



Cancer Care

MARCH 2026

Geoffrey Vaughn, LMFT, ATR, (left) met with two medical students to plan a new group for people with head and neck cancers.

New Group for People with Head and Neck Cancers

By D'Ann George

People living with head and neck cancers can now share their unique experiences and challenges at an in-person monthly meeting every second Monday. A medical family therapist, Geoffrey Vaughn, LMFT, ATR, facilitates the group through the [Duke Cancer Patient Support Program](#).

Two Duke medical students, Alexandra Hunter and Rebecca Zasloff, helped start the new group. Here they explain why they got involved, what they hope to learn by attending the meetings, and why they want to specialize in the research and treatment of these cancers.

A Disease that Impacts Family Bonds

For Hunter, growing up in a large family who often talked about their day over dinner helped her understand the profound social and relational loss that can occur when eating becomes difficult after surgery.

She said that it was only after leaving home for medical school, where she often eats alone while studying late into the night,

that she truly understood how much those family meals meant to her.

“Head and neck cancer affects how we communicate and how we identify ourselves,” she said. “Losing the ability to swallow or speak isn’t just losing a function. It can mean losing a cultural ritual, a family bond, a daily rhythm of love and belonging.”

Zasloff’s interest in these cancers began while pursuing her Master of Public Health under the mentorship of head and neck cancer epidemiologist Nosayaba Osazuwa-Peters, PhD.

As medical students at Duke, both women are [Albert Schweitzer Fellows](#) and are continuing to study head and neck cancers.

A Place to Listen and Learn from Patients

Both young women felt that clinic visits rarely gave them enough time to fully understand what patients were experiencing. Starting a support group would give them a place to listen and learn.

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Cancer Support Services

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At their very first meeting, Hunter watched patients nod in recognition as people described their challenges, like swallowing difficulties, feeding tubes, or the trial and error of finding the right blender to make meals manageable. “There was this immediate sense of relief as everyone realized that they weren’t alone,” she said.

Zasloff noticed the variety of people who came.

“We had people who were newly diagnosed before they even started treatment, to people who were five years out of treatment—well into survivorship.

“And while we did have a guest speaker focused on nutrition, we found that the majority of the time, the patients were talking to one another with words of encouragement, especially for people who are just starting this journey,” Zasloff said.

As future specialists in these cancers, both women hope that the group will teach them what no textbook can: how cancer shapes a person’s daily life and how clinicians can honor the human experience behind every medical decision.

To learn more about the [Head and Neck Cancer Group](#), (next session, March 9), along with other cancer support groups and meetups, visit duke.is/5/f2nb.

Support services are offered both in-person and remotely. Please call 919.684.4497 for more information.

dukecancerinstitute.org

Duke Cancer Institute offers a variety of cancer support and survivorship services for patients and their loved ones to assist with navigating life during and after cancer treatment. Our goal is to shape the future of cancer survivorship and improve the quality of life throughout treatment.

Patient and Nurse Navigation

Navigators support patients, families, and caregivers throughout cancer care — from diagnosis to the end of treatment. They provide information to guide decisions, advocate for your needs, identify barriers, and connect you with helpful resources. To learn more, ask your healthcare team about available Navigation services.

Clinical Social Work

Oncology and palliative care social workers help patients and families manage emotional and practical challenges. They ease stress, address financial concerns, and connect you with resources like disability support, home health, hospice, and end-of-life planning. Ask your healthcare team about Clinical Social Work services.

Cancer Nutrition

Our registered dietitians specialize in oncology and help to prevent and treat malnutrition, restore digestive health, and minimize the side effects of your cancer treatment. To learn more, contact your healthcare team and ask about cancer nutrition services.

Chaplain Services & Education

Duke chaplains are on site seven days a week to offer spiritual support to you and your loved ones. When requested, they connect you with faith-specific representatives from the community. To learn more, contact Chaplain Services & Education at Duke Cancer Institute locations by visiting dukehealth.org/support-services/pastoral-services.

Therapy and Counseling

Our medical family therapists provide individual, couples, and family therapy. They help you and your loved ones cope with the impact of cancer, all at no cost. Psychiatry and psychology services are also available and offered as part of our treatment for emotional, psychological, and relational issues associated with a cancer diagnosis. To learn more, visit duke.is/c/b47z.

Sexual Health Services

Sexual health services explain the impact cancer treatments can have on sexual health and intimacy. They help you address concerns surrounding sexual function, sexual feelings, intimacy, and changes in sexual health. To learn more, contact your healthcare team and ask about sexual health services.

Quit at Duke

Quit at Duke is a program designed to help people quit using tobacco products. Services are provided by tobacco treatment specialists and behavioral medicine clinicians. For more information or to schedule an appointment, please call 919.613.QUIT (7848). To learn more, visit dukehealth.org/quit.

