While having taken care of thousands of patients with lymphoma and other blood cancers, it is also at the laboratory bench where Joseph R. Bertino, MD, chief scientific officer at The Cancer Institute of New Jersey, leaves an indelible impression. Motivated by the passing of a young nephew from leukemia and the patients he first cared for as a resident, Dr. Bertino, a university professor of pharmacology and medicine at UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, has devoted most of his life to improving therapies for cancer and hematologic disorders. For more than 50 years he has contributed his expertise toward establishing the foundation of modern cancer research.

How far has cancer research come in the past half century? To put things in perspective, a form of nitrogen mustard, developed initially for military use, was considered “advanced” for its time in the 1940s. It was used to treat lymphoma and became one of the first modern chemotherapy drugs. Methotrexate, used in the treatment of both solid and non-solid tumors, was another early chemotherapy drug that led to successful treatment outcomes and would serve as a focal point in later years for Bertino’s work. Over the past few decades, safer and more effective chemotherapy agents have been developed, but this form of treatment was still in its infancy when Bertino first started his career.

Through the years, Bertino has seen a number of game-changers when it comes to cancer therapies – discoveries that re-defined how research is conducted and helped spur advanced treatments. In parti— Continued on Page 4

Embarking on an Exciting Future for The Cancer Institute of New Jersey

Effective July 1, The Cancer Institute of New Jersey will become a separate and independent unit of Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. This integration is made possible through the New Jersey Medical and Health Sciences Education Restructuring Act, which was approved by the state Legislature and signed by Governor Chris Christie this past summer. The move integrates all of the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey, except University Hospital and the School of Osteopathic Medicine, into Rutgers University. As required by the Rutgers Act of 1956, the two main governing bodies of Rutgers University formally approved the move in November. The integration with Rutgers will allow The Cancer Institute of New Jersey to enhance its statewide reach and create new relationships, research opportunities, and delivery of services throughout broader audiences both within and beyond our state’s borders. Patients can be assured that they will continue to receive the same excellent care in the same location and insurance coverage will remain the same. The Cancer Institute of New Jersey’s contact information and web site address will remain the same as well.
Director’s Corner

“Making Research Count for Patients.”

That is something we do every day at The Cancer Institute of New Jersey and it is the title of the most recent progress report to the nation on both scientific and clinical study of cancer from the American Association for Cancer Research (AACR). In 1971, one of every 69 Americans was a cancer survivor, according to the AACR. Today, thanks to research advances, that number has significantly improved to one in 23. This past year alone, eight new therapies were approved by the Food and Drug Administration for cancer treatment, a majority of which are more targeted, less toxic, and more effective than older therapies commonly used. It is all thanks to a foundation of scientific exploration and translation of those discoveries directly to patients that spans for more than four decades.

No one understands this impact better than The Cancer Institute of New Jersey’s Chief Scientific Officer Dr. Joseph Bertino, who has been both at the laboratory bench and in the clinical setting for more than 50 years. In our cover story, you’ll learn more about Dr. Bertino’s scientific contributions and his unique perspective on how far cancer research has come in this past half century and where this scientific discovery is headed.

Along with our aim of developing better and more personalized treatments for our patients, it is the patients themselves who inspire us to reach further with our research. In this issue’s “Survivor’s Corner,” you’ll meet teacher Brianne Bruns, a 33-year-old acute myelogenous leukemia survivor, who underwent a bone marrow transplant and is back teaching eighth-grade language arts.

But we can’t continue to advance our research without continuous funding and collaboration. In our Foundation section, read about the everyday heroes whose generosity and commitment are helping to propel new discoveries, many of which are supported through collaborative efforts.

One of the newest members to The Cancer Institute of New Jersey is the focus of our “Faculty Feature” — Dr. Samuel Bunting, an assistant professor of molecular biology and biochemistry at Rutgers University. In working with our Genomic Instability and Tumor Progression Program, Dr. Bunting and members of his Rutgers lab are working closely with investigators at The Cancer Institute of New Jersey in exploring tumor suppressor genes, as well as DNA damage signaling and repair.

Such collaboration with our Rutgers colleagues will be enhanced on July 1, when The Cancer Institute of New Jersey is integrated into Rutgers University under legislation that calls for the restructuring of higher education in the Garden State. This relationship will allow for new research opportunities so that we can extend our reach as a National Cancer Institute-designated Comprehensive Cancer Center and enhance our ability to “make research count” for patients here in New Jersey and beyond.

Sincerely,

Robert S. DiPaola, MD
Director, The Cancer Institute of New Jersey
Associate Dean for Oncology Programs and Professor of Medicine
UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School
Ultra-Shortened Radiation Treatment for Breast Cancer Explored

Conventional courses of radiation treatment following breast cancer surgery commonly run for seven to eight weeks. There is reason to believe that patient comfort and convenience can be enhanced if therapy is compressed into a single week or less, with multiple treatments administered each day — an approach known as Accelerated Partial Breast Irradiation (APBI). Investigators at The Cancer Institute of New Jersey are examining three such dosing schedules delivered post-surgery in shorter courses than are commonly administered with APBI.

