

FALL/WINTER 2003

Why I Chose Oncology Care

“Oncology is different than any other type of medicine. In oncology, all the fluff disappears and you get to know the real person very quickly,” explained Judy Haag, R.N., at RMCC’s Midtown office for more than 20 years. “Oncology is very rewarding. I love what I do. It’s a blessing.”

Though their job descriptions and reasons for entering and staying in the field differ, Norman Aarestad, M.D., John Burke, M.D. and Registered Nurses Judy Haag and Lisa Hullinger all say the same thing --- if they had to do it again, their choice would still be oncology care.

Norman Aarestad, M.D.



A radiation oncologist for more than 30 years, Dr. Aarestad has practiced at RMCC for the last five and a-half years. A “little bird” told us he just recently celebrated his 70th birthday.

He entered the medical profession because of the opportunities it afforded to work with others while making a difference. Dr. Aarestad originally completed a residency in general radiation but he missed working with patients so he went back to school and became a radiation oncologist. Dr. Aarestad currently practices at the RMCC Thornton cancer center but has worked

at all the RMCC radiation oncology sites at one time or another.

“The combination of math, psychics and the opportunity to work directly with patients was perfect,” said Dr. Aarestad. “As a radiation oncologist, you see patients several times a week during treatments so there is a real sense of continuity of care.” As a matter of fact, Dr. Aarestad recently treated a new patient whose husband he had treated 15 years earlier.

“While we will all die sooner or later, it is rewarding to make a patient’s life more comfortable and gratifying for whatever period of time you can.”

Judy Haag, R.N.

While Judy Haag has been an oncology nurse for more than 20 years, her road to oncology care had a few detours. With a degree in speech therapy, Judy was a housewife and stay at home mom until her late 30s when personal circumstances led her to nursing school.

“As a kid, I had always wanted to be a nurse,” explained Judy. “As an adult, I chose nursing because it was a profession that would allow me to live and work anywhere I wanted.”

As Judy studied nursing and rotated through different medical specialties, she was drawn to oncology. After completing an oncology rotation during her last several weeks of training, she realized that oncology was it and the rest is history.

“RMCC, then Hematology Oncology Associates (now RMCC Midtown clinic), was the only place I applied and I’ve been here ever since,” said Judy. “The hiring nurse was looking for someone with maturity, which I had, and she taught me the rest.”

Judy worked as a chemotherapy nurse and then was Dr. Fink’s clinician for 20 years. She now works as the clinician for Drs. Berris and Hinshaw.

“As an oncology nurse, I help facilitate living and dying. I have lots of faith and while I can’t control the disease, I do all I can to help the patient get through the experience.”

Lisa Hullinger, R.N.

Lisa Hullinger has filled many different roles during her 13 years as an oncology nurse at RMCC. She served as an infusion nurse and clinician before taking over as research coordinator at the Thornton office five years ago.

“I went into nursing because it made sense for me at the time,” explained Lisa. “I was the only one out of my class who chose oncology. I liked the combination of psychology and medical surgical nursing.”

As a research coordinator, Lisa gets to know her patients extremely well as she works with them to determine what research studies might be of benefit.

“It’s exciting to get to offer these new, potentially lifesaving treatments to patients,” said Lisa. “Treatments are always changing as new studies become available. It is rewarding to treat a patient, knowing that you made a difference by seeing them through a trial that may yield a cure for their disease.”

John Burke, M.D.

After completing a medical oncology/hematology fellowship at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, Dr. Burke joined RMCC-Colorado Springs in July of this year.

When Dr. Burke first decided to attend medical school, he was unsure what specialty he would pursue but it didn’t take long for him to realize that oncology would be the perfect fit for his interests and personality. Dr. Burke’s interest in oncology/hematology began early in medical school while studying basic hematology and why cells become malignant. When he started his clinical work, he gravitated towards



When he started his clinical work, he gravitated towards oncology but the decision was finalized by the influence of one of his teachers, an oncologist who became his mentor.

While there are aspects of his job that are difficult, Dr. Burke enjoys working in oncology and the opportunity to work with and impact his patients' health.

"I really enjoy working with patients and the chance to interact with so many people on a daily basis," explained Dr. Burke.

In addition to working with patients, Dr. Burke also does research, focusing on hematologic cancers.