Survivorship Services

We partner with you and your loved ones to support healthy, fulfilling lives beyond cancer. Care includes physical and emotional assessments, screenings, and counseling for prevention and wellness. Learn more at duke.is/survivorshippervices or call 919.668.2122.

Teen and Young Adult Oncology Program

This program supports teens and young adults (ages 15–29) and their loved ones through cancer diagnosis, treatment, and survivorship. Services include specialized medical care, individual and family therapy, peer support, and activity-based groups in both clinical and community settings. Learn more at dukehealth.org/TYAO.

Palliative Care

This team helps manage symptoms like pain, fatigue, nausea, anxiety, and more — improving your comfort and quality of life. They work with you, your loved ones, and your doctors to ensure care aligns with your goals. To schedule, call 919.668.6688 (option #7) or visit dukehealth.org/treatments/palliative-care.

Self-Image Services

Our self-image consultants offer a variety of services and products to assist individuals with changes in body-image experienced during cancer treatment and survivorship. If you are interested in a self-image consultation, at one of our three locations, call 919.613.1906 or email cancersupport@duke.edu. To learn more, visit duke.is/self-image.

Child and Adolescent Life Services

They focus on supporting the emotional and developmental needs of children and teens in families who are facing cancer. They hold individual education sessions to support parents while they take the lead in helping their children understand a cancer diagnosis, treatment, side effects, and changes in their family life. To learn more, visit duke.is/cals.

Onco-Fertility Services

Cancer treatments can impact fertility. If you are interested in a fertility preservation consult, talk to your care team, and a nurse navigator will connect you with specialists — including fertility-trained providers, financial counselors, and therapists, and more. Services are available from diagnosis through survivorship, even if preservation wasn't completed. Call 919-613-4389 to speak with a nurse navigator. To learn more, visit duke.is/fertpreservation.

Do you want to receive this newsletter monthly by email? Scan the QR code to [subscribe](#) today.



Scan to learn more or visit duke.is/n8h92

Pets at Duke

Take a break, find some calm, and connect with a furry friend.

Check the calendar to plan your visit: duke.is/PADCalendar



Support Gatherings

Duke Cancer Patient Support Program's support gatherings are professionally facilitated. Attendees have an opportunity to meet people in a similar situation, share their experience and get support, tips, and ideas from those who understand what they are going through. Registration is required. To learn more, call 919.684.4497. Scan the QR code to register for support groups. All times listed are in Eastern Standard Time.



Art Therapy at Nasher

Wednesday :: March 11
2 to 3:30 p.m.

[Second Wednesday of the month](#)

This [group](#) is open to patients and caregivers and is located at the Nasher Museum of Art in Durham. No art experience is needed. For more information and to register, visit duke.is/nn4gr.

Blood and Marrow Transplant Survivorship Support Group

Wednesday :: March 18
4 to 5:30 p.m.

[Third Wednesday of the month](#)

This virtual [group](#) is for patients and caregivers. To register, visit duke.is/mhc7m.

Breast & GYN Cancers Support Group

Tuesday :: March 10
5:30 to 7 p.m.

[Second Tuesday of the month](#)

This virtual [group](#) is for patients only. To register, visit duke.is/mhc7m.

Caregiver Support Group

Thursday :: March 19
6 to 7 p.m.

[Third Thursday of the month](#)

This virtual [group](#) is for caregivers only. To register, visit duke.is/mhc7m.

General Cancer Support Group

Thursday :: March 19, 5 to 6 p.m.

[Third Thursday of the month](#)

This virtual [group](#) is for patients only. Topics include communicating, finding information, making decisions, solving problems negotiating, and standing up for your rights. To register, visit duke.is/mhc7m.

Head and Neck Cancer Group

Monday :: March 9
4 to 5 p.m.

[Second Monday of the month](#)

This [group](#) is open to patients and caregivers and is located at Duke Physical Therapy and Sports Medicine in the Center for Living Campus. For more information and to register, visit duke.is/g/utqh.

LGBTQIA+ Cancer Support Group

Wednesday :: March 25
5:30 to 6:30 p.m.

[Fourth Wednesday of the month](#)

This virtual [group](#) is for patients and caregivers. To register, visit duke.is/mhc7m.

Metastatic Cancer Support Group for Women

Wednesday :: March 18
3 to 4:30 p.m.

[Third Wednesday of the month](#)

This virtual [group](#) is for patients only. To register, visit duke.is/mhc7m.

Parenting with Cancer Meetup

Tuesday :: March 17, 7:30 to 8:30 p.m.

[Third Tuesday of the month](#)

This virtual [group](#) is for parents with cancer and their caregivers, who have young children and/or teens. To register, visit duke.is/mhc7m.

Prostate Cancer Support Group

Monday :: March 23, 4 to 6 p.m.

[Fourth Monday of the month](#)

This virtual [group](#) is for patients and caregivers. To register, visit duke.is/mhc7m.