For at least six months, investigators followed participants who received the first of those dosing schedules. This first group consisted of women 50 years or older who were treated with four doses of 7 Gy (units of energy) twice daily through a catheter tube device that is inserted into the breast. The device, which delivers a radioactive seed to the affected area during each dose, has multiple treatment channels for the seed to travel in, ensuring a more precise target.

Researchers say their findings indicate that ultra-short courses of APBI with novel dosing levels can be logistically achieved and are well-tolerated. Toxicities were minor and resolved with follow-up or minimal intervention.

While the second and third phases of the study need to be conducted, the portion already completed has allowed investigators to make comparisons between results from the initial group and a recently unveiled European approach that delivers a single dose of radiation during breast surgery while women are still under anesthesia. While that approach has been found to be safe, it has stirred debate over what some consider to be a very serious potential drawback — that complete information on the tumor status is not available at the time of radiation because the pathology has not been reviewed.

The lead author of the current research, Atif J. Khan, MD, a radiation oncologist at The Cancer Institute of New Jersey and assistant professor of radiation oncology at UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, says his team’s findings appear to eliminate that uncertainty in an acceptable way. “While further study is needed, this important research offers women an abbreviated course of radiotherapy without the drawbacks of the single-dose intraoperative European approach.”

Dr. Khan’s research was presented at the CTTR-AACR San Antonio Breast Cancer Symposium this past December. Meanwhile, investigators have opened the second phase of the study, which is evaluating a three-dose schedule of 8.25 Gy over two days.

FACULTY FEATURE
Samuel Bunting, PhD

Samuel Bunting, PhD, is an assistant professor in the Department of Molecular Biology and Biochemistry at Rutgers University. He is also a member of the Genomic Instability and Tumor Progression Program at The Cancer Institute of New Jersey.

A key feature of cancer cells is the presence of mutations, changes in the DNA that cause the normal genetic program to be corrupted, enabling the cancer cell to divide and spread uncontrollably. Understanding the mechanisms leading to mutation is the goal of Dr. Samuel Bunting’s research program.

Dr. Bunting became interested in mechanisms regulating DNA damage and repair while undertaking graduate studies at the University of Cambridge. Studying B and T lymphocytes, which are white blood cells that play a key role in recognizing and clearing infectious material from the body, he recognized that cells have different ways of dealing with DNA breaks. Uniquely among mammalian somatic cells, lymphocytes induce breaks in their own DNA. These breaks are not repaired accurately to restore the correct balance of chromosome mutations to occur, which can initiate cancer. This process enables the formation of a limitless range of receptor molecules, which can recognize any marker of an infectious pathogen. However, it also provides a potential mechanism for mutagenic genomic rearrangements to occur, which can initiate cancer.

In his current role at Rutgers, Dr. Bunting continues to focus on fundamental questions about how cells regulate the balance of error-free versus potentially mutagenic DNA repair. In collaboration with investigators at The Cancer Institute of New Jersey including Drs. Zhiyuan Shen, Bing Xia and Shridar Ganesan, his lab aims to identify new opportunities for clinical intervention based on understanding the complexity of repair strategies in human cells.
50 Years of Cancer Research:
A “Golden” Opportunity

In other research, he and his team showed the benefit of a combination therapy for non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma (one of the first curative regimens), which he says was personally gratifying. “In the late 1960s it was quite satisfying to see that some forms of cancer could be cured with chemotherapy,” Bertino noted.

Looking back, Bertino says he wouldn’t change a thing and that he has been fortunate to have worked with so many talented mentors, colleagues and students through the years.

For many investigators, there is always that one “A-ha!” moment they never forget. For Bertino it came while he was on sabbatical from Stanford from 1976 – 77 working with colleagues Robert T. Schimke, Rod Kelkens and Frederick W. Alt on research involving methotrexate. “We knew that when cancer cells became resistant to methotrexate, the proteins on the cell increased and there was more ‘message’ being delivered to the cells telling them to block the drug from doing its job in attacking the cancer. We wondered how this was occurring. Using laboratory models, we found that cells had the ability to multiply genes that were coded for the target for methotrexate, a protein called dihydrofolate reductase. This finding was eye-opening in that everyone thought DNA was very stable.” Called “gene amplification,” Bertino says this mechanism is very important in cancer biology because of its ability to trigger resistance to anti-cancer drugs and its ability to increase levels of oncogenes that contribute to cancer.

A long-time mentor, Bertino firmly believes that the training invested in today’s young researchers will lead to tomorrow’s cancer advances. Bertino was on the ground floor when a pivotal advancement in this area took place. The only fellowships that encompassed cancer-related research when Bertino was a student were those in hematology, as oncology was not a specialty until the 1960s. Yale, where Bertino would become an assistant professor of Pharmacology and Medicine in 1961, was one of the first schools in the nation to offer a medical oncology program with a focus on treating patients.

