



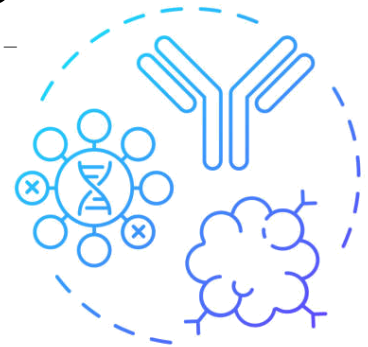
What's New?

with Ovarian Cancer Treatment

The information below came from the article "Ovarian Cancer – New Treatments and Research" on the website cancerblog.mayoclinic.org (5-1-24)

According to **Dr. S. John Weroha**, M.D., Ph.D., a Mayo Clinic oncologist and chair of Mayo Clinic Comprehensive Cancer Center's Gynecologic Cancer Disease Group, new treatments are helping more people survive all types of ovarian cancer, and researchers are studying new treatments and screening methods in clinical trials. In addition to surgery and chemotherapy, previously the only options for ovarian cancer treatments, targeted therapies are now being used. Monoclonal antibodies and PARP inhibitors are examples of drugs which target and attack cancer cells.

Monoclonal antibodies are molecules which are engineered in the laboratory to find and attach to specific proteins associated with cancer cells. One of the most common ones is Bevacizumab (Avastin), which is paired with chemotherapy to treat ovarian cancer recurrence. It works by preventing the growth of new blood vessels that tumors need to grow. Researchers are coming up with new drugs to pair with Avastin, such as mirvetuximab soravtansine (Elahere). It is an antibody-drug conjugate for patients whose cancer was treated with one to three other systemic therapies, and it works to target a protein called folate receptor alpha. Dr. Weroha explains that ovarian cancer has many folate receptors, but that most normal cells do not. He likened it to a guided missile traveling the body and sticking to cells with folate receptors. For patients with recurrent ovarian cancer, the tumor response rate from this targeted therapy is about double that of other treatments.



Monoclonal Antibodies

A category of drugs that block DNA repair and lead to cancer cell death is the **PARP inhibitors**. While used as a front-line treatment regimen for newly diagnosed patients who have a BRCA1 or BRCA2 gene mutation, they are also often used to improve survival in women with recurrence who do not have these gene mutations. One of the most common PARP inhibitors is Olaparib (Lynparza).

One to One is devoted to the on-going support of those newly diagnosed, those in remission and those in recurrence.

100% of contributions directly benefit our group by providing activities and paying for expenses.

*Donations are gratefully accepted and can be made by check payable to **One to One Ovarian Cancer Support Group** c/o Marilyn Brozovic*

*4793 Alton Dr.
Troy, MI 48085*

A receipt will be provided for tax purposes.

A **vaccine** is currently being developed which will prevent ovarian cancer tumors from returning in patients with advanced ovarian cancer who have experienced tumor recurrence in spite of surgery and chemotherapy. White blood cells are removed from the patient's blood and manufactured to become dendritic cells, which are immune cells that boost immune responses. The cells are returned to the patient in the form of a vaccine in hopes that they will spark the immune system to recognize and fight the cancer. The vaccine is given along with an immunotherapy drug, pembrolizumab (Keytruda) to kill any tumors that did not respond to the dendritic cells. Dr. Weroha explains that Ketruda is in a category of drugs referred to as immune checkpoint inhibitors. The hope is that it will release the brakes on the immune system and allow it to do its work of killing ovarian cancer cells. The potential benefits of the vaccine plus the immunotherapy drug is a cause for much hope in the research community.

Lastly, a **screening test** for ovarian cancer may be coming sooner rather than later. This may be in the form of an affordable tampon-based home screening test for ovarian and other gynecologic cancers. The test under development works by using methylated DNA markers to detect cancer in vaginal fluid.



Several of our *One to One* members have already experienced a number of the treatments mentioned in this article and we are so grateful to them for sharing their first-hand knowledge with us as they navigate through their treatments.



PROFILE in

Courage



by Marcia Gurche

Jena Hermiz's world was turned upside down in April of 2023 when she was diagnosed with granulosa cell tumor ovarian cancer at the age of forty. Granulosa cell tumor is a rare type of ovarian cancer accounting for only about 2-3% of all ovarian cancer diagnoses. Jena is a voracious reader and went into overdrive searching the internet, trying to learn all she could about her type of cancer. It was a very scary and lonely time for her. Fortunately, she has an extremely supportive husband, **Tarik**, and an amazing daughter, **Jesebel**, who were her rocks during this difficult time, helping her in every way. She also gives many kudos to Patty Kurpinski, our resident support group patient advocate. Jena says Patty spent countless hours on the phone with her, helping her learn about her cancer, figuring out the best path to take in her treatment journey, and talking her off the ledge, so to speak.



Jena was born in Athens, Greece and immigrated to the United States in 1983 at the age of five months, with her parents, **Basil** and **Fahima**, and four siblings. She attended school in Detroit and graduated from Pershing High School. At the age of eighteen, she married her husband, Tarik, in Greece in a small, intimate ceremony. It took over a year for Tarik to get his papers completed so he could come to the US. Jena worked in retail and at a bank prior to her diagnosis and while Tarik started out in retail management, he is now self-employed.