A Letter from the Executive Director

Once again, we are approaching the end of a very eventful year at RMCC. Not only have we experienced changes in leadership in many offices, but we have opened offices at Sky Ridge in Lone Tree, closed the Ft. Collins office, and six new physicians have joined RMCC. Our patients have all received excellent care from experienced physicians and staff, benefited from the finest technological advances in cancer care and have had the opportunity to participate in research studies. I applaud all of you whenever I consider the compassionate care that each RMCC employee offers to make a patient's day just a little easier, in light of all these changes.

Thank you for the empathy exhibited to patients, for being a patient advocate whenever necessary and for contributing to making RMCC the quality organization that it is. Each job at RMCC is equally valuable and each person brings news ideas concerning improvements that might be implemented. I appreciate those people who took the time to complete the employee survey. Your responses have been reviewed and from them the leadership team will determine what changes we can make to empower you to influence your environment.

Please have a safe and happy holiday season with friends and family. Best wishes to all.

Sincerely,



Tina Wilson, executive director

A Letter from the President

It is hard to believe that another year has nearly passed and that the holidays are once again upon us. As we look forward to this festive time of year, we have much to be grateful for. As always, we are thankful for the opportunity to serve our patients and to provide them with the latest in treatments and research.

As 2003 ends, we are excited about the changes that 2004 will bring. We look forward to the opening of new offices in Louisville and Parker. We also will be unveiling the first mobile PET-CT scanner in Colorado.

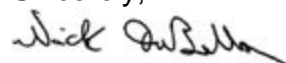
In addition to changes, 2004 will inevitably bring challenges as well. Working in the field of oncology care, we are accustomed to facing challenges each and every day as we guide our patients through one of the most difficult challenges of all – dealing with cancer.

As a corporation, we may be faced with a very difficult situation if the proposed cuts in Medicare drug reimbursements are signed into law. While more than 80 percent of cancer patients in Colorado are treated in outpatient settings such as RMCC, pending Medicare reform legislation would drastically cut Medicare reimbursement for cancer care by nearly \$16 billion or 30 percent over the next 10 years.

As the situation in Washington nears resolution, we will keep you updated. You can rest assured that our mission will not change. Although we will experience some cutbacks, we will deal with them accordingly. And while we may experience some “belt tightening,” we intend to keep our cancer centers open and plan to continue to serve Medicare patients.

I wish you and your family a wonderful holiday season.

Sincerely,



Nicholas DiBella, M.D., President

A Day in the Life

Angela Morgan – Customer Service Representative, RMCC Business Office

“There’s no lunch hour with this job,” joked Angela Morgan, customer service representative at the RMCC Business Office.

Angela is hopping from the time she walks in the door at 8:00 a.m. until she leaves at 4:30 p.m. Her responsibilities range from answering incoming patient calls related to billing to sorting the mail and processing secondary insurance claims.

Angela and her co-worker Jennifer answer 50 to 100 calls a day, coordinating their breaks to make sure the phones are always manned. In addition they process between 500 to 600 claims per day. They answer questions that patients have related to billing, research the answers to problems such as missing co-payments and process credit card payments. And when they are not on the phone or researching patients’ problems, they are finalizing the paper work necessary to submit claims to insurance companies.

Most of the time, Angela and Jennifer are able to solve patients’ problems without

referring them on. Although sometimes the research can take a few days, at times they are on the phone for up to an hour.

“We’re often referred to as buffers by the accounts receivable folks,” explained Angela, “but this really is a team job from the people in the clinics to those in the business office. We all have to pitch in and rely on each other to get the job done.”

As hectic as her days can be, Angela enjoys her job and the opportunity she has to help patients find solutions to their problems.

Susan Ash-Lee - Social Worker, RMCC Colorado Springs

From the time she was in kindergarten and had a classmate suffering from leukemia, Susan Ash-Lee wanted a career in oncology care. After an internship during undergraduate school, Susan knew that she would be an oncology social worker.

Susan has served as the social worker at the Colorado Springs center for nearly a year and a half. Most of her time is spent working with patients and patients’ families. She sees between six and eight patient/ patient families per day, helping patients deal with anxiety, depression, stress and a variety of other issues. She also meets with caregivers and families helping them cope with caregiver fatigue among other things. Many times patients and families are faced with financial issues. Susan acts as a resource, making sure the families know what kinds of financial aid are available and helping them determine if they may qualify.