While numerous cancer research advances have been made over the past 50 years, work still needs to be done. Bertino notes limited resources make it difficult to take advantage of the possibilities and potential that currently exists, but that these are “very exciting times.” “As far as advancements for patients with melanoma and kidney cancer, there were no treatments that worked for many years. In the past five years new drugs have been developed that are having a positive impact on both cancers. These drugs are not providing a full cure, but they are allowing patients to better manage their disease and for a longer period of time,” he said. “There is every indication that we will continue to move forward with the development of novel treatments and that combination therapies will be made more effective.”

As far as the next 50 years for cancer research, he says it is hard to predict but feels more individualized treatments will be available to offer as investigators begin to understand more about the patient’s health and physical make up in conjunction with understanding what drives cancer tumors.

Looking back, Bertino says he wouldn’t change a thing and that he has been fortunate to have worked with so many talented mentors, colleagues and students through the years.
Surgical Milestone Reached for Urologic Oncology Chief

Marking a major milestone in what has become a fast-growing standard of care in prostate cancer surgery, Isaac Kim, MD, PhD, the chief of urologic oncology at The Cancer Institute of New Jersey has completed his 1,000th robotic prostatectomy at Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital (RWJUH), the Flagship Hospital of The Cancer Institute of New Jersey.

Dr. Kim, an associate professor of surgery at UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, performed the operation recently on a Newark man diagnosed with high-risk localized prostate cancer. Robotic prostatectomy allows a surgeon to control a set of robotic arms that hold tiny surgical instruments used to remove the patient’s cancer. Unlike the traditional open method of prostate surgery that results in a six-inch scar in the abdominal area, patients who undergo this minimally-invasive surgical technique are left with incisions smaller than a dime. In the U.S., robotic prostatectomy is being performed on 85 percent of men who have their prostate removed (Journal of Clinical Oncology - doi: 10.1200/JCO.2011.36.862). This compares to only 10 percent of men a decade ago after the procedure first received FDA approval and started to be widely used.

Along with a minimally-invasive approach, the procedure allows for additional precision with a 3-D view of the tissue and delicate nerves that envelop the prostate. Reduced blood loss, shorter hospital stays and a faster time to achieve full continence are also hallmarks of the procedure.

Patient Sidney Travis had his cancer detected through a prostate exam during a regular check-up with his physician this past spring. He had just turned 50, and his girlfriend – a registered nurse – encouraged him to have it done.

“I don’t think getting screened is at the top of anyone’s ‘to-do’ list, but being African American and having a father and two uncles who battled prostate cancer, I knew it was time to be more proactive about my health,” he said. A former history teacher, Travis is currently busy starting his own solar consultation company and takes time to keep up a daily walking regimen. “It’s a period in my life where I don’t want anything to slow me down,” he noted, especially a longer recovery that the traditional open prostatectomy method usually holds. “I was presented with other treatment options at another facility, but I felt that it was important to explore the benefits available to me before making an immediate decision. Given my age and my active lifestyle, and after I learned more from Dr. Kim, the robotic procedure seemed to be the right fit.”

While the robotic technology allows a surgeon more advantages, Kim is quick to point out that it is having a surgeon who is well trained and experienced in the technology that helps account for positive outcomes. “Those in the field consider 250 procedures as a benchmark where one can start to achieve positive outcomes on a consistent basis. And we at The Cancer Institute of New Jersey and RWJUH are proud to be driving the next generation of innovative robotic surgical techniques, by offering specialized training to our surgeons,” he noted. Kim and Ephrem O. Olweny, MD, assistant professor of surgery at UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School teach robotics as part of the residency program.

Along with the 1,000 robotic prostatectomies, Kim, who is also the executive director of the Dean and Betty Gallo Prostate Cancer Center at The Cancer Institute of New Jersey, has also performed approximately 100 robotic kidney procedures.

An active researcher, Kim is currently studying the effects of a growth factor called bone morphogenetic protein-6 (BMP-6) on prostate cancer resistance to castration thanks to the generous support of The Marion & Norman Tanzman Charitable Foundation.
Meet CINJ’s Clinical Team

Sue Stephens, MSW, LCSW, ACSW, is a licensed clinical social worker in the Pediatric Hematology/Oncology Program at The Cancer Institute of New Jersey. Sue graduated from Douglass College-Rutgers, University and earned her MSW at Columbia University School of Social Work.

Sue has worked with patients and their families in active treatment and those in the Valerie Fund/Cancer Institute of New Jersey LITE program for survivors of pediatric cancer at The Cancer Institute of New Jersey. Her job focuses on helping infants to young adults and their families cope with the psychosocial effects of diagnosis, treatment, and any long-term effects of cancer. Children have been her prime focus since high school when she was the babysitter for the neighborhood kids. “Each age group and each child has their own perspectives of their world. The commonalities and diversity in how kids develop is amazing to me,” she says.

Sue chose social work as a career because she could do both counseling and advocate for services and programs beneficial to families. “A major psychosocial concern in pediatrics is to minimize the negative impact of cancer and treatment on cognitive, emotional, and social development of patients. It is just as important for our adolescents and young adults as it is for the youngest children. Another focus is helping families of patients cope with the stressors of treatment. The goal is to help all survive the best way possible,” she said.

