



CANCER SUPPORT SERVICES

NEWSLETTER

Issue 6 | August 2025

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Cancer Support Services

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My Journey as a Volunteer

Mr. Carlyle Best - Chair, Management Team, Cancer Support Services

My understanding of volunteering was crudely shaped by my experiences at school. We were asked to volunteer or face some consequence. So we reluctantly volunteered to avoid uncomfortable moments. Where was the joy? Yet from my teens I was a volunteer. I was raised in the church, the Methodist Church and among the organisations in the church was one known as the Wesley Guild, an all-aged group - at least that is how it functioned in the church I attended. From time to time, the boys and girls would be taken through the community to identify and to assist the shut-ins: to ensure that the house and surroundings were cleaned, to run errands, such as fetching water to meet the required need of the day. By the way, not at all homes then carried running water and we took turns going to the stand-pipe.

Later, in my 'A' level years I was invited by a friend to join the Leo Club. While most of our activities were developmental

and undertaken on the inside, it was always the annual Leo Week that took us outdoors to engage in community projects. We were young and energetic and made every activity fun. We painted, we cleaned, fell a few trees. Our projects were mainly undertaken in the housing districts in Bridgetown and the YWCA was almost always a beneficiary of our efforts. We also donated blood. We were reminded again and again that this was the essence of altruism.

Speed forward to many years later. I am visiting the QEH to see a friend, a patient on Ward C12. While walking through the Ward I observed two persons sharing precious moments with some patients. I assumed they were relatives visiting their loved ones. I would soon learn that the two had no relatives on the Ward but were just enthusiastic members of the fledgling Cancer Support Services (CSS) – a charity unknown to me but I was so touched by the act of goodwill that I reasoned I could offer some help to the group. From then to now I continue to be a member of Cancer Support Services.

Cancer Support Services a registered charity was established with its chief objective being the provision of voluntary support services to persons diagnosed with cancer. This objective alone is so broad, giving opportunity to persons to volunteer in areas which offer much comfort. We offer our time, our skills, our talents, our treasure to assist others and

we do so without counting the cost, even if at times we may feel a little weary. After all, to volunteer is to give of oneself, to experience a sense of fulfillment as one seeks to make a difference in the lives of others. Charities and churches allow us to express ourselves through the action of volunteering. Indeed, the notion of volunteering carries a strong religious flavour. Read Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount as carried in the Gospel according to Matthew 5-7.

So unlike the kind of “volunteering” trusted upon me in my early life as was the case in the classroom or even in the home, volunteering is indeed a noble act that allows individuals to give their time, their energy and skills for the benefit of others without expecting financial reward. Across our island, across the world there are numerous volunteers on whom we consistently rely and it all happens so seamlessly we take it for granted. Everyone knows of the work of the Red Cross, but just consider too those persons who swoop down on our streets in Bridgetown to serve meals to the homeless; or upon receiving news of an approaching severe weather system, and unknown to us, a number of persons from

different perspectives spring into action to monitor, provide updates and to attend to any emergencies where they may occur. Yes, volunteer work runs the gamut of life reflecting diverse interests and community needs. Thank God for those concerned about our environment who clean our gullies, comb our beaches and collect trash from the roads-side.

Readers that which I dropped when I left the Leo Club I found renewed energy for through my involvement in Cancer Support Services. Through the years I have met so many persons who otherwise I would not have known. Even my social networks have grown. Recently I have had reason to reflect on the number of self-development courses in which members of CSS have participated to assist in building confidence and self-esteem in those areas where such may have been lacking or deficient. In other words, I am affirming there are benefits to be gained from being a volunteer; and I commend membership in Cancer Support Services to anyone desirous of making a contribution to the well-being of others. Come, just offer what you have.

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Faith Over Fear: My Journey Beyond Cancer

By Kashamra “KayKay”

Victorious Ladies Beyond Surviving, Cancer Support Services

In 2022, my life changed with three words: “You have cancer.” I was diagnosed with Stage 2 Breast Cancer. A moment that, for many, might feel like the end, but for me, it became a new beginning.

That same year, I met Jan Lynton and became a proud member of the Cancer Support Services’ Victorious Ladies Beyond Surviving. This organization has been more than a support group, it has been a lifeline. Through them, I’ve learned that I am not defined by what I’m going through, there is always hope, even when things seem uncertain.

