Community Without Borders

Dr. Halyna Derzhko, Moffitt Patient
This article was kindly translated by a family member.

At the age of 72, I had been through some difficult times as a pediatrician living in a small town in Ukraine, but I had not expected to be diagnosed with cancer, specifically melanoma, at that stage in my life.

I loved my work and my young patients. After working for 47 years, I reluctantly retired. My salary was small and my retirement pay was even smaller, but I settled into what was to be a quiet life.

Unfortunately, I suffered a fall which caused a serious head injury and landed me in the hospital. This was followed by my cancer diagnosis resulting in several surgeries. Subsequently, I was fortunate enough to be treated with immunotherapy drugs that seemed to slow the progression of the cancer.

Then the war broke out. Continuing treatment was now becoming impossible, not only for me but for most cancer patients in my country, thus sealing their fate. Not only were homes being destroyed but hospitals and clinics were not spared in the ensuing rocket attacks. My son, who lives in Florida, immediately sent for me. Meanwhile, my sister-in-law contacted every organization and medical facility she could think of in an effort to continue my treatment, although neither I nor my son had the financial means to pay for it. But she was persistent, and I was hopeful.

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Happy fall, everyone! I always love this time of year. The fall signals many changes. For Moffitt patients, a new and welcomed change to waiting rooms has arrived.

To help patients and caregivers prepare for their visits, the Waiting Room Care Card is now available in Moffitt waiting rooms.

The Waiting Room Care Card is available for writing questions and taking notes. All too often, I find myself walking out of my appointment saying, “Oh, I should have asked about this,” or “Oh, no, I forgot to ask that.” I’m left feeling like I didn’t get the most out of my appointment. This resource will help many patients, like myself, organize thoughts and questions. I might even take some extra cards home to help me prepare in advance of future appointments. This new tool ensures that we can find comfort in the fact that we didn’t miss the opportunity to ask every possible question.

The Waiting Room Care Card serves as a wonderful distraction, brings a sense of calmness and allows me to focus on the appointment at hand. When conversations begin, patients are so focused on hearing what is being said that we lose track of what is important to ask. With this card, I can focus on what it is that I want to get out of that appointment. I can make sure I have captured all my questions on paper and not just in my head.

This tool isn’t just for patients. Caregivers may also have their own set of questions about caring for you. They could use the card to ensure they have a full understanding of your care. As a patient, all too often I have turned to my caregivers and said, “I’m glad you asked that question because I might have missed that,” or “I didn’t even think about that!” Having our caregivers look at our card can help ensure that we don’t miss or forget any questions.

I hope the Waiting Room Care Card will become your go-to tool in helping you maximize your appointments and provide the relief that no question was left unasked.

The Waiting Room Care Card is available in clinic lobbies, information desks and the patient libraries.
My name is Diane and I am a volunteer at Moffitt Cancer Center. I first learned of Moffitt in 2004 when I came here to be treated for breast cancer. In 2009, my husband was diagnosed with cancer and started treatment at Moffitt as well. He joined the volunteer team in 2012. I saw how much joy it gave him to help at the information desk. This made me want to volunteer when I retired in 2019.

In January 2020, I started volunteering in the surgery waiting room. I checked patients in for surgeries, walked them back into the pre-operative area, helped caregivers to consult rooms, and walked caregivers back to the recovery area to see their loved ones. I volunteered on special projects. I visited Moffitt’s Wesley Chapel facility to help direct patients to their infusion or radiation appointments. During the COVID-19 vaccine drives, I escorted patients and team members through the process.

In February 2020, I joined the Patient Family and Advisory Program. I started with the Coffee Connection at Magnolia Campus. Today, I volunteer for the breast clinic, infusion centers, Patient Library & Welcome Center, inpatient room visits, Coffee Connection and serve on various committees.

Volunteering is good for my soul and well-being. I’m active and engaged in so many different roles that it has truly enriched my life. When I was diagnosed, so many people started to give me their opinion on how I should manage my treatments regardless of my doctor’s advice or my choices. So, I never talked about my cancer.

Today, I listen to patients and caregivers express their challenges. I never offer advice but aim to be there as a sounding board for them. If questioned about my journey, I tell my story and the path that I took. When I speak about my surgeries, chemotherapy or radiation experiences, they learn there is light at the end of the tunnel. I will usually see the same patients at different locations, and they have told me it helps them feel more comfortable to always see a familiar face when visiting Moffitt.