Sue’s experience includes developmental disabilities, pediatric brain injury rehabilitation and hospice. While working in a pediatric rehabilitation hospital, she first learned about neuro-oncology and the late- and long-term effects of pediatric cancer. It was also when Sue first heard about The Cancer Institute of New Jersey’s Pediatric Hematology/Oncology Program through her patients. “They and their families consistently spoke of how well they had been cared for there. This is one of the reasons why I wanted to join their team when the opportunity arose,” she notes.

Sue is a member of the Association of Pediatric Oncology Social Workers, where she recently helped revise workshop curriculum for new social workers so that they can “be a voice for patients and families.”

A Pledge to Good Health: Body & Soul

For the past year, The Cancer Institute of New Jersey Office of Community Outreach under Kiameesha Evans, DrPH(c), MPH, MCHES, program director, has been working with houses of worship in the central New Jersey area to improve nutrition and physical activity among their congregation members. After months of recruitment and outreach in 2011, 19 houses of worship were selected to participate in Body & Soul* an adaptation of the evidence-based program developed by the National Cancer Institute, American Cancer Society and other national partners. With the commitment of Johnson & Johnson to help address health priorities impacting community residents, the Office of Community Outreach is working with these houses of worship through 2013 to build their awareness about nutrition and physical activity — especially the many benefits of both, which include cancer prevention.

The first phase of Body & Soul* included monthly sessions with experts in nutrition and exercise science at Rutgers University and Montclair State University to educate representatives from selected houses of worship on how to deliver educational programs to their members and the community at large. Some of the activities that resulted from these sessions include the development of walking clubs, creation of ‘health information stations’ at houses of worship and the incorporation of health literature into materials distributed at worship services.

With phase I of Body & Soul* completed, the next components are ready to launch. Phase II, which will start this spring, will invite houses of worship to have a consultation with faculty from the Department of Exercise Science and Physical Education at Montclair State University to assist with the development of on-site physical activity programs. During this summer, phase III will invite houses of worship to have produce delivered directly to their sites for distribution to their congregations and/or community feeding programs.

An indirect program goal of Body & Soul* is to build the capacity of participating organizations and help them promote opportunities that will allow nutrition and physical activity programming to flourish in local houses of worship for years to come.

To learn more about Body & Soul*, visit www.cinj.org/outreach and click on the Body & Soul* logo.
In the aftermath of the chaos created by ‘Superstorm’ Sandy this past fall, it is good to be reminded of the concept of preparedness. Although hurricanes, blizzards and other severe weather may be rare to our Northeast Corridor, being prepared in the face of such events is all of our responsibility. If you are under a doctor’s care for cancer or other chronic illness, you may want to give extra focus to making a plan and assembling an emergency preparedness kit.

Agencies and emergency preparedness organizations such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, American Red Cross and New Jersey Office of Emergency Management have terrific resources available that can help you map out a preparedness plan.

Almost every preparedness list will contain items such as water, food, flashlights, batteries, extra cash and family contact information, but don’t forget about any healthcare needs. Along with a first-aid kit, pay special attention to personal medications and copies of health-related documents.

When possible and with sufficient lead time, a seven-day supply of essential medications would be an ideal minimum. Many medications cannot be suddenly stopped without serious side-effects. Additionally, many of the medications prescribed to treat cancer, for instance, are intended to be taken on a specific schedule. Often various supportive medications are prescribed to help manage treatment side effects and going just a few days without could be uncomfortable and unsafe.

If you need to access the healthcare system during an emergency, having the correct, up to date information is helpful. At the conclusion of each contact point in your care (primary doctor, emergency room visit, or a visit to The Cancer Institute of New Jersey, for instance), you should receive a visit summary which should include your plan of care and current medication list. Bringing this list and your current medications with you can assist the next medical contact in understanding the most recent events in your care.

Be certain to update your personal information frequently to include:

- Changes in your medical condition
- Past surgeries and hospitalizations
- Current medications, allergies or adverse side-effects
- Names and contact information of doctors and pharmacies
- Recent laboratory results
- Insurance information including copies of your cards (front and back)

There are many creative ways to store this information including waterproof zip-up bags and laminating for physical material and flash drives for back-up copies stored in computer files.

Lastly, if you need to contact your physician during a state of emergency and cannot reach them through normal phone/e-mail methods, calling the hospital to which they admit patients may be helpful to locate them.

Remember, never give in to the complacency that an emergency event will never happen; be prepared!

For additional information, visit:


American Red Cross: “Be Red Cross Ready: Get a kit. Make a plan. Be informed.” www.redcross.org/prepare/location/home-family


Jacquelyn Lauria, RN, MS, APM-C, AOCNP, is the director of Oncology Nursing Services at The Cancer Institute of New Jersey.

Michael P. Kane, RPh, BCOP, is the director of Oncology Pharmacy Services at The Cancer Institute of New Jersey.

Both were on the front lines of managing patient care and medications during and after ‘Superstorm’ Sandy.
You received a bone marrow transplant from your brother Brandon Bruns as part of your treatment. Has that experience changed your relationship with him?