Not every day is easy, there are highs and lows. However, being surrounded by people who truly understand and have walked similar paths, has brought comfort during some of my most difficult times. The love and empathy shared within this community remind me that I am not alone.

My faith has been my anchor. It is by the grace of God, and through choosing faith over fear, that I now understand: a cancer diagnosis is not a death sentence. That mindset shift has been crucial to my healing — as important as any medicine or treatment. I’ve changed how I eat, how I move, how I think. Every choice I make now is with my well-being in mind.

Today, survival rates for many types of cancer are higher than ever, thanks to early detection and innovative treatments. This is a message I want others to hear: there is hope. There is life beyond diagnosis.

To anyone facing cancer or supporting someone who is — you don’t have to walk this road alone. Cancer Support Services offers more than just information; they provide a safe space. A place of compassion, understanding, and

confidentiality. A place where you can breathe, be heard, and begin to heal.

If you or someone you know needs support, I encourage you to reach out. Contact Cancer Support Services at (246) 228-7081 or visit them at 18 10th Avenue, Bridgetown, Saint Michael, Barbados.

There is life beyond cancer — and it can be beautiful.

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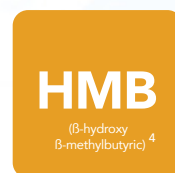
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References: 1. Stechmiller JK, et al. Nutr Clin Pract 2005;20(1):369-375. 2. Bellon G, et al. Biochim Biophys Acta 1995;1268(3):311-323. 3. Andrews FJ et al. Br J Nutr 2002;87(Suppl 1):S3-S8. 4. Wilson GJ, et al. Nutr Metab 2008;5:1. 5. Sibilla S, et al. The Open Nutraceuticals Journal. 2015;8:29-42. 6. Molnar JA, ed. Nutrition and Wound Healing. Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press, 2007:5.

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My Detour Became My Direction

Seandette Wiltshire, Victorious Ladies Beyond Surviving, Cancer Support Services

Hi everyone! I'm thrilled to be sharing a slice of my life with you through this newsletter. Before I dive in, a little about your friendly neighborhood survivor. I'm a proud mother of three fantastic adults, a seasoned entrepreneur who's been running my own business since 2019, and a Christ Church Foundation alumna with a fancy Masters from the University of Essex. For over two decades, I navigated the exhilarating world of high-pressure jobs, a training ground that perhaps inadvertently prepared me for my next big adventure.

Speaking of adventures, I have the honor of leading the Victorious Ladies Beyond Surviving, a vibrant group of about 30 incredible women, all fellow cancer survivors. We're a lively bunch, meeting monthly to share experiences, offer support, and yes, indulge in the occasional delicious meal or fun outing. We're a testament to the fact that even after the toughest storms, life doesn't just continue – it flourishes, often with more laughter and love than before. And for the gentlemen out there, the Conquering Men's group offers the same camaraderie and support. Both groups are extensions of the fantastic Cancer Support Services, an organization that truly walks alongside anyone facing a cancer diagnosis and their families, offering everything from counseling to vital information and when possible even a helping hand financially.

Now, to my own little plot twist. Despite a lifelong love of movement – from school netball to decades of dancing (modern, ballet, and now ballroom!), and a commitment to regular exercise, in 2021, I found a lump. Initially, I brushed it off. A gym enthusiast like me? Surely, it was just another benign lump, like the ones I'd had before. But when

February rolled around, and it was still there, larger and accompanied by a strange lack of energy, inexplicable sores, and a phantom toothache, my inner alarm bells started ringing louder than a Zumba class. That lump was the main culprit, so I marched to my GP.

The breast specialist I saw after an ultrasound wasn't overly concerned initially, noting its unusual location and shape. "Probably benign," he said. But something told me to push. "Let's just do the biopsy now," I insisted. And thank goodness I did. In March 2021, I received the news: Stage 2 estrogen-positive breast cancer. What followed was a whirlwind of chemo, surgery, and radiation.

This journey, this unexpected detour, has been a profound teacher. It stripped away the non-essential and illuminated the precious. It forced me to recognize my own mortality, a stark reminder to seize the day and prioritize self-care. Some relationships shifted, with some people drifting away, and while that was surprising, I found peace in it. More importantly, it amplified the unwavering support of my family and my Victorious Ladies, who constantly remind me that healing is a journey, not a sprint.

