

McLeod Breast Health Center Provides Outstanding Care and Support

by Sage L. Andrews and Leah M. Rank

The chance of a woman having breast cancer in her lifetime is one in eight, according to the American Cancer Society. The American Cancer Society also confirms that currently, more than two million women living in the United States have been treated for breast cancer.

It is the most common cancer among women other than skin cancer. Perry Wilson, the Director of Admissions at Coker College, was adamant about receiving regular mammograms after she turned 40. Her mother had been diagnosed with breast cancer at the age of 75. In August of 2003, at 45 years old, a mass was found during one of her routine mammograms. An initial biopsy was performed, and the lump was diagnosed as cancerous.

Perry and her friend Marion Coxe had always said that if one of them was diagnosed with breast cancer, she would have a mastectomy and “be done with it.” However, now faced with this decision, Perry wanted to re-think their pact. She asked her doctor for her options; a mastectomy or a lumpectomy could be performed, since the cancer was still at an early stage. Her friend Marion decided to call Dr. Tommy Wilson of Pee Dee Surgical Group to get his opinion, and Dr. Wilson brought Perry’s case to the McLeod Tumor Board.

The McLeod Tumor Board is a multi-disciplinary team of physicians, who collectively decide on the best treatment plan for each breast cancer patient. This board consists of experts in the areas of

radiology, radiation oncology, pathology, oncology, and surgery. McLeod Breast Health Specialist Maureen Counihan presents all breast cancer patients to the board twice; once after a biopsy is performed to determine the course of treatment of the cancer, and once after the treatment to determine the next steps. “How lucky are we that they do that? That’s why I was so happy with McLeod; I knew I was getting the opinions of five or more physicians, and they were making a recommendation based on my individual situation,” Perry said.

She was scheduled for a core needle biopsy with Dr. Bruce White in McLeod Breast Imaging, after which the McLeod Tumor Board agreed with a lumpectomy followed by radiation. Perry wanted to talk with Oncologist Dr. Rajesh Bajaj of Carolina Health Care before proceeding with the surgery. “I wanted the what-ifs. I really think it’s important to talk with an oncologist. I wanted his assurance on the best treatment.”

Perry was scheduled for the lumpectomy with Dr. Pearson of Pee Dee Surgical Group, and she felt completely confident in him and his team. “At McLeod, the surgeons are continuously updating their skills, attending breast



General Surgeon Dr. Joseph Pearson is pictured here with Perry Wilson. Perry is happy and healthy after undergoing breast conservation surgery at McLeod.

Radiology accredited Breast Imaging Center has five diagnostic mammography units; a stereotactic unit for less painful, less invasive, and less costly biopsies; two-state-of-the-art ultrasound units, and a computer aided detection system for reading
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cancer seminars, and constantly improving the technology. The technology is so important, and McLeod doctors keep up with it. The knowledge is here,” said Perry. “I didn’t feel like I needed to go anywhere else. I felt very comfortable in their care, and the doctors have a lot of camaraderie. They were very knowledgeable.”

Designated as the region’s only accredited cancer treatment center by the Commission on Cancer of the American College of Surgeons, McLeod is equipped with the most comprehensive treatment of cancers through surgery, including minimally invasive procedures and bloodless surgery, as well as the latest advances in the delivery of chemotherapy and radiation.

Dr. Pearson and his team also performed a sentinel node biopsy while performing the lumpectomy surgery and tested the lymph nodes for cancerous cells. “The sentinel nodes are the first two to three nodes that a breast cancer is most likely to spread to first,” said Dr. Pearson. Perry did not have any cancer there, and was sent home the next day after her surgery.

She was glad that she was told about the breast conservation techniques. “Breast conservation is a modality of surgically treating breast cancer without removing the breast. The survival rates are totally equal to a mastectomy,”

Dr. Pearson said. “You don’t have to lose your breast to save your life.”

Today, Perry still sees Dr. Pearson every six months for a checkup and continues to receive mammograms at McLeod Health. “Dr. Pearson is forthright and knowledgeable. He listens to you, and he takes the time to sit down with you and communicate what’s going on with your health and treatment.”