A: My brother saved my life. Our relationship has changed dramatically since being diagnosed with AML. We were always close, but not this close; he’s my best friend and he truly made my ‘journey’ with cancer bearable.

Q: You were only four years into your career when diagnosed. Did you think you might have to give up teaching?

A: Giving up teaching never crossed my mind. I was scared beyond belief, but I don’t remember a point ever thinking I was going to die, or be that badly off that I couldn’t teach. I was, however, devastated that I’d be out for a year. Because I’m a bit stubborn, and I missed being around the kids, I went back in ten months!

Q: What lessons or advice from your training as an educator do you think helped you through your journey with cancer?

A: I don’t think my job prepared me for this. To get through cancer you need to be positive. I’ve always been known to have a smile on my face, so this was no different. I did, however, yearn to learn and know EVERY aspect of my journey. I think I was a great patient – I understood everything that was happening and wanted to know why and how things worked.

Q: What lessons or advice do you have for others going through this experience?

A: Advice would be not to go to the Internet for anything (cancer related). I had the luxury of having 110 percent trust in the decisions that Dr. Roger Strair, Dr. Vimal Patel, my amazing nurses and others needed to make. I never questioned anything and that gave me some solace. Drs. Strair and Patel always ensured, then and now, that I understood what, scientifically, was happening to my body. It made sense. That, in turn, put me at ease. I’m not afraid to say the word “cancer,” because it doesn’t have to be a scary thing.

Brianna’s father died of cancer in the fall of 2010 – several months after she was diagnosed. And even though her mother suffers from Parkinson’s disease, Brianna says she is grateful for everything, no matter what – especially that her dad was able to see her get well before he passed away, the special relationship she shares with her brother, and the “amazing” people at The Cancer Institute of New Jersey involved in her care. She feels that she has learned a lot through her experience and that she is a better person because of her cancer.
Educating the Next Generation

While The Cancer Institute of New Jersey is well known for its comprehensive treatment and research components, one may not realize the dedication given to our education mission. One who exhibits this trait every day is Serena Wong, MD, a medical oncologist in the Stacy Goldstein Breast Cancer Center at The Cancer Institute of New Jersey. Along with a busy schedule seeing patients and working with colleagues on clinical research, she is the associate program director of the Hematology/Oncology Fellowship Program at UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School. The three-year program provides in-depth training in blood disorders and diseases, solid tumor oncology and transfusion medicine; experience in the performance and/or interpretation of specialized diagnostic procedures in blood disorders and cancers; and an exposure to research in these areas.

“As New Jersey’s only National Cancer Institute-designated Comprehensive Cancer Center, it is our aim at The Cancer Institute of New Jersey to arm the next generation of hematologist/oncologists with the education they need to become experts in the field,” notes Dr. Wong, who is an assistant professor of medicine at UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School. Wong knows first-hand the benefits to the program, as she graduated from the program in 2008. This is her fifth year helping to lead it.

“A unique benefit to training at an NCI-designated Comprehensive Cancer Center is the access to clinical trials,” she says. “Our hematology/oncology fellows have the ability to enroll patients they are evaluating in these novel studies and the opportunity to follow them throughout the process. From a personal vantage point, they get to experience translational research from patient bedside to laboratory bench and back again.”

Wong notes this comprehensive experience with the research component allows fellows to become immediately familiar with the clinical trials process, including the development of the study itself.

Vimal Patel, MD, a medical oncologist in the Hematologic Malignancies Program at The Cancer Institute of New Jersey, graduated from the program last spring and says it set the foundation for his career. “Thanks to the truly amazing physicians, teachers, and role models I trained with, I am prepared to meet the professional challenges that lie ahead of me. It was a terrific experience to work side-by-side with people who embody values that I want to emulate as an oncologist. Having joined the faculty now, I will have the opportunity to learn from my colleagues for the rest of my career. I couldn’t ask for anything more,” notes Dr. Patel, who is also an assistant professor of medicine at UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School.

Whether graduates move on to private practice or to academic institutions that have a clinical component, Wong says she and her colleagues know they have done their jobs in preparing the next generation of hematologist/oncology specialists. “It is our way of giving back while moving the field of hematology/oncology forward.”

The program is accredited by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME).

Researchers Awarded $2.4M to Find ‘Achilles Heel’ in Aggressive Cancers

Eileen White, PhD, associate director for basic science at The Cancer Institute of New Jersey and professor of molecular biology and biochemistry at Rutgers University and colleagues from Princeton University have been awarded a five-year, $2.4 million dollar research grant (1R01CA 163591-01) from the National Cancer Institute. The funding will support research to identify metabolic vulnerabilities of particularly aggressive cancers — those with mutations in the Ras cancer gene. Led by principal investigators Dr. White and Joshua D. Rabinowitz, MD, PhD, professor in the Department of Chemistry and the Lewis-Sigler Institute for Integrative Genomics at Princeton University, the project is an extension of a collaborative effort between their two laboratories. That work, which has examined cancer metabolism, was initially funded through a National Institutes of Health Challenge Grant.
After losing her mother following a long and courageous battle against breast cancer, Krista Kasper was inspired by the tragic loss to help others affected by the disease while raising awareness and funds to fight it. She formed the Mama Mare Breast Cancer Foundation (“Mama Mare”), and one of the foundation’s first projects recently came to fruition with the dedication of a Healing and Education Center named in honor of Kasper’s mother, Mary Ellen Pernice, on Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital’s (RWJUH) 4-North Oncology Unit.

