



**Podcast Transcript:  
The Linda B. and Robert B. Wiggins Wellness Center  
at Huntsman Cancer Institute**

**HOST:**

Multiple myeloma patients who come to Huntsman Cancer Institute are encouraged to take advantage of free access to the Wellness Center. There are so many offerings and among them are a fitness program, a bone health program, a guided imagery and relaxation program, nutrition counseling, yoga, acupuncture, and many activities that connect cancer patients with other cancer patients to form friendships and support networks.

Janet Bloch is director of the Wellness Center.

**BLOCH:**

“There is usually at least something here that people find is very helpful to them to help them just feel more positive about their cancer experience and their treatment.”

**HOST:**

The Wellness Center opened its doors in 2006 and continues to expand its programs and services. The very first program offered, says Bloch, was the fitness program.

**BLOCH:**

“Which we developed to help people deal with the common side effects of the treatments for cancer, namely fatigue.”

**HOST:**

The fitness program links patients to cancer exercise specialists like Kimberly Walker. Walker says the first step in the fitness program is an initial assessment to determine physical parameters like strength, agility, balance, and flexibility. A cancer exercise specialist and a physician are present during that initial assessment and, after that, patients can make appointments for one-on-one sessions.

**WALKER:**

“We work together in a private setting and we set very basic exercises to get us started and we just take it one week at a time. If you’re doing it during treatment then we’ll work around some of the physical elements and challenges that you’re experiencing and, overall, help you to build your strength back up and hopefully be able to do some of the things that you would like to do again.”



**HOST:**

Patrick Troumbly, who also works with the fitness program, says there's more to the program than just the one-on-one exercise sessions. There are also community-based group activities like...

**TROUMBLY:**

"...a yoga program. There's rowing and cycling. We do fly fishing, hiking, group circuit. We try to get as many things out there. We have aqua toning. We try to really involve a lot of good activities."

**HOST:**

Walker says these community-based activities are not just about getting fit.

**WALKER:**

"Once you enter the community programs, you really do have a community. A support group. An active support group where you can mingle with other survivors and make some good friends for life."

**HOST:**

As Troumbly mentioned, one of the community activities is rowing. The Wellness Center's rowing instructor is Nicole Hamory who—like all the other employees of the Wellness Center—has a true passion for what she does.

**HAMORY:**

"To get people out there and to share with them something that I love is quite an honor. And the best thing about the rowing program is that pretty much anyone can do it because you only pull as hard as you want to pull."

**HOST:**

On a beautiful summer afternoon, Hamory and I drove together to the Great Salt Lake, where she was meeting up with a group of cancer survivors for a rowing session. When we arrive, she enthusiastically runs down to the dock and helps round up the boats and the equipment for the afternoon's adventure.

**HAMORY:**

"Hi guys!"

**HOST:**

Everyone's ready to go, and she gets things started.



**HAMORY:**

"Let's get one hand on the dock. Push away on two. One. Two. Big push. Nice! Oh wow! Amazing water today.

Okay. Sitting ready. Ready all row. All together.

*<Sound of oars moving in and out of the water.>*

It is the ultimate team sport in the sense that everyone pulls together at the same time, and so there's a lot of metaphors woven into the sport that I think apply to cancer survivors.

I think one of my favorite metaphors is that every stroke is a new stroke—kind of like every day is a new day—and you can start fresh with every stroke and make it feel better than the last stroke you took. And if it didn't feel as good, then the next stroke is brand new too.

And then the water. We don't have a lot of control. We don't have control over the wind. We don't have control over the water. But we can focus on doing our very best and hope that we'll be supported and know what we have control over and know what we don't have control over and let that help shape a perspective that brings us more peace and more balance."

**HOST:**

In addition to being the rowing instructor, Hamory also teaches the Wellness Center's bi-weekly yoga classes.

Over the past several years, there's been a growing body of research indicating that relaxation-based interventions, like yoga, can contribute to the well-being of people with cancer. It can improve mood and concentration, give a person more energy, lower blood pressure and cholesterol, and allow for better breathing capacity. And of course, it also improves overall physical fitness.

**HAMORY:**

"There are weight-bearing poses, or asanas, that can be done and that will obviously strengthen the bones and help support the connective tissue, increase the circulation, help with proprioception. So for people who have balance issues and they just don't feel comfortable moving around, yoga is a really great way to get people moving without feeling threatened. So it's a great way to re-introduce exercise into people's regimen if that's part of what they need to do to feel better and improve their quality of life."

**HOST:**

Next, we meet Dr. Pamela Hansen, who is also involved with the Wellness Center in a variety of ways. She oversees the Bone Health and Osteoporosis Program. In the



fitness program, she helps with a person's initial assessment. And, she provides acupuncture treatments.

Acupuncture is the practice of inserting thin, sterile, disposable needles into the body at specific points. The use of these needles in treatments has been approved by the Food and Drug Administration.

Dr. Hansen says the Wellness Center started to offer free acupuncture after hearing many patients express an interest in the technique.

**HANSEN:**

"The traditional Chinese concept is that there's chi, or energy, flowing through the body and you can get obstructions in that energy at certain points and you can open that up by sticking needles in specific points in the body.

Our concept of how it works today is a little bit different and it's not clear how it works. We think that probably various substances—endogenous opioids and other factors—are released in the body when you insert the needles and its effects probably are related to that."

**HOST:**

Dr. Hansen says acupuncture can have many benefits.

**HANSEN:**

"Many patients come for acupuncture to help treat symptoms of pain. And that can be pain really anywhere. People have problems with back pain, knee pain, shoulder pain, pain after surgery. They can have bone pain. Some people have pain related to neuropathies from their treatments.

People also come frequently to help manage symptoms of nausea. And that's probably been one of the better-studied areas of acupuncture and there's a lot of good evidence out there showing that acupuncture can be very helpful in managing symptoms of nausea.

Acupuncture can really be used to help manage many symptoms, such as fatigue. Even mood. It can be very helpful in relaxation. So many people just enjoy spending the time meditating and relaxing during an acupuncture treatment."

**HOST:**

As mentioned before, another program at the Wellness Center is called the Guided Imagery and Relaxation Program. The director of the Wellness Center, Janet Bloch, says this program is run by the social workers at Huntsman Cancer Institute.



**BLOCH:**

“To help with the issues of anxiety and particularly with insomnia. People often have just a terrible time sleeping and this is an alternative or supplement to the need to rely on sleeping medications for this problem.”

**HOST:**

And there’s also a class for female cancer patients called “Look Good, Feel Better.” It’s sponsored by the American Cancer Society. The class teaches beauty techniques to help manage the side effects of cancer treatment, like hair loss, as well as make-up tips to offset changes in the appearance of skin and nails. Participants receive a free cosmetics kit.

It’s an exciting time for the Wellness Center and there are plans to keep adding programs, like a therapeutic arts program.

**BLOCH:**

“Which would include such activities as pottery, poetry writing, and even a dance class.”

**HOST:**

Bloch says in order to participate in any of the Wellness Center’s programs or services...

**BLOCH:**

“Call our receptionist at 801-587-4385. Or go to our website, and that’s a great way to see what the whole menu of programs that we have available are. And that website address is [www.huntsmancancer.org/wellnesscenter](http://www.huntsmancancer.org/wellnesscenter).”