Every morning I open my eyes is a gift, a chance to live fully and gratefully. If you're navigating the cancer journey, know that you are not alone. Cancer Support Services and groups like Victorious Ladies and Conquering Men are here to embrace you. We live, we love, and yes, we laugh – together. Come join us; there's always room for one more warrior.



My Experience with Healthy Smoothies

by Nurse Linda Jenkins, RN (Ret. - UK Trained)

About 12 years ago, I started drinking Leafy Green Veggie Smoothies, just for better health. At the time, I was wearing glasses, because I had age-related macular degeneration. A condition of the eye that affects the central vision, causing my vision to be blurred or fuzzy and eye floaters - dark spots flashing before my eyes. Wearing prescription glasses helped me to see distance vision.

After drinking two glasses of veggie smoothies one in the morning and one in the evening for about a year, I went to my eye doctor for a routine eye exam. The

ophthalmologist was very surprised that I read the letters of the chart right to the bottom. After examining my eyes he said that the age-related macular degeneration had cleared up and I told him I had been drinking green veggie smoothies for the past year. He said "Continue drinking those smoothies. You no longer need to wear glasses." and I haven't worn them again in over 10 years.

Drinking two glasses of veggie smoothies daily gives me more energy, daily bowel elimination, helps me to stay hydrated and my haemoglobin level is within normal limits.

Delicious

LEAFY GREEN VEGGIE SMOOTHIE RECIPE

One handful spinach leaves

1 tbsp fresh parsley

2 large celery stalks

1 piece fresh ginger

1 small apple (optional)

A pinch of black pepper (to make turmeric effective)

2 large kale leaves

1/2 medium cucumber

juice of 1 lemon

1 piece fresh turmeric (1/2 inch)

2 cloves garlic

1 cup coconut water or water



Delicious

LEAFY GREEN VEGGIE SMOOTHIE RECIPE

Method:

- Chop all ingredients, pour in lemon juice in a high powered blender.
- Blend until smooth in texture.
- Can be drank with all the fiber or use a strainer to remove the fiber.
- Makes about 2 cups. Drink at least 1 cup per day. Juice can be stored in the fridge for 2 days.

NB: Leafy greens are high in nutrients and low in calories. A great source of calcium, magnesium, potassium and trace minerals e.g. iron, copper, selenium, manganese and zinc. They protect the body from long term damage.

