

# The Brain Stem

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## FROEDTERT & THE MEDICAL COLLEGE OF WISCONSIN

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2010 Strain for the Brain fund-raising event, see page 3

## What is a Clinical Trial?

*Tiffany Marbach, BSN, RN, Clinical Coordinator, Brain and Spine Tumor Program*

A few of our articles have focused on clinical trials. "Clinical trial" describes a test or study of a drug, therapy, surgical procedure, or medical device. The tests are done to find out if the drug, therapy, procedure or device is safe and effective for people to use.

By taking part in clinical trials, you can try a potential new treatment that may (or may not) be better than standard treatments available. Your participation may also help people who may be suffering from the same disease or condition in the future.

Much of today's brain tumor research is focused on drug therapy. Several drugs now under investigation are designed to interfere with molecular pathways that are critical for tumor function.

Froedtert & The Medical College of Wisconsin comprise a leading center for clinical research into new cancer therapies. Through the Brain and Spine Tumor Program's active involvement with the Radiation Therapy Oncology Group, the Central Neuro-oncology Group and other research collaboratives, we offer patients access to many advanced treatment options. ■

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## STAFF PROFILES

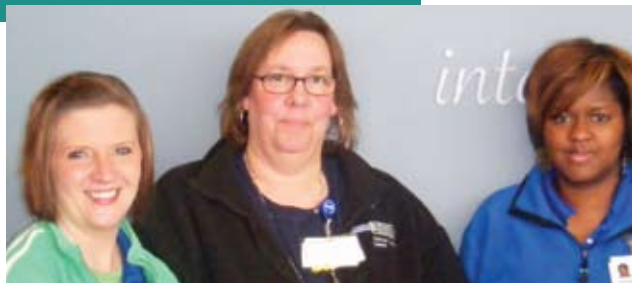


### Joyce Olson, RN

I am a nurse in the Froedtert & The Medical College of Wisconsin Clinical Cancer Center, and I love my job! I have been in nursing for more than 40 years, and started my career on these very grounds. For the past seven years, I have been a certified clinical research professional working in Radiation Oncology.

I work mostly with brain tumor patients in studies sponsored by the Radiation Therapy Oncology Group, which operates under the National Cancer Institute. This allows me to meet patients who are interested in research protocols and explain studies that are offered here. I make sure patients fit specific requirements; then, I follow them through treatment and follow-up care. I am responsible for obtaining data that lets the study sponsors know how new treatments are working.

I meet some wonderful people, and feel good about being an extra resource for patients as they travel through the experience of fighting their cancer.



### Hope Clinic Scheduling Coordinators Vicki Helg, Julayne Otto, Kendra Collier

We are the scheduling coordinators for the Hope Clinic in the Froedtert & The Medical College of Wisconsin Clinical Cancer Center. Scheduling coordinators are the liaisons between patients and physicians to schedule all established patient appointments. We also act as a link between patients and nurses to ensure patients can contact their nurses or doctors as needed.

For us, fulfillment comes from making someone's day — in sitting with a patient for a few minutes, listening to a patient's feelings about a diagnosis, holding a patient's hand. We enjoy our role and although appointment scheduling is very important, we know it's also important to offer a warm, friendly smile and share our compassion for each person we meet.

## Improving Quality of Life for Young Adult Brain Cancer Survivors

Mary Jo Burgoyne, PMHCNS-BC, APNP  
*Psych-oncology Clinical Nurse Specialist*

The National Cancer Institute and the Lance Armstrong Foundation recognize that the needs of adolescent and young adults (AYAs) with cancer are unique. A brain cancer diagnosis and subsequent treatments are unexpected in this group, defined as ages 15 to 39, and AYAs are often unprepared to deal with all the disease entails. Learning to manage life after experiencing brain cancer brings with it a whole new set of challenges. People often struggle to handle changes which occur as a result of treatment. They begin to re-integrate themselves into their old world of family, friends, school and work. Efforts to identify and treat those challenges are the focus of research as well as practice at Froedtert & The Medical College of Wisconsin and Children's Hospital of Wisconsin.

Creating and defining a new healthy self for the AYA brain cancer survivor is part of the work of the Psych-oncology Program at the Froedtert & The Medical College Clinical Cancer Center.

There are three primary categories of impact: physical, emotional and practical.

