

Meet Helen Gonzalez, RN, OCN,
LRCC Employee of the Quarter.



Helen Gonzalez, Registered Nurse and Oncology Certified Nurse at LRCC, not only screens and assesses patients for eligibility in our clinical trials program, she offers exceptional support and care to patients and their families. It's no wonder she's always willing to share her ideas and contribute to the improvement of services at our center. According to Research Assistant Karen Rose, "Helen always puts others first. She is an everyday hero to those she works with, and to our patients." Congratulations, Helen!

City of Lakeland honors LRCC with
Beautification Award.



Lakeland Regional Cancer Center was recently presented with the Commercial Beautification Award, an honor bestowed on businesses that have made property improvements which ultimately contributed to the overall beauty of the City. Pentas, Knock Out® roses and lantannas framed by mature magnolias and majestic oaks create a peaceful environment that patients can enjoy. We encourage you to follow the path behind our facility that meanders alongside Lake Miracle and leads to a butterfly garden maintained by the Lakeland Garden Club. It's the perfect complement to our highly advanced care.

new directions

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CERVICAL CANCER. THE PROGNOSIS IS GOOD.

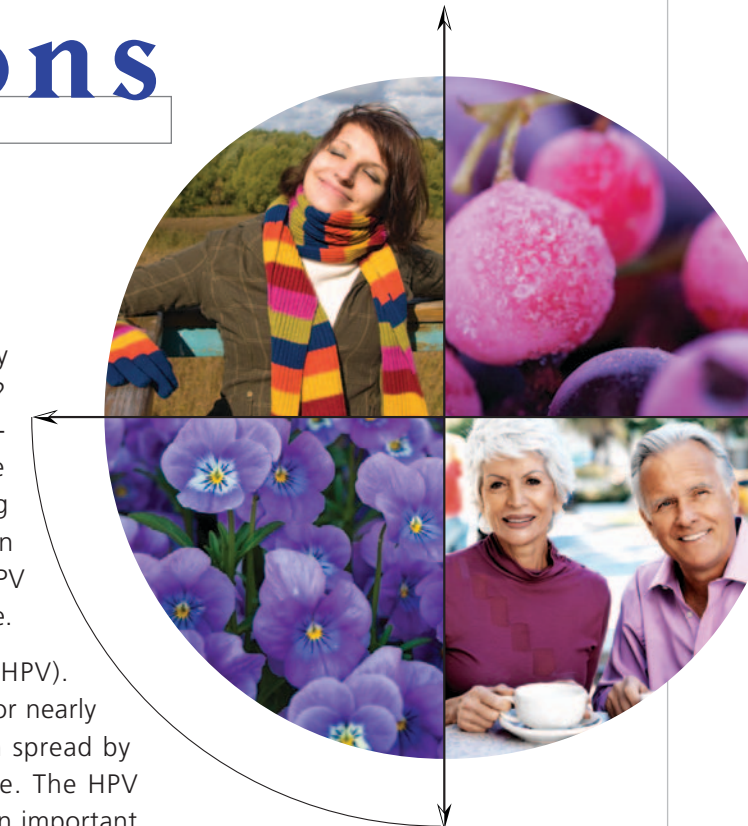
Today we know more than ever about cervical cancer. So why are more than 11,000 women dying from the disease every year? The main reason is that cervical cancer usually does not present symptoms until after it has spread. These symptoms include abnormal or heavier bleeding and/or vaginal discharge, bleeding and pain during or after sex, and pelvic pain. With advances in treatment, regular screenings and the now widely accepted HPV vaccination, the incidence of cervical cancer is expected to decline.

There are over 100 strains of the Human Papillomavirus (HPV). Persistent infection with high-risk strains of the virus account for nearly all cervical cancer. HPV usually has no symptoms and is often spread by those who don't know they're carriers via sexual intercourse. The HPV vaccine is now widely accepted by the medical community as an important preventative for cervical cancer and is endorsed by the American Academy of Pediatrics, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. Pap tests are another important guard against cervical cancer. Only a Pap test can detect minor changes to the cervix well before cancer develops.

Cervical cancer is highly preventable and with the right treatment, highly curable. At Lakeland Regional Cancer Center we are specialized in the treatment of cervical cancer, providing the latest technological advances including robotic surgery for successful recovery from the disease. If you have questions, talk to your doctor or call LRCC for a consultation.

Sincerely,

Richard Boothby, MD, FACOG
LRCC Gynecologic Oncologist



CERVICAL CANCER SCREENING RECOMMENDATIONS

- Girls and young women ages 11 – 26 should receive the HPV vaccinations before sexual activity begins.
- Men and boys can also be carriers of HPV and are now approved to be vaccinated.
- Annual Pap tests and a pelvic exam are recommended for women beginning at age 21.