L. Jenkins, RN (Ret.)

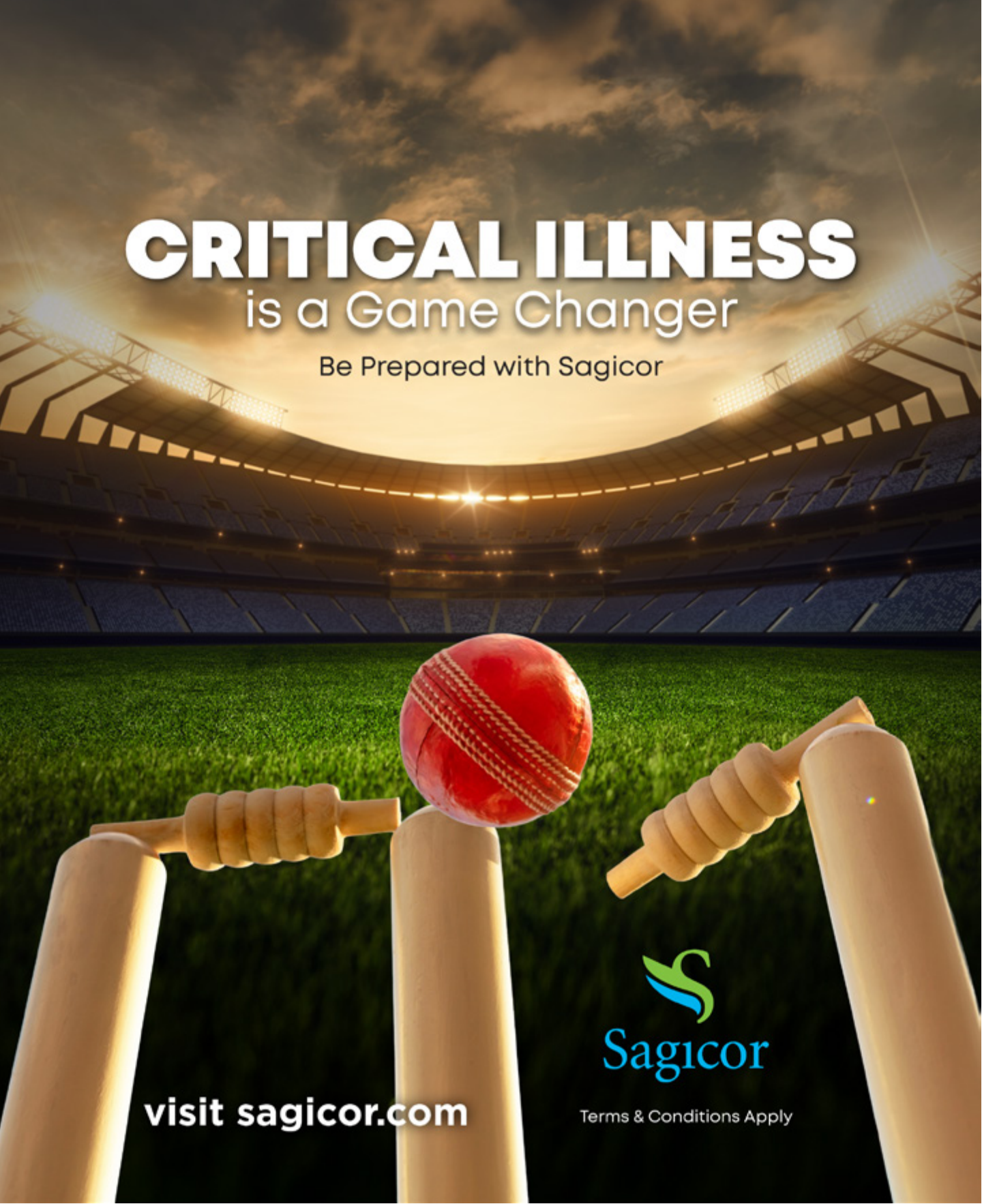





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Healthy Nutrition and Integrative Modalities Before, During and After Cancer Treatments

Dr. Daniel Kellman, ND, FABNO, IFMCP

Integrative Oncology

The treatment of cancer continues to evolve, and many breakthroughs have been achieved with targeted therapies, immunotherapy, advanced surgery and interventional radiology techniques, and focused radiation treatments. Traditional chemotherapy is also used to control the disease or treat microscopic disease before and after surgery. These modern medicine advancements would be perfect if it weren't for the unwanted side effects and damage to healthy tissues.

Naturopathic Medicine, Nutrition, and other integrative modalities are well suited to help patients protect healthy tissues and maintain quality of life throughout treatment and into the prevention phase.

A key concept when employing Integrative Oncology is the reduction of stress and inflammation. Inflammation is directly involved in activating genetic predispositions to cancer development, as well as being the main trigger for all chronic disease including cancer, heart disease, diabetes, and autoimmune diseases. Reducing stressors that cause inflammation is a focus for integrative practice in managing patients dealing cancer diagnoses and its subsequent treatment.

Hope

Maintaining hope and optimism is the first step in overcoming the prospect of dealing with a cancer diagnosis. When a patient knows there are treatment options, and that they have a skilled medical team and resources to face their situation, then hope is certainly easier to maintain. It is important to have clear and concise information, and to understand what the goal is, so that the patient can set goals and visualize the healing process taking place.

Hope can also be an active personal process connected to one's faith, belief systems and physical, mental, and emotional strength. Therefore prayer, meditation, exercise, social connection, family support and even the financial health matter in being able to maintain a hopeful outlook when treating and preventing cancer. All of these activities that help maintain hope and optimism have supportive studies

to show benefit, even in being able to reduce inflammatory and cancer risk factors such as C-reactive protein and Insulin growth factor 1 (CRP and IGF-1) for example.

Reference: Differential Reduction of IP-10 and C-Reactive Protein via Aerobic Exercise or Mindfulness-Based Stress-Reduction Training in a Large Randomized Controlled Trial; J Sport Exerc Psychol. 2019 Apr 1; 41(2): 96–106.

Diet and Nutrition

The Mediterranean Diet is proven to help lower inflammation, and is associated with longevity in regions such as Greek and Italian islands, where the highest concentration of centenarians (100 year plus life expectancy) live. Reports from large, prospective studies showed, with nearly perfect consistency strong benefits of the Mediterranean diet to reduce the risk of myocardial infarction, stroke, total mortality, heart failure and disability.

