SPRING 2011

# The Genetics Voice

## News from Virtua's Cancer Genetics Program

## Hello!

I hope that this second annual edition of the *The Genetics Voice* finds you as happy about spring's arrival as we are. Not only has spring officially sprung, but the new Virtua Voorhees Hospital is due to open on Sunday, May 22, at 7 am. See the events section of the newsletter for the Open House dates and other Virtua special events. Also, in this 2011 edition you will learn about *Genetics Myth or Fact*?, Virtua Nurse Navigation and Social Work, and new genetic testing recommendations for personal or family history of ovarian cancer from the NCCN.

We plan to distribute this newsletter once a year by e-mail*. This newsletter is a way to tell you what is new in cancer genetics and give you updates on testing, screening, and the latest research developments.

You may read something here that makes you want to pick up the phone and call us. We encourage you to contact us. You will also learn about updates in other areas of our Cancer Program.

Warmly, Bridget LeGrazie
Cancer Genetics Program Manager

Janice O'Connell, MS, CGC
Certified Genetic Counselor

## Do you have a personal or family history of ovarian cancer?

By: Bridget LeGrazie, RN, MSN, APNG

The National Comprehensive Cancer Network guidelines for genetic testing for BRCA1 and BRCA2 recommend testing for BRCA1 and BRCA2 alterations for individuals with a personal or family history of ovarian cancer in a first degree relative (mother, sister, daughter) or second degree relative (grandmother or aunt). These relatives can be on your mother's or father's side of the family. If you think you maybe eligible for testing, please call to schedule an appointment at 1-888-VIRTUA-3.

## Save the Date!

**May 1, 2011**
New Virtua Voorhees Community Open House; 9 am to 4 pm, visit www.virtua.org for more information.

**May 22, 2011**
New Virtua Voorhees Hospital opens.

**May 8, 2011**
Philadelphia Komen Race for the Cure – Join Team **Virtua**

**May 14, 2011**
BreastFest Fundraiser at the Tap Room www.breastfest.org.

**June 23-25, 2011**
FORCE annual conference Orlando, FL
http://www.facingourrisk.org/

**October 2011**
Dessert with the Doctors – Date TBD call 888-VIRTUA-3 for info.

***In the spirit of going green, after this issue, *The Genetics Voice* will only be distributed by email. If you would like to continue to receive *The Genetics Voice*, please send an email to cgp@virtua.org with the subject: newsletter subscription. Past issues can also be found online by clicking HERE or http://www.virtua.org/health/genetic-testing.aspx.**

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# Genetics Myth or Fact?

## Of Course I have the gene – I had breast cancer!

By: Janice O'Connell, MS, CGC

**Myth!** Most cases of breast cancer are sporadic, meaning that they are ***not*** due to hereditary or genetic causes but rather other causes such as environmental exposures, aging, and lifestyle choices. In fact, only 5-10% of all breast cancer is considered hereditary. Only a portion of hereditary breast cancers are associated with alterations in genes that we know of, the primary genes being BRCA1 and BRCA2. Therefore, most women who have a history of breast cancer **DO NOT** carry a known genetic change associated with breast cancer. They may be at risk for a hereditary cancer syndrome, however, if they had an early age of diagnosis, if their cancer was bilateral, or if they have a family history of breast and/or ovarian cancer. These individuals should have a genetics evaluation to determine if they are eligible for genetic testing.

Risk Factors for Hereditary Breast Cancer

- Personal or family history of breast cancer of less than or equal to 50 or two primary breast cancers
- Personal or family history of ovarian/fallopian tube/primary peritoneal cancer at any age
- Family with with more than or equal to3 breast cancers on the same side of the family at any age
- Ashkenazi Jewish and a personal history or family history of one or more breast/ovarian cancers at any age
- Personal or family history of male breast cancer
- Personal or family history of a known hereditary mutation

# Routine Screening of Colon and Uterine Cancers

By: Janice O'Connell, MS, CGC

To help identify patients at risk for a hereditary cancer syndrome known as Lynch syndrome, the Cancer Genetics Program has recently implemented a new process to routinely screen certain patients for this syndrome. Lynch syndrome is associated with an increased risk for colon, uterine, stomach, and ovarian cancer as well as other cancers. These cancers tend to affect an individual with Lynch syndrome earlier than is typically seen. Genetic testing is available for Lynch syndrome, however, the best way to screen for this condition is to perform tests directly on a patient's colorectal or uterine tumor. Therefore, as of March 2011, any colon tumor, colon polyp, or uterine tumor that is removed from a patient who is 60 years old or younger at Virtua Hospital will automatically be screened for features suggestive of Lynch syndrome. This will help the treating physicians know who may be at risk for this condition and refer them to the Cancer Genetics Program for further evaluation.