The room provides a serene area for cancer patients and their families as well as a resource center complete with HP Elite Books donated by Mama Mare, which give patients easy access to research and help them stay in touch with family and friends during their hospital stay, “smart” furniture and a boutique to provide wigs, turbans, prosthesis and other items needed by cancer patients as they undergo treatment.

“When someone you love is undergoing treatment for cancer, it can be a long and emotionally draining experience for everyone. Treatment often involves lengthy hospital stays,” Kasper explained. “We hope that with this room, we can ease the anxiety of patients and families. I love knowing it is being used and wonderful things are happening there.”

“The Mama Mare room is a Special Place for Education and Healing at Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital.

For years medical institutions have discussed cancer patients after treatment had occurred. At Meridian Health, this approach continues, but with a proactive twist.

“Meridian Health is unique because we are an integrated, six hospital system, with outstanding inter-hospital communication,” says Mark Krasna, MD, medical director of Meridian Cancer Care. “By utilizing system-wide resources and building on the strengths already existing at each site, our goal is to provide excellence in cancer evaluation and treatment, with the caring and personal attention that is so important to patients and their families.”

Meridian’s multidisciplinary team of physicians, which includes a primary care physician, medical and radiation oncologists, surgeons, gastroenterologists, pulmonologists, radiologists, pathologists and other related specialists, take a prospective view of patient cases prior to recommending treatment options. Together, the physicians review cases and reach a consensus regarding what is ultimately the best treatment plan for the patient.

Prior to providing treatment, these case presentations serve as an opportunity to ensure that everyone is asking the right questions, discussing the appropriate treatment algorithms, and leveraging the unique expertise of each member of the team. In addition, the team physician and nurse navigator communicate with the patients’ primary
such a welcoming, versatile space. It’s a place where patients and their families can rest and spend time outside of their rooms; it’s a place where patients can meet to support one another and discuss their challenges and triumphs; and it’s a place where patients’ family members, who are so often filled with a lot of anxiety about their loved one’s illness and treatment, can relax and get a massage, all thanks to the Mama Mare Foundation,” says Lynn Lutwin, RN, MA, OCN, CBCN, director of Breast Care Connection at RWJUH. “Our patients and our families are so grateful to have this room.”

Also made possible through the Mama Mare Foundation was the recent installation of 40 flat screen television units in the treatment area at The Cancer Institute of New Jersey.

The Cancer Institute of New Jersey Brings Advanced Breast Surgery to CINJ Hamilton

Two leading breast surgical oncologists at The Cancer Institute of New Jersey will now also see patients as part of the breast care team at CINJ Hamilton providing advanced surgical care for patients with breast cancer. Director of Breast Care Services at The Cancer Institute of New Jersey, Thomas Kearney, MD, FACS, an associate professor of surgery at UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, and Laurie J. Kirstein, MD, FACS, an assistant professor of surgery at UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, have expanded their practice to Hamilton in addition to their New Brunswick location.

“Community hospitals typically cannot recruit specialists with the experience and credentials of these surgeons, but the special partnership between the Robert Wood Johnson Health System and The Cancer Institute of New Jersey continues to elevate our cancer program,” adds RWJ Hamilton President and CEO Skip Cimino. “As New Jersey’s only Comprehensive Cancer Center designated by the National Cancer Institute, The Cancer Institute of New Jersey plays a critical role in New Jersey and the field of cancer research. Some people probably do not realize that the physicians at CINJ Hamilton – including experts in radiation oncology, medical oncology and pathology – come from The Cancer Institute of New Jersey and the Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, so our patients are extremely well served.”

As part of a larger team that includes radiation oncologists, medical oncologists, nurse navigators and other professionals, Drs. Kearney and Kirstein help patients select therapies for breast cancer that are most appropriate for them. “Our expertise and counsel are available at any time throughout the journey,” says Dr. Kearney. “As soon as someone has a breast concern, from a newly discovered lump or an abnormal mammogram to a cancer that has already been diagnosed, we address the potential diagnosis and work with our comprehensive team of experts to provide patients with the education they need to make informed decisions.” Some of these discussions include information about risk of cancer recurrence, genetics, and clinical trial offerings.

Care physicians – who in turn communicate with their patients about the course of treatment and help them anticipate any future treatments or interventions, such as chemotherapy. They also offer the opportunity to solicit the right interventions for patients who may need multi-modality therapy. Often, research nurses are in attendance and can help determine if a patient is eligible for a clinical trial; a social worker and/or palliative nurse assesses their family and personal needs; and a genetic counselor is on hand if a consult is needed.