Reference: Mediterranean diet and life expectancy; beyond olive oil, fruits, and vegetables. Curr Opin Clin Nutr Metab Care. 2016 Nov; 19(6): 401–407.

The Mediterranean Diet Includes:

- Whole grains, olive oil, fruits, vegetables, beans and other legumes, nuts, herbs, and spices.
- Healthy fats: olive oil, avocados, nuts, and oily fish like salmon and sardines; among these, walnuts and fish are high in omega-3 fatty acids.
- Fish as the preferred animal protein at least twice weekly and other animal proteins of poultry, eggs, and dairy (cheese or yogurt) in smaller portions either daily or a few times a week. Red meat is limited to a few times per month.
- Water as the main daily beverage, but allowing a moderate intake of wine with meals, about one to two glasses a day for men and one glass a day for women.
- Daily physical activity through enjoyable activities.

The Mediterranean Diet Limits or Avoids:

- Sweetened beverages like soda, juice drinks, iced tea
- An excess of refined carbohydrate foods like white bread, pasta, rice

- Fried foods
- Processed high-fat meats like bacon, sausage, hot dogs.
- Saturated fats like full-fat dairy from cream and butter, partially hydrogenated oils, fatty cuts of meat and poultry
- Excess alcohol

Naturopathic Medicines to reduce inflammation and help with cancer prevention.

- Omega 3 fatty acids found in fish oil, flaxseeds, hemp oil, chia seeds.
- Herbal extracts/plant medicines such as curcumin(turmeric), boswellia, quercetin, bromelain, ginger
- Antioxidants such as grapeseed extract, resveratrol, coenzyme Q10
- Mushrooms show anti-inflammatory, anti-oxidant and anti-cancer properties
- Vitamin D3 optimization

Naturopathic Oncology observations in practice from Dr. Kellman's experience.

- Co Q 10 and L-Carnitine improve energy and may protect from cardiovascular side effects of chemotherapy.
- L Glutamine, B6, B12 can help reduce neuropathy associated with chemotherapy
- Astragalus and maitake mushroom extract improve blood counts during cancer treatment.
- Exercise and movement have a profound effect on tolerating cancer treatments and may improve outcomes.
- Stress reduction, mindfulness, counseling and prayer improve quality of life and strength to endure cancer treatment.
- Ginger, peppermint oil diffused, Seaband bracelets, acupuncture can help reduce nausea.
- Improving digestive health improves outcomes and quality of life during cancer treatment (enzymes, probiotics, gut healing agents)



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The Importance of Patient Advocacy and Navigation

by Elizabeth Paucar Harris of H.O.P.E., based in Miami, Florida

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Cancer Support Services for doing such an awesome job of truly advocating for patients as if they were their own family. For over a decade, we have been working together on this journey in handholding patients from the moment they find out of their diagnosis through survivorship. We have been privileged to see how they work side by side with patients. We have done our fair amount of travel to many countries, big and small, and we don't often see this type of authentic caring for patients. I would hope that the Barbadian community is aware that this very much needed, support service is available to patients who have been diagnosed or living with cancer.

I am grateful for this edition because it provides us an outlet to share with the audience in hopes of providing a better understanding of the importance of patient advocacy and navigation.

These 2 terms: Patient Advocacy and Patient Navigation are often used interchangeably but are not necessarily the same. These are services desperately needed for patient, especially when there is a serious diagnosis, but yet not many know how life changing it is when a patient has these by their side. I am privileged to be able to share my 15 years' plus experience as a Patient Advocate and Navigator.

Both terms are used interchangeably because the Patient Advocate is the one advocating for the patient while they navigate the case through all its phases of need.

Patient advocacy's definition is a process in health care concerned with advocacy for patients, survivors, and caregivers. The patient advocate may be an individual or an organization, concerned with healthcare standards or with one specific group of disorders. The terms patient advocate and patient advocacy can refer both to individual advocates providing services that organizations also provide, and to organizations whose functions extend to individual patients.

Patient advocates help patients—and their loved ones—navigate the healthcare system in many ways, like communicating with their medical teams, ensuring proper

follow through and next steps, helping them navigate the healthcare system, finding legal or financial assistance, working with insurance companies, employers or payor institutions, and setting up appointments, tests and screenings. They assist with many aspects of a patient's medical care to make it a little less complicated, despite of what they are going through.