When Susan is not meeting with patients and their families, she is coordinating the many programs and support groups that she facilitates each month. The monthly support groups deal with a variety of topics from living with metastatic and recurring cancers to stress management techniques. She also runs monthly programs that are open to all community members and include such topics as music, art and aromatherapy. She also hosts a quarterly educational, support group for caregivers.

“My days are always full. There is always something new to learn,” said Susan. “I enjoy the creativity involved in organizing the many programs and the opportunity to meet and help so many interesting people.”

Cindy Chavez - Practice Administrator, RMCC Boulder and Longmont

Cindy Chavez was promoted to practice administrator of the Boulder division which includes RMCC’s centers in Boulder, Longmont and Louisville (the Avista location will open in February 2004) in July after serving as Boulder’s practice manager for nearly two years.

As a member of RMCC’s leadership team, Cindy oversees the global operations of the Boulder division. This includes responsibility for finances, operations, human resources, internal and external communications, crisis management and pretty much anything else that may pop up throughout the day.

The majority of Cindy's days are spent in meetings. She has weekly meetings with the Boulder division's five physicians and also meets with supervisors weekly. Typically, Cindy also attends corporate meetings each week.

In addition to her daily responsibilities of managing the Boulder division, making sure all staff positions are filled and dealing with the crisis that inevitably arise, Cindy is also very active on the corporate level. She is very involved in assisting the IDX/IT team and she serves on the corporate communications, operations and compliance committees.

"While finding enough hours in the day to fit everything in is always a challenge, the opportunity to make a difference and have an impact on RMCC is extremely rewarding," Cindy explained.

Patient Profile: Cristina Bearden

Cristina Bearden, age 39, is a testament that regular breast self-examinations really do make a difference. With a strong family history of breast cancer -- her grandma passed away in her early 50s and an aunt was recently diagnosed -- Cristina regularly remembered to do self breast-examinations.

So in early July 2002 when she felt something suspicious, she wasted no time in getting in to see her physician. Just a few weeks later, she was diagnosed with breast cancer.

Less than a month after her initial diagnosis, Cristina underwent a double mastectomy which led to the discovery that her breast cancer was metastatic, having already spread to one lymph node on her right side. She immediately started chemotherapy and radiation under Dr. Paul's supervision at RMCC Rose.

Cristina was able to participate in a study, 01062, which combined standard chemotherapy treatments with a drug that had originally been used in treating more advanced stage breast cancer. After undergoing more than four months of chemotherapy treatments, Cristina underwent five weeks of radiation. Since Cristina completed radiation in May 2003, all tests have shown her to be cancer free.

"Life has gotten back to normal; it's almost as if nothing really happened," stated Cristina. "It was a stage, something I had to go through that would eventually be over."

As the mother of two young children, Cristina did not have much time to dwell on her cancer. She had too much living to do. But she is thankful to her physicians who she completely trusted to make the right decisions concerning her care and she has a message for women everywhere. "The key is to know your own body," explained Cristina.

Kudos

- Lisa Mullineaux, RMCC genetic counselor and Sharon Graw spoke at the Latina Breast Cancer Survivor's Meeting on Saturday, October 4.
- Dr. Otsuka was a co-author of an abstract entitled "A phase II study of carboplatin and gemcitabine in patients with untreated extensive small cell lung cancer," presented at the ASCO annual meeting in Chicago.
- Dr. Carter presented an abstract entitled "Two year survival for concurrent carboplatin, paclitaxel and hyper fractionated radiotherapy in unresectable head and neck cancer," at the ASCO annual meeting in Chicago.