To view videos of inspirational community members and the talented health professionals that cared for them, visit www.meridiancancercarenj.com.
Grant Supports Training of Breast Cancer Surgeons

For the second consecutive year, The Cancer Institute of New Jersey has been awarded a $75,000 grant from the Breast Cancer Alliance for academic year 2013-2014 to support its Breast Surgery Fellowship Program. The one-year program provides surgeons who have completed their general surgery residency advanced training and experience that prepares them to provide state-of-the-art care specifically for patients with breast disease. The fellows also participate in clinical and/or laboratory research with opportunities to design and implement clinical trials. The Breast Cancer Alliance, a non-profit entity, awards grants to support innovative research as well as education and outreach initiatives devoted to breast cancer.

“The Breast Cancer Alliance has supported fellowships at many top institutions in the Northeast region through the years. We are pleased that its members recognize the strength of our program here at The Cancer Institute of New Jersey in training the next generation of breast cancer surgeons,” said Cancer Institute of New Jersey surgical oncologist Laurie J. Kirstein, MD, FACS, who heads the fellowship program and is an assistant professor of surgery at UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School.
Honoring the Pillars of New Jersey’s Cancer Community

The 17th Annual Award of Hope Gala hosted by the Cancer Institute of New Jersey Foundation at The Palace at Somerset Park this past fall featured a spectacular evening honoring those who help propel New Jersey’s cancer community forward. The Award of Hope for Leadership in Research and Patient Care was presented posthumously to the immediate past chief of Pediatric Hematology/Oncology at The Cancer Institute of New Jersey Barton A. Kamen, MD, PhD, who passed away last year. PricewaterhouseCoopers, LLP was the Award of Hope for Corporate Leadership recipient, while Embrace Kids Foundation was named the Award of Hope for Philanthropic Leadership recipient. One of the highlights of the evening was the live ‘Research Minutes’ auction, during which participants bid generously and raised $150,000 to sponsor research at The Cancer Institute of New Jersey. Overall, the event raised more than $700,000. Rounding out the evening, music was provided by Pat Guadagno and his band.

Exhibiting GRACEful Hope

This past fall, the Rocha family held its second annual “GRACEful Hope” benefit dinner at the Sport Club Portuguese in Newark. The event, created in honor of mother Grace and daughter Erika who both lost their fight against ovarian cancer, was received by a full house of family, friends and community supporters. More than seventy companies, organizations and clubs offered items that were auctioned off throughout the evening while ovarian cancer survivors moved all of those present with their extraordinary testimonies of hope and survival. Grace and Erika were treated at The Cancer Institute of New Jersey by Drs. Lorna Rodriguez and Darlene Gibbon, who were both in attendance that evening. Funds raised through the event will support ovarian cancer research at The Cancer Institute of New Jersey.

During this past holiday season, the Rocha family and GRACEful Hope organization also generously “adopted” the family of a Cancer Institute of New Jersey patient by providing winter coats, toys and gift cards to make their holidays brighter!
A Different Kind of Road Trip

When you hear about a family ‘road trip,’ visions of piling into mom’s mini-van with a cooler, snacks and pillows come to mind. Not so for the Goydos family, who instead put pedal to the pavement as a family this past fall to ride in the annual Century for the Cure bike ride to benefit The Cancer Institute of New Jersey. Having trained for nearly four months, the family – led by James Goydos, MD, director of the Melanoma and Soft Tissue Oncology Program at The Cancer Institute of New Jersey – rode nearly a combined 400 miles to raise money for cancer research at the Institute. Dr. Goydos and 16-year-old twin sons Christopher and Ryan each rode 100 miles, while 14 year old Matthew accompanied mom Dr. Maria Martins on the 40 mile trek. Touched by relatives and friends who had battled cancer and inspired by the everyday work of Dr. Goydos, the Goydos family made it their mission to train together and enlist support of family and friends, which included the sale of a special rubber wrist band showing support for “Team Goydo5.” Their hard work paid off as the family raised $5,000, which was double the initial goal they set for themselves.

Jersey Boys Rock for a Cause

Just in time to spread some holiday cheer, a “Who’s Who” of Garden State rockers turned out to perform at the sixth annual Hope Concert at the Count Basie Theatre in Red Bank this past December. Thanks to the efforts of Jersey Shore notable Bobby Bandiera and his band, the all-star line-up for this year’s event, which raised $84,000 for The Cancer Institute of New Jersey, included Jon Bon Jovi, Ben E. King, Southside Johnny, Gary U.S. Bonds, David Bryan, Tim McLoone and many others.

The PERFECT Gift

One may not think of probiotics — like those found in yogurt that promote good digestive health — as a weapon used in the fight against cancer. But thanks to generous support from the Steven and Beverly Rubenstein Foundation, the work of Dr. Goydos and the Goydos family will support the research of Shridar Ganesan, MD, PhD, a medical oncologist at The Cancer Institute of New Jersey and assistant professor of medicine and pharmacology at UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School.