Two years after their marriage, Jena and Tarik were heartbroken when their first child was stillborn. It was a devastating time for them and to make matters worse, one year later, Jena was diagnosed with thyroid cancer and was in treatment for the next four years. Their quest to have another child was a long one and it took nine years before their miracle baby, Jesebel, was born.

Most people who have had teenage children can safely say that while they love them deeply, there are times that they do not always like them. That is not the case with Jena Hermiz and her sixteen-year-old daughter! Jena's voice radiates joy with every mention of Jesebel and she readily admits that just the thought of her brings happiness. During her treatment, Jesebel helped read medical reports and either she or Tarik accompanied Jena to all her appointments or chemotherapy treatments. Jesebel is a junior at L'Anse Creuse High School where she is excelling and is currently president of the Honor Society. She is working part time as a physical therapy technician at a physical therapy office and is planning to pursue a career in either PT or sonography.




Shortly before Jena's diagnosis, the Hermiz family got their adorable little dog, Cinnamon. She is a Cavapoo, which is a cross between a Cavalier King Charles and a poodle. Jena truly believes that everything happens for a reason and Cinnamon was meant to be with their family. She was with Jena through her two surgeries and helped her get through her recovery from them as well as all her treatments. She is adorable, loving, and cuddly and a very important part of their family.

(Cont. 'd on next page)

Jena likes to cook, with her specialty being grape leaves. Her claim to fame is that she beat out her mother and mother-in-law in grape leaf making and everyone in the family loves hers the most. Jena has a very strong faith which has helped her tremendously as she navigated her cancer journey, and she is a firm believer in the power of prayer. She feels that this is God's show and that He is in charge. She loves to read and will read anything – books, magazines, articles – you name it. She particularly enjoys listening to Joyce Meyer. She loves to walk in nature, and she also enjoys just strolling through the mall with her daughter. She enjoys all kinds of music but especially likes jazz. Jena loves to spend time with her family. She is happy that her mom, who was diagnosed with uterine cancer at the same time Jena was diagnosed with her ovarian cancer, lives nearby, as do all her five siblings, including her youngest sister who was born after the family moved to the US.



A recent visit to Disney World was the trip of a lifetime for Jena, Tarik, and Jesebel. They went to all four parks and had an amazing time. They are setting their sights on a possible trip to Greece in a couple years when Jesebel graduates from high school. The hope is that by then the neuropathy and other annoying chemo side effects will be gone and Jena and Tarik can enjoy showing their daughter the beautiful country that they came from. Let's hope that this dream also comes true for them. 

SHAKE * IT * UP!

Once again, the dedicated physical therapy students from Oakland University awed us with an informative and fun filled evening which they had entitled “**Shake, Shimmy and Strengthen.**” The students invited our *One to One* group along with the Sharing and Caring breast cancer support group, to an evening of interactive sessions in which they shared vital information to help us deal with various side effects of chemotherapy and radiation. Hints and tips regarding sleep were eagerly accepted by those in attendance. Who knew that you could download an app to put a **red** screen on a phone or reading device to alleviate the stimulation at night which the **blue** light from regular screens cause, consequently resulting in not being able to sleep?! Many questions regarding the benefits of physical therapy for urinary and bowel issues were discussed and answered along with a number of other interesting topics. The students then thought it necessary to get all 27 of us up to dance to music from the 80's, and even those with two left feet had fun once the oldies began to play and we couldn't help but want to move our bodies - or at least try to. It was a wonderful presentation by these very passionate students who we know are going to make amazing physical therapists in the very near future.





Our *One to One Bunco* event in early November was a huge success, thanks to so many generous people who donated time, prizes, and energy. Who would have thought that the evening could have brought such enjoyment to so many of all ages? Marcia's 22-year-old granddaughter had more fun than anyone and walked away as the winner with the most buncos for the night and if there had been a prize for the loudest participant, she would have won that award too! Once everyone got the hang of the game, the dice began to

roll and the evening was filled with hoots of laughter and everyone still had time to visit with their tablemates a little during the exchange of tables. We want to thank everyone who came and supported the event and all who contributed beautiful gift baskets. You all helped make our event a tremendous success! Even the most skeptical first-time bunco players left asking when the next bunco night was going to be – the true measure of a successful evening.



February

Ella Steele	17 yrs!
Ann Ayers	6
Karen Simister	6
Rosemarie Bautista	2

HAPPY SURVIVORsary



January

Molly Goodman	30 years!
Jen Poore	30
Elaine Greenberg	26
Patty Kurpinski	18
Nancy Evanson	14
Janice Murphy	11
Nancy Nordlie	11
Barb Teach	11
Alyson Denyer	10
Jennifer Bailey	9
Kimberly Queen-Barnes	8
Jan Bishop	1
Melinda Mack	1

Group Meeting

Group meetings will be held at 4 pm on the 2nd Thursday of the month at

Gilda's Club

3517 Rochester Rd.
Royal Oak, MI 48073
(located north of 13 Mile Rd.)

January 8, 2026
February 12
March 12

Newsletter information is presented in summary form, is general in nature and provided for informational purposes only. It is not intended in any way to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis or treatment.

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Objectives of support group:

- ✦ *Provide a forum for ovarian cancer patients to address concerns;*
- ✦ *Support each other through initial treatment phase, during potential recurrence, and with issues related to long term survival;*
- ✦ *Establish core group of survivors willing to visit newly diagnosed patients;*
- ✦ *Increase awareness of ovarian cancer, including its symptoms and risk factors, in the hope of achieving earlier detection and treatment.*