The McLeod Breast Health Center, the only center of its kind in the region, provides support and education to women through a broad range of services. The McLeod Resource center is open five days a week and offers free materials and a caring staff to answer questions, and the McLeod Community Education Coordinator raises breast health awareness by providing the Pee Dee with the most recent breast health information and research.

Early detection is a primary focus of the McLeod Breast Health Center, and annually McLeod Health provides free breast cancer screenings to the community. A mammogram can detect breast cancer one to three years before a lump can be felt, and McLeod mammography technicians are certified to perform mammograms, ultrasounds, and biopsies to achieve the most thorough understanding of the condition.

McLeod also has the latest technology, and McLeod’s American College of

mammograms.

McLeod also uses magnetic resonance imaging (Breast MRI), which can detect masses difficult to see in an ultrasound mammogram. McLeod also offers same and next day scheduling for the region's only fixed based positron emissions tomography scanner (PET), a state of the art diagnostic tool for detecting breast abnormalities.

A certified breast care educator, the McLeod Breast Health Specialist, coordinates each patient's and their families clinical, educational, and support needs. She is available 24 hours a day by beeper or via www.McLeodHealth.org to ease concerns and answer questions.

The McLeod Breast Health Center involves patients and their families in the entire process with personal care and treatment. An important part of recovering from breast cancer is receiving emotional, mental, and spiritual support, and McLeod offers the American Cancer Society's "Look Good...Feel Better" program, and support groups that meet regularly to offer information, encouragement, and hope.

If you have questions about breast cancer, you can contact the McLeod Breast Health Center Monday through Friday at (843) 777-4444 or log onto www.McLeodHealth.org/Services anytime, access the Breast Health Center link and click on "Ask the Breast Health Specialist."

McLeod Provides Boutique for Women Undergoing Treatment for Cancer

A new resource has opened at McLeod Regional Medical Center for women undergoing cancer treatment. The McLeod Color Me Pink Boutique officially opened during the fall, and offers free wigs, scarves, turbans and other items that can help a woman enhance her appearance during cancer treatment. In addition, post-mastectomy bras and breast forms (protheses) are available for breast cancer patients.

Many of the wigs have been donated to the McLeod Boutique by patients and individuals in the community as well as the American Cancer Society and local retailers. All of the wigs have been refurbished, cleaned and styled by Christy Moore and Company in Florence, who were very generous in offering to provide this service for free. In addition, other companies in Florence also contributed to the boutique by making donations including Murray Mitchell Lighting, Bazen's Family Restaurant, Progressive Biomechanics and Palmetto Prosthetics and Orthotics.

Located on the sixth floor oncology unit of the medical center, the boutique features a vanity and mirrors, wall shelves displaying a variety of styles and colors of wigs and scarves, bookshelves holding different size bras and hats and a privacy screen for bra fittings.

The Color Me Pink Boutique is a joint effort between McLeod Cancer Services, the McLeod

Breast Health Center and the hospital's Volunteer Auxiliary. Rudy and Sylvia Hughes, past and current presidents of the McLeod Volunteer Auxiliary, led the efforts and donated much of their time and energy and a few of the items that were needed to open the room. In addition, volunteers of the Auxiliary provide staffing in the boutique. These volunteers are also Certified Post-Mastectomy Bra and Prosthetic Fitters.

The McLeod Color Me Pink Boutique is open on Mondays and Thursdays from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m and 5 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. These services are free to any woman in the community who is undergoing cancer treatment.

The Auxiliary is also open to any donations of new hats, wigs or scarves. If you have items to donate, please contact McLeod Volunteer Services at (843) 777-2082. If you are interested in dropping off items at the medical center, the following locations can accept your donations: McLeod Breast Imaging and the Volunteer Services office, which are both located on the first floor of the McLeod Pavilion or one of the two McLeod Gift Shops.



The McLeod "Color Me Pink Boutique" provides free services to cancer patients.