After chemotherapy, surgery and radiation therapy, coming to terms with the physical cancer experience and developing new ways to deal with a new body are extremely important to creating the new healthy self. Cognitive changes may occur due to brain cancer and its treatment. Techniques to assist with those changes can be learned. The Neuro-oncology Cognitive Clinic and David Sabsevitz, PhD, Medical College of Wisconsin neuro-psychologist, can assist in evaluating this. Physical weakness, fatigue and scarring can also result from treatment. Specific cancer rehabilitation and resiliency training, as well as supportive counseling can be of help.

In addition, adjusting to a newly altered self image, fatigue and increased vulnerability are issues that may be resolved with one-to-one short term supportive treatment. Additional emotional issues we explore are often related to redefining the AYA's career and family roles, existential questioning, and rebuilding a new sense of identity. Frequently, this process includes an altered career path or educational direction. The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation is useful in evaluating and assisting in this process.

Also, resuming prior social networking, breaking away from family and creating new intimate relationships are developmental issues that now require extra skills. These can be explored in one-to-one work, in cancer groups or in cancer-related AYA internet sites like Planetcancer, Lance Armstrong Foundation (Livestrong) and Imerman's Angels.

Numerous practical issues abound. For instance, surviving brain cancer requires a crash course in health maintenance. Creating a

*continued on page 4*

**“Hope sees the invisible, feels the intangible and achieves the impossible.”**



As a physician at Froedtert & The Medical College of Wisconsin, and part of the Brain and Spine Tumor Program team, I interact with neurosurgeons, analyzing brain tissue they have removed in surgery to determine if cancer or other abnormal process is present. I'm a neuropathologist, which means unlike other doctors, I work more "behind the scenes," examining slides of brain tissue samples with a microscope in a laboratory to make a diagnosis. If a brain cancer is present, I determine its type.

Each week, I present patient tissue slides at the brain tumor board. Knowing if tissue samples show evidence of a brain cancer and its type helps other members of the team give the best possible care.

Although new to Froedtert & The Medical College, I am no stranger to Milwaukee. I also lived in Chicago for many years, working as a neuropathologist at Rush University. I am excited to be at Froedtert & The Medical College, and find it very gratifying to be able to participate in the

care of brain tumor patients. It is important to me to provide the most accurate diagnoses with the most up-to-date evaluations, and work with all team members to achieve the best possible outcomes for the patients who are facing difficult situations. ■

## 2010 Strain for the Brain 5K Run/Walk Exceeds Expectations

### Mike Molloy, Brain Tumor Survivor

*This event supports local brain tumor research through the Froedtert Hospital Foundation's brain tumor fund.*

The Third Annual Strain for the Brain 5K run/walk was a huge success. On May 8, brain tumor survivors, loved ones of brain tumor patients, and friends and family of those who have passed on from brain tumors gathered at Milwaukee's beautiful lakefront to raise much-needed funding for brain tumor research.

Olympic speed skater Bonnie Blair Cruikshank, whose brother Rod suffered more than 20 years with a brain tumor before his recent death, was a celebrity participant and gave an inspirational interview with celebrity emcee Scott Dolphin of radio station WMIL FM106. Ever the athlete, Bonnie ran the 5K! We heard many other inspiring stories, including Don Shave's story of survival well over a decade out from the most malignant of brain tumors. Fortunately, newer therapies have emerged, thanks to continuing research — though not nearly enough.

The number of people who showed up was far greater than expected. The overwhelming participation in chilly weather was

amazing to all. Karen Spring, the event's lead organizer, is already planning for 2011, and plans to accommodate the ever-growing event on all fronts, building on lessons learned this year. The total amount raised and number of attendees has not been tallied for 2010; last year, the event raised nearly \$40,000. Proceeds will primarily benefit local brain tumor research through Froedtert Hospital Foundation's brain tumor fund. A much smaller percentage will benefit national and international brain tumor research through the American Brain Tumor Association (ABTA).

Mark Malkin, MD, Medical College of Wisconsin neuro-oncologist, staffed an informational tent about brain tumor research on behalf of the Brain and Spine Tumor Program at Froedtert & The Medical College of Wisconsin. Dr. Malkin ran the 5K event in an incredible show of support, inspiring many of his own patients and their families also in attendance. His humility does not restrain his enthusiasm about research and progress in treating brain tumors. Dr. Malkin highlighted many of the promising areas of research at a recent monthly Brain Tumor Support Group hosted by Renae O'Keefe, a nurse at Froedtert & The Medical College. This group is a great source of support for patients, families and caregivers.