The entire goal of our work at H.O.P.E., is exactly this: we advocate for our patients to access quality medical care as quickly and seamlessly as possible while navigating them through a very complicated healthcare system in the U.S. for both local patients and foreigners aka international patients. Our focus has been helping patients who come from the Caribbean region, Latin America, Canada and Asia, which altogether present with a number of additional challenges patients tend to face. We started with medical care and second opinions here in the U.S. but have added other options as well, given the various needs of our patients. We also handhold patients medical treatments not readily available in home country to hand-picked institutions to the U.S., Trinidad (for cancer patients), Colombia (especially for patients who do not have a U.S. visa or the non-insured due to reduced costs there for quality transplant and cancer treatments), Toronto/Canada (for specific type of transplant cases), and Costa Rica (our newly added option for cancer patients; have known of their work for many years).

Timing is also a very important factor in the entire cancer journey. We are strong advocates of screening and early detection programs because we know that this makes the difference in either preventing or catching diagnoses early on. The earlier cancer is caught and dealt with, the better prognosis and treatment option(s) patients have. We tend to see majority of patients not being proactive with screenings or even visiting their doctors for annual check-ups. We also see patients waiting on either going to the doctor, knowing something is not right with their bodies or waiting on accessing medical care and treatment, when they finally know their diagnoses. Being a LATAM native, I also understand the cultural aspect or even fear of the unknown – cancer is a serious diagnosis but it no longer has to be

a death sentence. I understand that there has been plenty of trust or delay issues with our country's healthcare system. However, I am here to say that the quicker you tackle the disease, the better the outcome. We encourage everyone annual check-ups and screenings with your doctors. If there is something wrong, you can catch it early. We know that cancer does not wait so we tell patients the same – we don't wait either to accessing the appropriate, quality care for our patients!

We encourage patients to get second, third and fourth opinions. Patients should be their own advocates and seek for these opinions to feel comfortable that they are choosing the appropriate specialist, medical service(s) and treatment(s). We ask patients to ask their doctors about treatments which may not be readily available in home country but possibly in other countries or even the U.S.

Physicians should also be confident to encouraging patients to seek those opinions. I speak to many physicians, who even refer out to other colleagues or encourage patients to seek other recommendations including abroad. They prefer their patients trusting in their treatment recommendation than having them doubt of what is being recommended. A lot of patients realize that their doctor recommended the same as outside doctors and end up even staying with their doctor but at least they have done their own due diligence. Or, you also have patients who are being offered treatments which are only available in their home country, although there may be more ideal treatments offered abroad. In my opinion, the patient should ask: are there other treatments for my diagnosis, which possibly is not available here? This helps physicians share with you of those other options as well. They are very busy and may not be thinking outside the box at the moment but if you ask, they should be aware of latest treatments for your particular diagnosis or even clinical trials.

There are plenty of statistics supporting overall survivorship for patients with cancer due to these services. I've heard many panel speakers share that patient navigators saves lives. I would humbly say that our passion is to handhold patients through probably one of their most difficult times of their lives and make the process of getting medical care as smooth as possible, so they don't have to feel the frustration of dealing with it all alone. We rather take on all those burdens with our experience on how to do so allowing the patient to deal with the diagnosis as peaceful as possible.

I am very passionate about this topic since I do this for a living. However, we can dive into more topics in future editions.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to e-mail me at liz@hopepatientconcierge.com or whatsapp at +1 (954) 240-7770

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Whether you are the patient or you are caring for a family member/friend faced with a serious diagnosis or condition, navigating the complex healthcare environment can be challenging.

We take on the burden of these challenges to provide you with the resources & access you need ASAP!

We serve as your personal health advocate and provide the guidance you need. Please see the many ways you can connect with us:

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In Memory of Jackie Marshall-Clarke



Left to Right: Mr. Eric Clarke, Husband/Widower, Dr. Kristen Clarke, Daughter, Janette Lynton, Executive Director, Cancer Support Services, Cassandra Crawford, Communications Advisor, Light & Power and Samantha Barrow, Communications Assistant, Light & Power

Cancer Support Services had the distinct pleasure of receiving a Legacy Donation in memory of the late and beloved Jackie Marshall-Clarke, former Director of Communications of the Barbados Light & Power Company Limited and avid supporter of Cancer Support Services and our commitment to those journeying with cancer in Barbados.