Sharing their ‘Happily Ever After’

A special thank you to newlywed Sara Toth, MSW, LSW, a social worker at The Cancer Institute of New Jersey, who along with husband Tyler Hutchinson gave a generous gift to the Cancer Institute of New Jersey Foundation in lieu of wedding favors during their special day this past October. The bride helps patients who are seen in the Stacy Goldstein Breast Cancer Center, while the groom is a developmental scientist aiming to pursue a PhD in genetics in the near future. The couple’s gift, made in memory of Stephen Toth, Jr. and Mary DiBenedetto, will support the research of Shridar Ganesan, MD, PhD, a medical oncologist at The Cancer Institute of New Jersey and assistant professor of medicine and pharmacology at UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School.
Charitable Foundation, Inc., investigators at The Cancer Institute of New Jersey are now examining the effectiveness of probiotics as they relate to the outcomes of bone marrow transplant for patients with blood cancers.

Some patients with leukemia, lymphoma and myeloma are treated with an “allogeneic” bone marrow transplant where the donor is a blood relative or is unrelated, but has the same tissue type. Donated cells can generate an immune attack against cancer cells in the patient, but they can also attack normal healthy cells and tissues. This attack, known as “graft-versus-host disease (GVHD),” is one of the major complications of transplant and occurs in the gastrointestinal (GI) tract in 25 to 40 percent of patients who undergo the allogeneic procedure.

When the GI tract malfunctions, bacteria in the colon can invade the body and cause severe infections that activate the immune system. GVHD can then progress to the liver and other organs. Probiotics are known to reduce the growth of certain types of bacteria. Investigators at The Cancer Institute of New Jersey, who have already determined the probiotic lactobacillus GG is safe in relation to GVHD, are now exploring its effectiveness as part of the “PERFECT” (Probiotic Enteric Regimen For Easing Complications of Transplant) trial. The research is being led by Roger Strair, MD, PhD, chief of hematologic malignancies/hematopoietic stem cell transplantation at The Cancer Institute of New Jersey.

“This funding from the Steven and Beverly Rubenstein Charitable Foundation allows us to build on our previous findings without interruption. By further exploring the effects of probiotics on graft-versus-host-disease, we may be able to identify methods of preventing infection. We are grateful for their support,” noted Dr. Strair, professor of medicine at UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School.

Andrew Rubenstein is a trustee and manager of the Steven and Beverly Rubenstein Charitable Foundation — named for his parents who instilled in him at a young age the importance of giving back. With father Steven having passed away of acute myeloid leukemia, Andrew Rubenstein felt a connection to Strair’s work. “My father’s treatment stemmed from innovative research that was being conducted at the time. By participating in that treatment, he understood the importance of advancing those latest findings. Through our Foundation’s support of Dr. Strair’s research, we hope to keep such advances moving forward,” he said.

### Everyday Heroes

A special thanks to community and school groups throughout New Jersey whose efforts highlighted below resulted in nearly $100,000 in support for cancer research, patient care and community outreach.

**Gifts over $20,000:**

- **Harvest for Hope Fundraiser,** New Jersey DECA, High School Division, Edison  
- **GRACEful Hope Benefit Dinner,** Rocha Family, Roselle  
- **Lunch & Learn,** Stitch Fore Time, Deal

**Gifts up to $5,000:**

- **“Go Jane Go” Breast Cancer Walk,** Jane O’Brien and Family, Bradley Beach

**Gifts up to $2,500:**

- **Steak Bake Event,** Shark River Beach & Yacht Club, Neptune  
- **Employee Fundraising Events,** inVentiv Health, Somerset  
- **Employee “Cookies for Cancer” Bake Sale,** eResearch Technology, Bridgewater

**Gifts up to $1,000:**

- **Bake Sale,** Sayreville Leprechauns, Sayreville  
- **Bookmark Fundraiser,** Stuart Country Day School, Princeton  
- **“Dress for a Cause” Day,** Lalor Elementary School, Hamilton  
- **“Jeans Day”,** Arthur M. Judd Elementary School, North Brunswick  
- **“Networking with the Sharks”,** South Jersey Business Alliance, Mt. Laurel

Toys from Carly Loves Kids resulted in tons of holiday smiles!

**Toy Drives:**

- **Carlito’s Wish Foundation,** New York  
- **Carly Loves Kids,** East Brunswick  
- **Church of the Epiphany,** Brick  
- **David’s Touch Foundation,** Woodbridge  
- **New Brunswick Police Department,** New Brunswick  
- **PharmaNet/i3, Build-a-Bear Drive,** Somerset
Rolling Past the $1 Million Mark

A special congratulations to Scott and Aileen Glickman, who created and continue to nurture the Century for the Cure bike ride, and its countless volunteers and supporters, who helped bring the cumulative fundraising total for the event to more than $1 million!

In our next edition of Oncolyte, learn how ‘Pilot Grants’ from the Century for the Cure bike ride are supporting the work of researchers at The Cancer Institute of New Jersey and Rutgers University.

Elegance with a Purpose

Discover The Cancer Institute of New Jersey Infinity necklace — made exclusively by Phillips Frankel. This stunning piece features diamonds and pink sapphires and combines the classic elegance of Phillips Frankel’s Infinity necklace with a pink ribbon. Profits from the sale of each necklace will support breast cancer awareness and research.

To learn more, visit: http://shop.phillipsfrankel.com/CINJ-c34/