



BASSETT HEALTHCARE

Cancer Information Center has much to offer

The Cancer Information Center at Bassett Healthcare in Cooperstown offers a wealth of information to those in our region who suffer from cancer as well as their loved ones. It offers many services to anyone who would like to learn more about cancer and topics related to cancer such as nutrition, complementary therapies, exercise, and pain management. The goal of the Center is to make the experience of a cancer diagnosis and treatment a little easier and to offer both support and confidence to the patients and their loved ones.

The Information Center shelves are filled with books, videocassettes, and audiocassettes all available for loan, much like a public library, and a computer for Internet access is also available. There are currently 24 categories of books available including the more common cancers such as breast, colorectal, prostate, and skin. Other categories are complementary/alternative methods, cookbooks, coping with cancer, and motivation. There is also a selection of more than 100 free brochures and special folders on chemotherapy, radiation therapy, and general cancer information. All the materials have been donated by patients, doctors, nurses, pharmaceutical companies, and publishing companies.

The opportunity to browse the Internet for additional information is a free service and assistance from volunteers is available. One does not have to be a Bassett cancer patient to take advantage of all that the Information Center has to offer. In fact, several high school and college students have taken advantage of access to this material for research papers.

The Center opened in 1998 as a result of a project created by the Patient Advisory Group for Education (PAGE) whose members include cancer survivors, family members of cancer patients, nurses, the administrative director and the director of the Regional Cancer Program. PAGE serves as a liaison between cancer patients and the cancer center. Among other responsibilities, it sought with the Information Center to provide a place where patients and family members could go to read, learn, research, and talk with someone about their illness.

Patients and family members often take advantage of the Information Center while waiting for an appointment. Information Center volunteers have helped newly diagnosed patients learn more about what to ask their doctor—what are the benefits and risks of the

treatment I will receive? What side effects should I expect? Will I be able to continue working? When is the best time to call with a question? Patients are pleased and more importantly, a little more confident and prepared for the appointment. In addition to providing answers to these questions, the physician may suggest reading material that may be found at the Information Center.

The Center is staffed by specially trained volunteers, most of whom are cancer survivors, although this is not a requirement. This can be a comfort to patients seeking more information about their diagnosis. Although the doctors and nurses are always available to answer questions, patients are also wise to educate themselves about cancer.

The Information Center volunteers offer their time one morning or afternoon per week and also attend Cancer Information Center volunteer “staff” meetings. At our meetings, we discuss improvements to the operation of the Center and updates on cancer information available at the Center. The Center is always looking for volunteers to share the duties and enjoy the experience of helping others. If you or someone you know may be interested in volunteering one morning or afternoon a week, please call Barbara Ann Heegan, Director of Volunteers at 607-547-3190, or the Information Center at 607-547-3076 to speak with a volunteer. I can tell you from personal experience that it is a worthwhile endeavor.

Ann Carr is a CIC volunteer and Cancer Information Center Manager. She has been with the CIC since it opened in 1998.