The Legacy Donation was presented by Mrs. Marshall-Clarke’s beloved daughter Dr. Kristen Clarke and husband Mr. Eric Clarke. Dr. Clarke shares the below quote with us;

“It was an honor and a deeply personal moment to present this donation to Barbados Cancer Support Services in memory of my mother, Jackie Marshall-Clarke. Her life continues to inspire us, and this gesture is a reflection of our desire to carry her legacy forward by supporting the critical work being done for families impacted by cancer. This is not a one-time act, our family remains committed to championing this cause through ongoing advocacy and support. We’re also very grateful to The Barbados Light & Power Company Limited, whose consistent partnership helped make this moment possible. Together, we hope to ease the burden for others, celebrate survivors, and build a stronger foundation of care in our community.”

Dr. Kristen Clarke

Also joining us for the presentation were colleagues of Jackie from the Barbados Light & Power Company Ltd. Mrs. Cassandra Crawford, Communications Advisor and Ms. Samantha Barrow, Communications Assistant.

“At Light & Power we suffered the loss of a friend, a work mother, an incredible team leader, our calm in any situation, a dedicated, passionate and consummate professional, in Jackie-Marshall Clarke so today being here at the invitation of Jackie’s first family, to witness this donation presentation to Cancer Support Services is humbling and one of the good and meaningful ways to honour her. The work she started while with us is really continuing, as she would have wanted. This donation will help your organization to help others and Light & Power looks forward to adding more support through our covenant donation in the near future.”

Mrs. Cassandra Crawford, Communications Advisor, Barbados Light & Power Co. Ltd.

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Cancer and Nutrition: Addressing the Challenges Faced by Patients in the Caribbean

By Dr. Marisa Nimrod, MD, MPH
CEO, Caribbean Association for Oncology and Hematology (CAOH)

Cancer remains one of the most pressing public health concerns in the Caribbean, where a growing number of individuals are diagnosed with various forms of the disease each year. While advancements in medical treatments have improved survival rates, nutrition remains a crucial yet often overlooked component of cancer care. Patients undergoing cancer treatment in the Caribbean face unique challenges related to food selection, availability, and affordability, which can significantly impact their immune support and overall well-being. This article explores these challenges and offers guidance on how patients can optimize their diet to strengthen their immune system.

The Role of Nutrition in Cancer Care

Nutrition plays a pivotal role in cancer prevention, treatment, and recovery. A well-balanced diet can help patients manage treatment side effects, maintain energy levels, and improve their body's ability to fight infections. Proper nutrition also supports the effectiveness of cancer treatments such as chemotherapy and radiation by helping patients maintain muscle mass and body strength.

For Caribbean cancer patients, dietary choices must be informed by locally available foods that provide essential nutrients while also being easy to digest and prepare. Foods rich in antioxidants, vitamins, and minerals can help combat oxidative stress and inflammation, which are often exacerbated by cancer treatments.

Challenges Faced by Caribbean Cancer Patients in Nutrition
Despite the importance of nutrition in cancer care, patients in the Caribbean face several challenges in accessing and selecting the right foods to support their immune system:

1. Limited Access to Nutrient-Rich Foods

Many Caribbean islands rely on imported foods, which can be expensive and sometimes lack freshness due to long

shipping times. Fresh, locally grown fruits and vegetables are available but can be costly depending on the season and supply chain disruptions.

2. Cultural Dietary Preferences

Traditional Caribbean diets are often high in fried foods, processed meats, and starchy carbohydrates. While these foods provide comfort and familiarity, they may not always be the best options for cancer patients seeking to support their immune system.

3. Economic Constraints

Cancer treatments can be financially draining, leaving patients with limited budgets for purchasing healthy foods. This can lead to reliance on cheaper, highly processed foods that lack essential nutrients.

4. Lack of Awareness and Education

Many patients and caregivers are unaware of the specific dietary needs of cancer patients. Without proper guidance, patients may unknowingly consume foods that hinder rather than aid their recovery.

5. Side Effects of Treatment

Cancer treatments can cause side effects such as nausea, loss of appetite, and difficulty swallowing, making it challenging for patients to consume the necessary nutrients for recovery.