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For Jennifer Vazquez, **losing her battle with cervical cancer was not an option.**

Dr. Richard "Rusty" Boothby, LRCC Gynecologic Oncologist, patient Jennifer Vazquez and LRCC volunteer Jean Tayntor, one of our "cookie ladies"

A wife and mother of two, Jennifer Vazquez was only 38 when she was diagnosed with cervical cancer. After experiencing abnormal bleeding, she made an appointment with her OB/Gyn who immediately referred her to Dr. Richard "Rusty" Boothby, gynecologic oncologist at Lakeland Regional Cancer Center. "It all happened so fast," remembers Jennifer. "One week after going to LRCC, I was having a hysterectomy." While Dr. Boothby and Jennifer were hopeful that surgery would be the only treatment needed, a biopsy of lymph nodes revealed the cancer had spread.

Jennifer's case is a perfect example of the unique collaboration afforded cancer patients who come to LRCC. Doctors are sometimes confronted with the unexpected spread of the disease or the need to adjust treatment. "Here I can walk across the hall and speak to a radiation oncologist, medical oncologist, urologic oncologist or other cancer professionals to discuss a patient's case, as was necessary with Jennifer," says Dr. Boothby. "We knew we needed to do more than surgery to reduce her risk of recurrence. Thanks to our extensive services, we did not have to refer her 20 miles away for added treatment."

Jennifer underwent six rounds of chemotherapy, and under the guidance of LRCC radiation oncologist Dr. Kris Guerrier, 26 radiation sessions. Jennifer recalls feeling bad and weak from treatment, but she had kids to carpool and a husband who needed her. So for Jennifer, it was a "business as usual" attitude, even

when she later developed lymphedema, an excess buildup of fluid where lymph nodes were removed. Her team of doctors even collaborated on her care with therapists at Lakeland Regional Rehabilitation & Sports Medicine Clinic, which includes a lymphedema therapy program.

"The compassion, gentleness and honesty shown to me by LRCC's team of doctors, staff, front desk and even the cookie lady were what got me through it," adds Jennifer. "I would be getting chemo or radiation, and the cookie lady would come around with cookies and coffee, which always made me smile." She was also reassured by Dr. Boothby's kind words to call him "whenever." Jennifer best describes her care in a letter she wrote to LRCC after her treatment was finished. "You always made me feel optimistic. With my hope and longevity restored, I press on every day. I love you all."

The Connection between cancer treatment & heart problems.

The good news is that cancer survivors today are living much longer following treatment than in the past. The bad news is that this increased longevity has revealed the risks of developing "late effect" heart problems, those that occur more than five years after a diagnosis. Heart problems in cancer survivors are most often

the result of radiation to the chest area and/or high-dose chemotherapy. You're also at higher risk of developing heart problems if you're a survivor 65 years or older.

With this knowledge, doctors today are taking greater steps to reduce the risks of

heart problems in cancer patients. At LRCC, we offer the latest advances in radiation therapy including Intensity Modulated Radiation Therapy (IMRT) and Image Guided Radiation Therapy (IGRT). "These technologies allow us to specifically tailor the size and strength of each beam of radiation, as well as more precisely position the patient when delivering treatment, all of which means less damage to surrounding tissue and other major organs," says Dr. Arvind Soni.

Talk to your doctor if you've had chemotherapy and/or radiation and have concerns regarding your heart's health, especially if you have shortness of breath with minimal exertion, or if you're a current cancer patient experiencing chest pain during chemotherapy. Cancer treatment has come a long way and so has our knowledge of how we can better prevent heart problems related to it.



Dr. Arvind Soni, LRCC Radiation Oncologist

Exploring treatment options to find what's **right for you.**

You may have heard that the FDA recently withdrew its approval of Avastin® for the treatment of breast cancer that has spread to other organs. This drug has been undergoing lengthy testing and trials for metastatic breast cancer, but in November the FDA revoked its accelerated approval of Avastin because its benefits were not significant enough to justify its risky side effects. The FDA has maintained its approval for the treatment of certain types of colon, lung, kidney and brain cancers.

Just as the FDA takes potential new treatments and the many existing treatments extremely seriously, so does the Tumor Board at LRCC. Our doctors,

representing various oncology disciplines, meet to discuss each patient's individual case. According to Dr. Madhavi Venigalla, "We take into careful consideration each patient's medical history and overall health, weighing risks and side effects with known benefits to determine the safest and most effective course of treatment." It's important for patients to have a good understanding of their treatment plan. If you have questions, talk to your doctor or get a second opinion.

Dr. Madhavi Venigalla, LRCC Medical Oncologist, Hematologist