Updates

Community Events

- Colorado Cancer Conference – RMCC was a sponsor of this statewide conference held on August 11th and 12th in Denver. The conference focused on quality of life and palliative care, prevention and intervention strategies, science and information, insurability, clinical skill building, health disparities and tobacco control. The more than 300 attendees included physicians, community outreach specialists, public health educators, nurses, social workers and other individuals and organizations with an interest in cancer prevention and control.
- Cancer Research Expo – RMCC hosted this first-time event on Saturday, September 27, 2003 in Denver with more than 80 participants. The Cancer Research Expo opened with a general session on the role of clinical trials in oncology care. Attendees then broke into sessions on specific diseases and the event ended with a panel discussion featuring RMCC patients that have been in a clinical trial. A special thanks to the nine RMCC physicians that spent part of their weekend speaking at the event. And an extra special thanks to Dr. Robert Jotte for getting to the Channel 7 newsroom at 7:00 am on that Saturday to talk about and promote the event.
- Light the Night – RMCC was a sponsor of four of these events that benefited The Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. Events were held in Denver on September 18, Colorado Springs on September 19, Boulder on September 26 and Longmont on September 27, 2003. RMCC staffed a booth and had many staff members and physicians at each event.
- Prostate Cancer Screenings – RMCC worked with the American Cancer Society, the Prostate Cancer Education Council and other community partners to host prostate cancer screenings on Saturday, September 20, 2003. They were very successful with 32 men screened in Longmont, 40 in Boulder, 60 at Midtown and over 400 in Colorado Springs. Thanks to the RMCC staff and physicians that volunteered and made these events possible.
- Denver Komen Race for the Cure – RMCC was a sponsor of this event that was held in and around the Pepsi Center on Sunday, October 12, 2003. The RMCC

team had 66 members and a number of RMCC staff and physicians volunteered to staff the RMCC booth in the expo area.

Managed Care

A few changes in the payor arena include:

- Rocky Mountain Health Plans discontinued its Medicaid line of business on the Front Range as of June 30, 2003. Colorado Access is now the only Medicaid HMO in Colorado.
- Great West/One Health Plan has changed their name to Great West Healthcare.
- Humana has rolled out a new “consumer driven health plan” in Colorado named SmartSuite. The plan offers employers the opportunity to give their employees choices in the features of their health plan that can help to contain costs.
- Medicare+Choice HMO plans were required to announce any service area withdrawals in September. So far, Kaiser, PacifiCare (Secure Horizons) and Rocky Mountain Health Plans have all indicated that they intend to continue in their current service areas. We will get information on any changes in co-pays/benefits out to the offices as soon as it is received.
- PacifiCare has renamed their commercial products. The HMO product is now called SignatureValue. The POS product is now called SignaturePOS. The PPO product is now called SignatureOptions. The self-directed health plan is now called SignatureFreedom and the indemnity product is now called SignatureIndependence.

New contracts:

- RMCC group contract with Colorado Access with an effective date of November 1, 2003.

Legislative Update

In the final phase of the 2003 legislative session (which is expected to end Thanksgiving week), work continues on the development of a Medicare prescription drug bill. The current prescription drug legislation as passed by both the House of Representatives and the Senate includes unprecedented cuts in Medicare funding for cancer care. Since the House and Senate’s passage of their respective drug bills this summer, Congressional Conferees have been meeting to merge the two versions into a single package. Thanks to the tremendous public awareness and political pressure that has been brought to bear on the cancer cuts, a final decision has thus far not been reached. At present, the situation remains very fluid, and the community remains fully engaged in the effort to achieve truly balanced reform.

RMCC physicians, staff and patients visited Capitol Hill on September 17 with more than 1,000 other individuals to oppose the proposed cancer cuts. In addition, Dr. Allen Cohn and Dr. Tony DeCarolis were interviewed by local radio stations on the current legislative situation. Dr. Nicholas DiBella had a letter to the editor published in the Denver Post regarding the proposed cancer cuts on October 17, 2003.



RMCC Foundation Update

The 4th Annual Spirit Sprint, held on Saturday, July 12, 2003, in Denver's City Park was a tremendous success. With record setting numbers, the event raised more than \$60,000 for the Rocky Mountain Cancer Centers Foundation. Almost 400 individuals registered for the 4th Annual Spirit Sprint and over 330 participated the day of the event.

Fifty-four of the race participants were RMCC physicians or staff. An additional 45 RMCC staff members were volunteers at the Spirit Sprint. RMCC Aurora had the highest percentage of staff participating in the event. The traveling trophy will move from the Longmont office to Aurora. RMCC staff members raised \$1,740 in pledges as part of the event.

All the money raised by the 4th Annual Spirit Sprint goes directly to the RMCC Foundation. The RMCC Foundation provides funds to current cancer patients in financial need. In 2002, more than \$73,000 was distributed to 153 cancer patients to cover expenses such as housing, food, utilities, medical supplies and insurance.

A big thanks to all the RMCC physicians and staff who helped and participated in the 4th Annual Spirit Sprint. The event would not have been possible without your assistance.