# News From Navigation

## What is Virtua Nurse Navigation?

**By: Amanda Cahall, RN, BSN**

Learning that you have cancer is a very difficult and confusing time. Patients can face many challenges when initially diagnosed with cancer and throughout their treatment. In order to help ease anxiety about a new cancer diagnosis and ensure that patients get the support and services they need, Virtua offers Oncology Nurse Navigators for patients with gastrointestinal, thoracic, prostate and gynecologic cancers, along with the breast nurse navigation program. Nurse navigators who specialize in oncology care provide patients with assistance in:

- Understanding their diagnosis, care plan and medications
- Obtaining healthcare services for a timely treatment and follow up
- Facilitating and streamlining communication with providers and connecting patients with support services
- Providing individual support and resources

## CHECK THIS OUT – WOW!

### Cleaning for a Reason:

Fighting cancer is difficult enough, but living with it is even tougher – the Cleaning for A Reason Foundation can help. This nonprofit foundation offers free professional housecleaning, and maid services to improve the lives of women undergoing treatment for any type of cancer. They partner with professional residential maid services who are insured and bonded to participate in the foundation. The companies have agreed to take two patients at a time and offer four free *general* cleanings – one a month for four months as a way to give back to their community. If you or a loved one is undergoing cancer treatment and are interested in these free services, please contact their website at www.cleaningforareason.com to apply online.

**Navigation is a FREE service provided to all Virtua patients facing a cancer diagnosis. Call 1-888-VIRTUA-3 for more information.**

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# NEW CLASS: Moving on Aqua

## An Aquatics exercise program designed specifically for cancer survivors

Want to exercise in the water but not quite sure what to do? Aquatic movement is especially beneficial for all cancer survivors including those with lymphedema. The support of the water eases movement, relaxes muscles, and assists the movement of lymph and blood flow to facilitate good health. Lead by a certified cancer exercise specialist, this group class will include water walking, strength, balance, range-of-motion movements and relaxation techniques. Come out and join the fun!

Join an eight-week class: $64
Wednesdays, April 13 to June 1
11:30 am to12:30 pm
Group Exercise Pool

***Registration is required at the Member Services Desk. Classes cannot be made up** and **are for Moving On participants only.**

## Hand in Hand

By: Karen Atkin, MSW, LCSW

Of paramount concern for cancer patients is the effect their illness and treatments will have on the young children in the family. When parents are facing a diagnosis of cancer, they naturally want to protect their children. But not having a discussion about a parent's illness can leave children feeling scared and confused. Knowing how to communicate illness-related information to children in an age appropriate manner is often a request made of patients experiencing a cancer diagnosis. To help with all those aspects a unique children's counseling program, "Hand in Hand" is offered by the oncology social workers at the Virtua. In sessions with the parents "Hand in Hand" offers practical information on communicating with children about their parents illness, how children should be told, how to answer the child's questions and what the typical reactions are. In addition to providing parents with the practical information on communicating with young children and teens, the "Hand in Hand" program assists parents in identifying any emotional/behavioral "red flags" the child may be exhibiting. The clinical social worker can then help the parent develop an action plan when additional support resources are needed for the child. In addition, when indicated, counseling is provided to the child. Given the opportunity to explore their concerns and develop a feelings vocabulary children are then assisted in developing age appropriate coping strategies to ease some of the confusion and fear they may be experiencing.

For more information on the "Hand in Hand" children's counseling program or to schedule an appointment, please contact Karen Atkin MSW,LCSW, oncology social worker at (856) 355- 6922.