If you’re interested in using your lived experience as a patient or caregiver to make a difference the Patient and Family Advisory Program may be right for you. To learn more please email PatientAdvisors@Moffitt.org or call 813-745-2963.

“In April, Patient Advisor Diane Johnson was honored to receive the Volunteer of the Year Award for her outstanding dedication and commitment to volunteer service at Moffitt. Diane supports patients and caregivers by listening and giving them the opportunity to talk with someone who has faced a similar experience. Our patients, families and staff appreciate all of our volunteers and commend Diane on receiving this esteemed award.”

– Anne Bidelman, Manager, Patient and Family Advisory Program
PATIENT’S PERSPECTIVE

We Are the Other People

Michelle Maricic, Patient Advisor,
Patient and Family Advisory Program

There comes a time in one’s life when we come to realize that we are the others. What I mean by this is that none of us see unexpected tragedy happening directly to us. It happens to other people, right? Wrong. Cancer isn’t selective. It’s all around us and will randomly find its host.

I have always been fiercely independent and lived many lives. I was a successful nurse, an accomplished health care I.T. executive, an achieved athlete, boat captain, pilot, wife of thirty-two years and a dear friend to many. I was on top of the world and life was good – until it wasn’t – as my surgeon would tell me.

After a three-hour surgery, a biopsy confirmed that I had diffuse large B-cell non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma. I was told they could not remove the tumors as they were wrapped around my organs. I had a year to live or I could undergo R-CHOP therapy (an intensive form of chemotherapy that includes a combination of drugs taken over several hours). I refused to say I had the C-word. Instead, I decided I had unwelcome guests. And those intruders had no idea whose house they had entered.

I now know that I am not invincible. I am the patient fighting for her life. I am resilient, strong-willed, faithful and a little salty. I never prayed for an easy life, but I did always pray for the strength to endure a difficult one. I needed all the help I could get to navigate through this unchartered path. I turned to my husband, friends, colleagues, neighbors and former patients. I turned to God and my church for help, support and prayers.

A caregiver comes in many forms. We must allow ourselves to depend on them. When we can’t stand on our own, they will be there to help us. I started this journey invincible and fiercely independent, but it’s taught me that healing includes being vulnerable. If it weren’t for all of them helping me, I would never have been a witness to the miracle that is cancer remission on this day.

Help is available to Moffitt patients that need it. Contact Moffitt’s Department of Social Work at 813-745-8407 if you find that you need emotional support.

YOUR VOICE MATTERS

Learn How Sharing Your Voice Can Impact the Patient Experience

Ask about the Patient and Family Advisory Council at PatientAdvisors@Moffitt.org.

Michelle Maricic and her dog, Buddy, are Moffitt volunteers
MOFFITT RESOURCES
to Help Patients and Caregivers

**UPCOMING EVENTS**

*September – November*

**Virtual Relaxation/Meditation for Stress Relief**
813-745-6052

*Virtual/Zoom, RSVP only*  
Wed. at 12:15 p.m.  
PatientWellness@Moffitt.org

**Virtual Gentle Restorative Yoga Class**
813-745-6052

*Virtual/Zoom, RSVP only*  
Tues. at 11 a.m. and Thurs. at 2 p.m.  
PatientWellness@Moffitt.org

**Magnolia Open Art Studio**

In person, Moffitt’s Magnolia Campus  
3rd floor – Arts in Medicine Studio  
Mon.-Fri., 9:30 a.m.-4 p.m.

**McKinley Open Art Studio**

In person, Moffitt’s McKinley Campus  
1st floor – Patient and Family Center  
Mon.-Fri., 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m.

**Patient and Family Orientation**
813-745-1690

*Virtual/Zoom, RSVP only*  
Mon.-Fri., 2 p.m.  
PatientLibrary@Moffitt.org

**Virtual Meet the Experts**
813-745-1690

*Virtual/Zoom, RSVP only*  
Tues. and Weds., 10-10:30 a.m.  
PatientLibrary@Moffitt.org

**PATIENT AND FAMILY SUPPORT GROUPS**

For your convenience, we offer support groups via Zoom. To learn more about any of the support groups offered, including times, please call the Social Work office at 813-745-8407 or visit Moffitt.org/SupportGroups.

**General Cancer Support Group**

Weekly meeting for patients diagnosed with any cancer type to connect and share mutual support. Meets every Tuesday, 1-2 p.m. via Zoom. To register, please call 813-745-8407.

**Family and Friends Support Group**

Weekly meeting for families and caregivers of patients with any cancer type to connect and share mutual support. Meets every Wednesday, 1-2 p.m. via Zoom. To register, please call 813-745-8407.

