

Focusing on You: Pilot Program Offers Free Support Services to Breast Cancer Patients

A survivorship program at Sylvester at Plantation helps patients' achieve physical, mental, and emotional well-being.

Carmen Calfa M.D., a breast medical oncologist and medical co-director of the Cancer Survivorship Program at Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center, describes a unique pilot program that offers support services to breast cancer patients and why it is so important not only to treat their cancer but also address their emotional and mental wellbeing. Annie Masi is one of those patients.

MEET ANNIE MASI

When Annie Masi was diagnosed with breast cancer at 42, she knew she had a tough battle ahead.

“On the right top of my breast, I had a lump the size of a big gumball,” Annie says. “Within a couple weeks I was starting chemo.”

Carmen Calfa, M.D., a breast oncologist and medical co-director of the Cancer Survivorship Program at Sylvester, says it’s not just about treating the patient’s cancer, but addressing their physical and emotional well being from diagnosis, through treatment, and beyond.

“At Sylvester we really are dedicated to finding the best treatments and cure as many patients as we can,” says Dr. Calfa. “But we also want to really be mindful of the aftermath and what comes with cancer and with cancer treatment.”

“Doctor, what is the Survivorship Program at Sylvester?” asks anchor Pam Giganti.

“When you look at the Survivorship Program we have at Sylvester, we really try to take into account evidence-based interventions,” Dr. Calfa says.

Survivorship Supportive Services are available to all cancer patients at Sylvester. But six months ago, a pilot program that offers breast cancer patients a coordinated, integrated, and personalized survivorship care plan all under one roof was launched at the Plantation location.

“We offer them a multidisciplinary approach,” says Dr. Calfa. “That includes exercise physiologists, nutritionists, music therapists, art therapists, acupuncturists, the medical oncologists, the nurse practitioner.”

“When I was in the chemo lounge, we always had someone come in and play some instruments. Then they taught me how to use the instruments,” says Annie.

Annie is in remission now but she’s still in treatment and continues to engage in the free services that kept her spirits high in the toughest times.

“It just touched every aspect of my life,” Annie says.

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