The 2004 Spirit Sprint Committee needs you. If you are interested in participating on the committee please contact Dana McCroskey at (303) 418-7600 or email her at dana.mccroskey@usoncology.com

4th Annual Spirit Sprint t-shirts are for sale for \$5.00 (in Adult L and Adult XL), please contact Erin Hought at erin.hought@usoncology.com to purchase t-shirts.

Clinical Leadership Council

Results from the RMCC employee satisfaction survey are in. The purposes of the survey were to evaluate employee satisfaction; obtain ideas for improving employee satisfaction; and increase employee satisfaction and retention. Of the 400 plus RMCC employees, 216 responded. Congratulations to Brandy Deluna, radiation referral coordinator, on winning the \$100 check for completing the survey.

The great news is that on a scale of one to five (with one being not at all satisfied and five being completely satisfied), RMCC employees ranked their overall job satisfaction at a 3.81. In addition, the majority of RMCC employees would refer a family member or friend to RMCC for treatment. Most employees feel good about communication between themselves and their direct supervisor, and they are satisfied with their relationships with coworkers.

On the down side, many employees expressed dissatisfaction with their benefits (TOWP, insurance and 401K). This information has been shared with US Oncology. Another result that was not shocking to the group was a general dissatisfaction with

salaries. We are currently looking at salary inequities and hope to address that in the near future. We are also considering additional bonus opportunities.

Thanks to all of those that completed the satisfaction survey. Stay tuned for reports of more actions based on the survey responses.

News from the Field



ACCOUNTING DEPARTMENT

Congratulations to Greg Paschke, our regional finance director, and his wife Tracy on the birth of their baby girl, Sarah Marie, born August 10, 2003.

AURORA

We welcome Jill Straton, medical records technician, Julie Candia, PRN, RN., and Felitia Jones, lab supervisor. Thank you to Jacque Leach who has helped out as lab supervisor since Aurora opened.

In October, a bowl-a-thon was held to raise funds for Maria Standish, RN, who is fighting gastric cancer. Staff from multiple RMCC offices, physicians, patients and friends enjoyed an afternoon of bowling, food and fun. More than 230 games were played and more than \$5,500 was raised to help Maria. Thanks to Sugar and Spice Clowns for providing face painting and balloons, Amgen for the refreshments and AMF Bowling for hosting the event. And a big thank you to everyone from the Standish family.

We welcome Radiation Therapists Amy Harris and Sarah Kusterer and Chief Therapist, Corinne Sigel. Congratulations to Julie Bosacker on her promotion to lead therapist/dosimetrist.

BOULDER

We welcome Jenny Fox, MD. Dr. Fox joined the Boulder office in October. She is a Colorado native who grew-up in Boulder. We would also like to welcome new staff members Donna Hamm, Cori Lunetta, Donna Tanguay and Rose Randazzo.

Congratulations to Pat Dingman and her husband, Michael, on the birth of their son, Kenneth Dingman. Kenneth was born on July 19, 2003.

COLORADO SPRINGS

We welcome new front office staff members, Meggan Stone, operator; and Lezlie Hemmert, scheduling.

Congratulations to Katie Thompson, medical records, on turning 21, buying a house and getting married all in the same weekend.

The Race for the Cure in Colorado Springs was on August 10th at the US Air Force

Academy.

Welcome to Tanya Walker, student radiation therapist from Washburn University's Radiation Therapy Program.

Congratulations to Dr. Mitchell on his one year anniversary. Also, congratulations to expectant parents Melissa and Matt Weege and to Barb Heitzmann on her granddaughter's second place finish in the statewide marching band championship.

RMCC Halloween Costume Corner

AURORA RADIATION



AURORA MEDICAL ONCOLOGY



BOULDER The best Halloween costume in Boulder was Shelly Besaw, charge entry specialist, dressing as Bea Glamorous. (left)

COLORADO SPRINGS

Sharon Shelton, laboratory technician, won the costume contest on Halloween. (right)





**COLORADO SPRINGS
MEDICAL ONCOLOGY**

**LITTLETON
RADIATION**



Questions or Comments

How do you like the newsletter? Your feedback is important. We are always looking for story ideas, as well as suggestions, on how to make the newsletter better. If you have any ideas, suggestions, comments or questions, please contact Tiffanie Burnett at Tiffanie.Burnett@USOncology.com