**Metastatic Breast Cancer Support Group**

Meet with people who have been diagnosed with stage IV metastatic breast cancer to share mutual support. Meets every Tuesday, 11 a.m.-12 p.m. via Zoom. To register, please call 813-745-8407.

**Breast Cancer Connection**

Monthly support group for anyone who has been diagnosed with breast cancer. Meets the first Tuesday of every month, 6-7 p.m. via Zoom meeting. To register, please call 813-745-8407.

**Families First: Parenting During Cancer**

A support group for parents raising young children and teens while living with cancer. Meets every Wednesday, 4-5 p.m. via Zoom. To register, please call 813-745-8407.

**Survivorship Program Support Group**

Monthly meeting for Survivorship Program participants to connect and share mutual support. Meets the last Tuesday of every month, 1-2 p.m. via Zoom. To register, please call 813-745-8407.

**Quit Smoking Support Group**

Monthly meeting for patients and household members who want to quit tobacco, share insights and find mutual support. Meets the last Tuesday of every month, 1-2 p.m. via Zoom. To register, please call 813-745-8407.
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Community Without Borders

Group Donates $1.5M Worth of Medical Supplies to Ukrainian Hospitals

Sara Bondell, Medical Science Writer, Strategic Communications

In a hospital in Kharkiv, Ukraine, medical staff use a donated ultrasound machine to evaluate a 1-month-old baby with a skull fracture.

Doctors in Zaporizhzhia treat a Ukrainian soldier whose forearm bone was shattered by a bullet. Using a donated external fixation device, they stabilize and properly align his bone. The doctors then treat another soldier wounded by a mine using a donated ultrasound machine to identify his injuries and place an access line to quickly administer pain medication.

“We looked at our backgrounds and saw medical and humanitarian aid would be our strength — let’s help keep Ukrainians alive.

We had direct connections to physicians in Ukraine to find out what the needs are and we had connections in global logistics to deliver directly to hospitals there.”

These three lives, and many others wounded during the war in Ukraine, were saved thanks to donated medical equipment.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has overwhelmed hospitals across the country trying to treat soldiers and civilians with limited access to medical supplies.

From the moment I stepped onto the McKinley Campus, the care and attention I received was remarkable and comprehensive.

I thank God that Moffitt Cancer Center agreed to accept me as a patient with the assistance of the wonderful Gina El Mouallem Mhaweij, an international patient coordinator with Moffitt’s International Referrals Services Department. This team eases the transition to Moffitt, paying extra attention to personal, cultural and travel-related needs. From the moment I stepped onto the McKinley Campus, the care and attention I received was remarkable and comprehensive.

I am especially grateful to Dr. Nikhil Khushalani, Julie Twining, Digy Paul and all of the staff at the Cutaneous Oncology Clinic at McKinley for their kindness and goodwill. I am currently receiving immunotherapy treatment and appear to be tolerating it well. I am hoping for a positive outcome and will be forever grateful to Moffitt. I am also humbled that I was given this chance to fight for my life when so many in my native country will not have the same opportunity. From the bottom of my heart, I thank you all. May God bless all of you and your good work.

Coming to a different country with a cancer diagnosis can be a difficult step to take. Moffitt’s International Referral Services is available to ease the transition by assisting you and your family with an array of resources. For more information visit Moffitt.org/International or email InternationalReferrals@Moffitt.org.
“It’s very difficult to find the words that truly encompass my feelings,” said Dr. Inna Smalley, a researcher at Moffitt Cancer Center who grew up in Ukraine. “It’s devastating, scary, stressful, disturbing. I feel guilt for being here while many of my family and friends are there.”

That includes Smalley’s grandfather, a 97-year-old World War II veteran who fought on the front lines against the Nazis. He has skin cancer and cannot find the medical care he needs because of the war.

Smalley wanted to turn her feeling of hopelessness into a tangible way to support her native country. She started approaching other Ukrainians around Moffitt and in the community, and they quickly formed the group now called Medical Help Ukraine.

“We found each other in this dark time and were united by this single goal of saving Ukrainian lives. What can we do to have the most impact immediately?” said Smalley. “We looked at our backgrounds and saw medical and humanitarian aid would be our strength – let’s help keep Ukrainians alive. We had direct connections to physicians in Ukraine to find out what the needs are and we had connections in global logistics to deliver directly to hospitals there.”