Seeking Guidance from a Dietitian

Given the complexities of maintaining a healthy diet while undergoing cancer treatment, it is highly recommended that patients consult a registered dietitian or nutritionist. These professionals can tailor meal plans to accommodate dietary restrictions, ensure proper nutrient intake, and help manage side effects from treatment. A dietitian can also provide valuable guidance for individuals who have additional health conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure, or kidney disease, ensuring their diet supports overall well-being.

Optimizing Nutrition for Immune Support and Chronic Conditions

To help address these challenges, Caribbean cancer patients, along with those managing conditions such as high blood pressure and diabetes, should focus on incorporating the following foods into their diet:

Leafy Greens and Cruciferous Vegetables (e.g., callaloo, spinach, kale, cabbage, and broccoli) provide essential vitamins, fiber, and antioxidants that help combat inflammation and detoxify the body.

Fruits Rich in Vitamin C and Antioxidants (e.g., soursop, guava, papaya, and mango) can help boost the immune system and provide natural energy.

Healthy Fats from sources such as avocado, coconut oil (in moderation), and nuts aid in reducing inflammation and improving overall cell health.

High-Quality Proteins like fish, lean poultry, and plant-based options such as lentils, chickpeas, and red beans help maintain muscle mass and support tissue repair.

Whole Grains and Complex Carbohydrates (e.g., quinoa, breadfruit, and sweet potatoes) provide sustained energy and essential fiber for digestive health.

Herbs and Spices with Medicinal Properties, including turmeric, ginger, and garlic, offer anti-inflammatory and immune-boosting benefits.

Low-Sodium and Low-Sugar Options: Individuals managing high blood pressure should limit salt intake and opt for fresh, unprocessed foods, while those with diabetes should prioritize complex carbohydrates and fiber to regulate blood sugar levels.

A Simple, Immune-Boosting Caribbean Recipe: Healing Soursop Smoothie

Soursop (Graviola) is widely known for its potential anticancer properties and is rich in antioxidants, vitamin C, and fiber. This simple smoothie is gentle on the stomach and packed with nutrients to support cancer patients' immune systems.

Ingredients:

- 1 cup fresh soursop pulp (seeded and mashed)
- 1 cup coconut water (or almond milk for a creamier

- texture)
- 1 banana (for natural sweetness and potassium)
- 1 teaspoon grated ginger (anti-inflammatory benefits)
- 1 teaspoon turmeric powder (immune booster)
- 1 tablespoon chia seeds (fiber and omega-3s)
- 1 teaspoon honey (optional, for added sweetness)
- Ice cubes (as needed)

Instructions:

1. Place all ingredients into a blender.
2. Blend until smooth and creamy.
3. Pour into a glass and serve immediately.
4. Enjoy this nutrient-packed smoothie as a nourishing breakfast or a mid-day boost.

Conclusion

Cancer patients in the Caribbean face unique nutritional challenges, but with greater awareness, local food sourcing, and simple meal planning, they can support their immune system and enhance their overall well-being. By incorporating nutrient-rich, locally available foods into their diet, patients can improve their resilience and response to treatment.

In addition to cancer patients, individuals living with high blood pressure, diabetes, and other chronic conditions can benefit from adopting a balanced diet that emphasizes whole foods, lean proteins, and healthy fats while reducing processed foods, sugar, and excess salt.

Healthcare providers, caregivers, and community organizations must continue to promote accessible, cost-effective dietary strategies that empower patients with the knowledge to make informed food choices. Seeking professional dietary guidance can make a significant difference in managing health conditions and improving quality of life.

With the right nutritional approach, cancer patients and individuals with chronic illnesses can strengthen their immune system and enhance their overall health as they navigate their treatment and wellness journey.



Ensure® Max Protein Mixed Berry Parfait

 **Makes:** 2  **Prep Time:** 5 mins

INGREDIENTS

- 1 Creamy Strawberry Ensure Max Protein shake, 11 fl oz
- ½ cup fresh or frozen berries
- ½ cup plain Greek yogurt
- 3 tbsp granola

DIRECTIONS

Combine Max Protein, berries, and yogurt in a blender. Blend until smooth. Divide between 2 drinking glasses and top with granola before serving. Immediately refrigerate or freeze remaining servings and consume or discard after 24 hours.

1 Portion 188 calories | 23g protein | 5g fat | 14g carbs



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