer research, including antibody and antibody conjugates; ongoing clinical trials with HER2-targeted agents; small molecule HER/HER inhibitors other than lapatinib; and novel anti-HER3-agents. The chapter can be located at http://bit.ly/igwF37r.

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“That’s what attracted most of us to the role to begin with.”

Besides Cudworth and Morgan, the Institute’s navigation team includes Paige Woodruff, Barbara Gaughan, Marlene Silvis and Suzanne Brown at Hartford Hospital; Noa Mencher and Alicia Gadeinski at The Hospital of Central Connecticut; Kathy Clements at MidState Medical Center; Donna Slosnik at Backus Hospital; and Pat Zikoros and Lori Surber at Windham Hospital. Other members of the navigation team include Mary Ann Vanderjagt, a resource navigator at Hartford Hospital, and Debbie Walker, a survivorship navigator at Hartford Hospital.

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Q. How did you get into this field?

What do you find rewarding about it?

A. I started in this field in 1982 when I worked a summer internship at Boston’s University Hospital in the Department of Nuclear Medicine. It was there I first learned about radiation oncology and medical physics. I am a physicist, so the most rewarding part of my position is evaluating new equipment and then implementing that technology so that we can bring the highest levels of technology to our clinics in a safe manner.

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Increasing accuracy and efficiency in cancer care

Q&A with Gene Cardarelli

Director of physics and radiation oncology, Hartford HealthCare Cancer Institute

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Memorial Sloan Kettering Physician-in-Chief José Baselga has been elected president of the American Association for Cancer Research (AACR), the world’s oldest and largest professional organization dedicated to advancing cancer research. Dr. Baselga officially became president-elect during the AACR’s Annual Meeting 2014, which was held in San Diego, from April 5-9, and will serve for one year as president beginning in 2015. Dr. Baselga will assume the post, just a year after physician-scientist Charles Sawyers, chair of Memorial Sloan Kettering’s Human Oncology and Pathogenesis Program, completes his term as AACR president.

Visionary leadership

In his new role, Dr. Baselga will work with the AACR Board of Directors and membership, which includes more than 34,000 members in more than 90 countries, to further the association’s mission to prevent and cure cancer through research, education, communication and collaboration. “We are proud and delighted that José Baselga has been elected president of the AACR,” said Memorial Sloan Kettering President and CEO Craig B. Thompson. “Dr. Baselga is an internationally recognized physician-scientist with a special interest in translational and early clinical research as well as the identification of novel mechanisms of resistance to current cancer therapies. His laboratory research includes the development of novel molecularly targeted cancer therapies, with a special focus on breast cancer and therapeutic approaches to targeting the PI3K pathway. His work in the pre-clinical and early clinical development of therapies has helped introduce a number of new targeted agents, including trastuzumab and lapatinib. Recently, he led the early clinical development and pivotal clinical studies that resulted in approval by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration of two drugs for the treatment of breast cancer — pertuzumab for the treatment of patients with HER2-positive metastatic disease and everolimus for the treatment of advanced hormone-receptor-positive HER2-negative breast cancer.”

Innovative researcher

Dr. Baselga joined Memorial Sloan Kettering in 2013 from Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH), where he was director of the Division of Hematology/Oncology and associate director of the MGH Cancer Center. He did his medical oncology fellowship at Memorial Hospital and was a faculty member on the Breast/Gynecology Service from 1994 through 1996, after which he returned to his native Spain. He is past president of the European Society for Medical Oncology and has served on the board of directors of the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) and the AACR. He is also a founding editor-in-chief (with Lewis C. Cantley) of the AACR’s journal, Cancer Discovery.

Dr. Baselga has also been the recipient of many awards of honor, among them ASCO’s Young Investigator and Career Development Award and the AACR-Rosenthal Family Foundation Award.

The information for this story comes directly from Memorial Sloan Kettering and is used with MSK’s permission.
Nurse navigators are the “angels” of the Hartford HealthCare Cancer Institute. That’s the term many of the Institute’s patients use to describe the team of nurse navigators who strive to make their patients’ experience as seamless and stress-free as possible. The navigation team is in many ways the human face of the Institute, welcoming patients when they first arrive for treatment and staying by their side throughout their journey of care. Navigators assist patients at each of the five cancer center campuses across the Institute, combining clinical expertise with compassion and empathy.

When Anne Pappalardo’s husband, Ralph Pappalardo, was recently diagnosed with oral cancer, the couple felt lost and fearful about how to begin the treatment process. But as soon as they met Erin Mangan, RN, the nurse navigator at the Helen & Harry Gray Cancer Center at Hartford Hospital who was assigned to manage Ralph’s care, their anxieties began to ease.

“I don’t know what we would do without her,” said Anne. “Erin is our ‘go-to’ person. She makes things happen faster, has coordinated referrals to other professionals, is able to answer all of our medical questions, and also offers emotional support. I know I can call her at any time, and she is there for us.”

Partnership a pioneering effort

Over the past several months, I have heard questions from many people across the Hartford HealthCare Cancer Institute about the status of our partnership with Memorial Sloan Kettering (MSK), particularly as it relates to the ongoing certification process.

The process began last fall and has proven to be rigorous and complex. It has centered around creating baseline data for the current state of care we provide, while developing a consistent standard across the Institute that will allow us to measure our improvement and give meaningful value to our alliance with MSK.

For months, teams of physicians from MSK have been working closely with our own physicians in the Cancer Institute to establish the baseline data.

This attention to detail in this process demonstrates how the MSK/HHC partnership is designed to drive fundamental improvement at the caregiver level. Really, it is a pioneering effort to incorporate the strengths of two vibrant organizations into a new and better model for delivering care.

The process of achieving MSK certification across all the five campuses of the HHC Cancer Institute has included assessments of 11 key cancer disciplines and six disease specialties. The partnership is accelerating the work of integration that has already begun to establish a single standard of care within the five campuses, thereby reducing variation and ensuring excellence across the spectrum of care.

Now that the programs offered across the HHC Cancer Institute have been carefully evaluated and analyzed, we are working to replicate best practice across each of the five individual campuses, and work with MSK to create and implement guidelines for care. Our collaboration with the MSK teams has been enormously productive and educational for all involved, and I strongly believe that both organizations will benefit enormously as a result of this process.

We are close to completing the certification process. I expect that our Institute will receive certification by the end of the summer, at which point the HHC Cancer Institute will officially become the first fully-certified member of the MSK Cancer Alliance. That will be an achievement we have all worked tremendously hard for, and for which we should all be extremely proud.