Thanks to monetary donations, as well as equipment donations from multiple organizations, Medical Help Ukraine has collected lifesaving equipment including portable ultrasound machines, surgical instruments, orthopedic devices, C-Arm imaging machines and orthopedic implants. The group then coordinates with doctors in Ukraine to make sure the right hospitals are getting the right items.

Medical Help Ukraine has shipped more than $1.5 million worth of medical equipment and supplies to hospitals around Ukraine. In return, doctors have sent back dozens of photos of the equipment being used to save lives.

“I got into cancer research because it was my life goal to help people in whatever small way I could and it’s amazing being able to be part of this group of people providing this critical medical help,” Smalley said.

Medical Help Ukraine is now coordinating a second large wave of shipments to key hospitals in other cities treating many patients who are in the greatest need. The group hopes to become an official nonprofit in the future.

“I am so taken back by the generosity of people willing to donate time and resources to this,” said Smalley. “We had this feeling of helplessness and then we realized how strong we were as a group. It really is not any one person and I am amazed at how it all came together.”

To learn more about the team, their efforts and ways you can help, visit MedicalHelpUkraine.org.
Patient and Family Orientation Helps Reduce First Visit Anxiety

Ray Posey, Patient Advisor, Patient and Family Advisory Program

Every day at 2 p.m., Moffitt Cancer Center offers a virtual Patient and Family Orientation for patients and their families. Some sessions are presented by patient library team members and others are presented by volunteers from the Patient and Family Advisory Program. These presentations provide information about Moffitt, resources available to patients and caregivers, services offered, and how to navigate their many buildings and campuses.

Four years ago, when I first became a Moffitt patient, I learned how disorienting a cancer diagnosis can be. I had surgery and an overnight stay at the Magnolia Campus, but I had only been there once before while my wife had never visited. We did not receive an orientation and it was especially challenging for my wife to find her way around.

After becoming a patient advisor, I remembered my own experiences and readily volunteered to present orientation. I’m able to provide a patient’s perspective for new patients and I hope my excellent experience at Moffitt can help ease some of the tension newly diagnosed patients might feel. I believe that if I can at least remove the worry about simple things, like where to park or how to find your way to the first appointment, then I’m helping new patients cope.

Not long ago during an orientation session, a new patient who was clearly anxious about her upcoming appointment asked me what her first appointment would be like. I described my own first appointment at Moffitt and what I thought would be the range of possibilities. I went on to acknowledge how gut wrenching the time between a cancer diagnosis and the beginning of treatment can be. You know your body has turned on you and you can’t wait to fight back. But you’re left worrying that every day that passes is an opportunity lost and time for the disease to advance. Hearing that from another patient seemed to help her. Patient and Family Orientation can help reduce this kind of stress and prepare new patients for their first visit to Moffitt.

For more information about Patient and Family Orientation read the outside back cover.

MEET THE EXPERTS

Connect with Moffitt experts and learn helpful information for patients and caregivers. Sessions held via Zoom on Tuesdays and Wednesdays at 10-10:30 a.m.

To register please visit Moffitt.org/MeettheExperts or call 813-745-1690.
HEALTH & WELL-BEING

Is It Possible to Enjoy Thanksgiving Without Turkey? You Bet!

Sarah Proctor, Registered Dietitian

A vegetarian diet has become increasingly popular for a variety of reasons. Whether you choose to go meatless for ethical, religious or medical reasons, you will likely benefit from better health. Following a wholefood, plant-based diet is recommended to decrease the intake of chemical additives, as well as increase intake of vitamins, minerals and cancer-fighting plant nutrients.

If you or a loved one recently committed to vegetarianism, you might be wondering if Thanksgiving can still be the same without turkey. Of course, it can! What matters most is that you’re enjoying the company of family members and friends that you may not frequently see. So, whether you’re going meatless or not, you can still enjoy a wonderful Thanksgiving feast. The most important thing to remember is not to forget about protein. Protein is a vital nutrient which helps rebuild damaged cells as well as maintain muscle mass.

Keeping up with dietary restrictions may seem like a daunting task. Make sure to ask anyone expected at your table this Thanksgiving if they have any restrictions, including allergies. If you’re expecting vegetarians at your Thanksgiving table for the first time this year, you can make sure that your holiday spread has much to offer by planning the meal in one of two ways. The first is to serve enough vegetarian side dishes that your herbivore guests can make a meal of them. The second is to prepare a vegetarian main dish that respects the meatless mandate.

This might prove to be much easier than it sounds. Many traditional side dishes and desserts are already vegetarian-friendly, but watch out for hidden ingredients, like chicken stock, Worcestershire sauce and marshmallows.