KidsCAN!

KidsCAN! is a program designed to support children and teens, ages 4 to 18, who have a



parent or significant caregiver living with a diagnosis of cancer. Monthly meetups focus on issues such as understanding cancer, changes in the family life, feelings, self-care, memories, cooperation, love and family. KidsCAN! (ages 4–10 years) meets virtually on the second Monday of the month, March 9 at 6:30 p.m.



KidsCAN! Tweens and Teens (ages 11–18 years) meets virtually on the third Monday of the month, March 16 at 6:30 p.m.

Registration is required. For more information, contact us by visiting duke.is/m/wv4y.

TYAO

Teen and Young Adult Oncology Program

Join us for a virtual meetup for young adults (18–39 years old) on Tuesday, March 24 from 6:30 – 7:30 p.m.

Email TYAO@Duke.edu for more information and to register. Check out our Instagram for updates and upcoming events.



@duketyao

Rest, Relax, Renew

The Duke Cancer Patient Support Program provides services and resources to help support patients and their loved ones. For a list of complimentary services, visit dukehealth.org/cancersupport or call 919.684.4497.



Virtual Tai Chi
Fridays :: March 6 & 20,
2:30 to 3:15 p.m.
First and Third Friday of the month
Join Dr. Jay Dunbar, founder and director of The Magic Tortoise Taijiquan School, for a virtual [Tai Chi class](#) for cancer patients and survivors. Visit duke.is/8mues to learn more and to register.

Virtual Yoga
Tuesdays :: March 10 & 24,
Noon to 1 p.m.

Second and Fourth Tuesday of the month
Join certified Yoga for Cancer instructor Laura Woodall in a [class](#) designed specifically for cancer patients and survivors. Visit duke.is/7jgt3 to learn more and to register.

Mind-Body Approaches to Coping with Cancer
Tuesdays :: March 3 & 17,
Noon to 1 p.m.

First and Third Tuesday of the month
Mindfulness can be a powerful tool to manage the stress that can accompany living with and life after cancer. These [virtual sessions](#) teach mind and body approaches to coping with cancer. Through the focus on the breath and the present moment, patients and their caregivers will learn to discover how to respond rather than react to life's stressors. For more

information and to register, visit duke.is/gzsvt.

Explore the Power of Your Voice for Healing
Wednesdays :: March 4 & 18, Noon to 1 p.m.

First and Third Wednesday of the month
In this virtual [workshop](#) you will explore breathing techniques, vocal toning, and chanting. These tools and techniques, when used daily, encourage mindful attention to one's heart and voice. Experience the health benefits of sound, vibration, and self-expression. Visit duke.is/mn7m9 to learn more and to register.

Exercise Consultations
Mondays :: 2 to 4 p.m.
Wednesdays :: 8:30 to 11:30 a.m.

Supportive Care & Survivorship Center offers [exercise consultations](#) by exercise physiologists. These personalized sessions

are available to oncology patients and survivors at no cost. Video chat or phone sessions are available on Mondays between 2:00 and 4:00 p.m. and Wednesdays between 8:30 and 11:30 a.m. To learn more or to register email DHFCancerExercise@dm.duke.edu or visit duke.is/82cne.

Salon Services
Mondays :: March 2 & 23
Wednesday :: March 18
10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Typically the First and Fourth Monday of the month; Third Wednesday of the month

Our volunteer team of expert hair stylists provide private consultations at the Belk Boutique in Durham at no cost. They offer dry cuts for your hair or a head shave. Our stylists can also assist with wig styling, cutting, and general wig care. To learn more, visit duke.is/n/8mu6.

Duke University Hospital
Cancer Center



Beyond Cancer:
Confronting the Challenges of Survivorship



MEDSCAPE SERIES

This series discusses how our innovative approach of providing onco-primary care, along with collaborative research efforts, has informed improvements in screening, treatment, and post-treatment oncology care.



duke.is/4/qm9r



Duke Cancer Institute

MARCH 2026

Duke Cancer Institute Support and Activity Groups

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
2	3 Mind/Body Approaches Coping with Cancer	4 Explore the Power of Voice	5	6 Tai Chi
9 Head and Neck Cancer Group KidsCAN! (4–10)	10 Yoga Breast & GYN Cancer Support	11 Art Therapy at Nasher	12	13
16 KidsCAN! Tweens and Teens	17 Mind/Body Approaches Coping with Cancer Parenting with Cancer Meetup	18 Explore the Power of Voice Women’s Metastatic Cancer Support BMT Survivorship Support	19 General Cancer Support Group Caregiver Support Group	20 Tai Chi
23 Prostate Cancer Support	24 Yoga TYAO Young Adult Meetup	25 LGBTQIA+ Cancer Support Group	26	27

For more information and to register, visit dukehealth.org/cancersupport or call 919.684.4497

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