The 5K run/walk highlighted local research efforts at Froedtert & The Medical College. It is hoped that the event will continue to flourish in coming years, to someday achieve not only the goal of ultimately curing and/or preventing brain tumors, but also to improve the number and types of options used to treat these typically difficult-to-treat tumors. Brain tumors affect the lives of more than 360,000 Americans, with approximately 50,000 new cases diagnosed each year.

For more information, please visit these Web sites:

Froedtert Hospital Foundation: [froedterthospitalfoundation.org](http://froedterthospitalfoundation.org)

Strain for the Brain: [strainforthebrain.org](http://strainforthebrain.org)

American Brain Tumor Association: [abta.org](http://abta.org) ■



Brain tumor survivor Mike Molloy, Olympic speed-skating champion Bonnie Blair Cruikshank and Mark Malkin, MD, at the 2010 Strain for the Brain event.

## Support Groups and Events

Froedtert & The Medical College of Wisconsin offer support groups and sponsor events of interest to brain tumor patients and their families.

### BRAIN TUMOR SUPPORT GROUP

The Brain Tumor Support Group is for patients and family members who are looking for information and encouragement. Meetings are designed for open discussion of concerns related to brain tumors, with many sessions featuring speakers who focus on a variety of topics specific to this disease.

### CANCER CAREGIVERS SUPPORT GROUP

This support group is for friends, family members or others caring for people with cancer. It promotes open communication of feelings, as well as providing relaxation and stress relief. (Made possible by donations to the Froedtert Hospital Foundation.)

### YOUNG ADULT ONCOLOGY GROUP

Children's Hospital of Wisconsin offers the Young Adult Oncology Group for cancer survivors ages 18 to 39. This group provides survivorship support and education.

### KID'S SUPPORT GROUP

Gilda's Club of Southeastern Wisconsin offers the Kid's Support Group for children ages four to 12 whose lives have been touched by cancer.

### SURVIVORS *continued from page 2*

surveillance schedule of appointments, lab tests and scans that will work around college courses or childcare is often a great challenge. Facing financial obligations and insurance issues are additional areas of exploration which can be addressed by social work and financial counselors.

In the Hope Clinic, which is the section of the Clinical Cancer Center where brain cancer patients are seen, we have a quote: "Hope sees the invisible, feels the intangible and achieves the impossible." Being a young brain cancer survivor carries its own potential for hope and growth as one creates the new healthy self. Although there are inherent challenges during and beyond treatment for AYA cancer survivors, there is hope in rebuilding life and creating a positive outlook with support and available resources. ■



## CALENDAR

### Brain Tumor Support Group

Third Tuesday of each month  
6:30 pm – 8:00 pm  
Support group: 6:30 pm – 7:00 pm  
Featured speaker: 7:00 pm – 8:00 pm  
Administrative Boardroom  
2nd floor, East Clinics Building

### August 17

*What's New in Neuro-oncology?*  
Wade Mueller, MD, Medical College of Wisconsin Neurosurgeon

### September 21

*Open Forum:*  
*Question and Answer Session*  
Jennifer Connelly, MD, Medical College of Wisconsin Neuro-oncologist  
Joseph Bovi, MD, Medical College of Wisconsin Radiation Oncologist

### October 19

*Cognitive Issues in Brain Tumor Patients*  
David Sabsevitz, PhD, Medical College of Wisconsin Neuropsychologist

### Cancer Caregivers Support Group

Fourth Tuesday of each month  
5:30 pm – 7:00 pm  
Clinical Cancer Center  
Conference Room J, Lobby Level  
Aug. 24, Sept. 28, Oct. 26  
Free chair massages provided by Lakeside School of Massage.

### Young Adult Oncology Group

Second Tuesday of most months  
6:30 pm – 8:30 pm  
Sponsored by Children's Hospital of Wisconsin  
More information: Kristin Bingen, 414-456-4148 or [kbingen@mcwu.edu](mailto:kbingen@mcwu.edu).

### Kid's Support Group

Quarterly, six consecutive Wednesday evenings  
5:30 pm – 6:45 pm  
Sponsored by Gilda's Club of Southeastern Wisconsin  
More information: Pat David, 414-962-8201, ext. 103 or [patd@gildasclubsewi.org](mailto:patd@gildasclubsewi.org).

For more information about our support groups, please visit [froedtert.com](http://froedtert.com) or call 414-805-3666 or 800-272-3666. (unless otherwise noted).

### THE BRAIN STEM VIA E-MAIL

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