Here are some ideas for vegetarian sides and adding more protein:

- **Salad** – Mix in high-protein grains such as quinoa, farrow or buckwheat. Beans or lentils also add extra protein.
- **Cornbread** – Opt for a packaged brand that offers a high-protein option.
- **Mashed potatoes** – Add pureed chickpeas into your mashed potatoes.
- **Sweet potatoes** – Top with roasted pecans or walnuts.
- **Green bean casserole** – Top with sliced almonds.
- **Creamed spinach** – Make with cream cheese and top with parmesan.
- **Stuffed mushrooms** – Include a ground meat-alternative in your stuffing.
- **Other seasonal options include**: Brussels sprouts, sweet corn, butternut squash, cranberry sauce and pumpkin pie.

If you’d like to replace the turkey with a main dish, you might consider a veggie-packed shepherd’s pie topped with mashed potatoes or pie crust. If serving with gravy, you can add sautéed onions and mushrooms. To finish the gravy, just add vegetable broth, thicken with cornstarch and flavor with soy sauce. With so many tempting options for vegetarians on your table, you might even notice the turkey-eaters jumping on board as well!

For more information about nutrition, please visit Moffitt.org/Nutrition or call 813-745-3609.
Partnering to Build a Better Patient Experience

*Rae Sawyer, Family Advisor, Patient and Family Advisory Council*

If you have traveled along McKinley Drive during the past two years, you have noticed the beautiful new building emerging across from the Richard M. Schulze Family Foundation Outpatient Center at McKinley Campus. A curved, pedestrian bridge now connects the outpatient center to the new Moffitt McKinley Hospital.

I joined a group of patient and family advisors that had the privilege of participating in the planning and design process for the new hospital. This began with the “imagination” phase where we collaborated with architects, designers, and the health care professionals who would be working in the facility, to decide what would represent an optimal inpatient, surgical experience for Moffitt patients. And what a fascinating experience it has been!

Patient and family advisors have given input into every phase of the design process with an emphasis on prioritizing the comfort of patients and families. We participated in the design of inpatient smart rooms that are controlled through tablets. We assisted with selecting specific locations for patient parking in the garage. We also advocated for family resources to be included, such as laundry facilities, small private lounges and a spiritual room for quiet reflection.

The construction team has included patient and family advisors the entire way. We were there for the groundbreaking ceremonies. We signed the

*Continued on next page*
To subscribe to the PARTNERS electronic newsletter, please email PatientLibrary@Moffitt.org.

“Moffitt McKinley Hospital is a new facility specially designed for our surgical patients. The hospital features 19 operating rooms, 128 private inpatient rooms and all support services needed to care for the surgical patient. We are excited to enhance the patient experience and improve upon that with several new upgrades. Caregiver spaces, private bathrooms and personal control over new smart room features with enhanced technology options are just a few of the new upgrades available in all patient rooms. Join us in the excitement as we approach opening day on July 31, 2023!”

— Christine Alvero, Senior Director of Clinical Therapy Services, Operational Readiness Liaison

Do you have feedback to give as a patient or caregiver? To learn more about the Patient and Family Advisory Program please email PatientAdvisors@Moffitt.org or call 813-745-2963.

Move for What Matters
Help fund lifesaving cancer research by participating in the annual Miles for Moffitt. Join virtually or in downtown Tampa on Nov. 19 to move for what matters – love, courage and finding the cures for cancer.

Visit MilesforMoffitt.com to register today!
Improved Online Registration

Moffitt is relaunching its Online Registration to support patients with an easy mobile tool. The new service helps patients complete required forms from any location, saving time when you arrive at your appointment. Patients can upload personal information, such as a driver license and insurance card from the privacy and safety of their mobile phone or tablet. For questions about online registration please call 813-745-8111 and select option 1.

Patient and Family Orientation

Learn how to:
– CONNECT WITH PROGRAMS AND SERVICES
– PARTNER WITH YOUR CARE TEAM
– FIND YOUR WAY AROUND MOFFITT

• Virtual sessions are presented at 2pm on weekdays
• Each session offers a 30-minute presentation with Q&A
• Presented in English and Spanish
• View online at MOFFITT.org/Orientation

813-745-1690 | Orientation@Moffitt.org

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If you would like to be involved in making Moffitt the best it can be for all patients and families, contact the Patient and Family Advisory Program at PatientAdvisors@Moffitt.org or 813-745-2963.