



ARIZONA MYELOMA NETWORK

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# Press Release

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **NOTE TO DOCTORS TREATING CANCER PATIENTS:**

### ***IT'S NOT JUST THE PATIENT***

GLENDALE, AZ, JANUARY 19, 2010: When a doctor treats a person with a diagnosis of cancer, the spotlight is typically on the patient - treatments, medications and therapies for the *disease* - but what about the people and issues *surrounding* that patient? This often-neglected aspect of cancer treatment was the subject of an event presented by Arizona Myeloma Network to young medical students at Midwestern University in Glendale. The event, presented to approximately 30 doctors-in-training at MU, began with a short primer on myeloma, a cancer involving the plasma cells of the bone marrow, presented by Dana Devine, D.O., an MU Clinical Associate Professor, followed by a discussion panel consisting of Barbara Kavanagh, MSW, the founder and president of *AzMN*; Daniel Holterman, Ph.D., a tumor immunologist for drug developer *ImmuneRegen*

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*Biosciences*; and Mickey Gulli, the wife and caregiver of a two-year cancer survivor.

Gulli related her experience with her husband's myeloma diagnosis as "like being hit in the chest with a softball...it just changes your life from that moment forward." She explained that once her husband was diagnosed, the attention of doctors, family, and friends was primarily centered on her husband and his disease. It wasn't until much later that someone asked her, "How are you doing?" Although not typically prone to outbursts of crying, Gulli reported that, upon being asked that question, the emotion poured out. "Boy, did I let go!" she said. *AzMN's* Kavanagh, who herself has been a myeloma caregiver since her husband was diagnosed 19 years ago, added that many physicians and scientists involved in the treatment and research of myeloma do not always appreciate how critical the caregiver is to the whole treatment system. As they are often involved in the care of the person with myeloma, the family, children, friends, and even employers must be taken into consideration when treating the patient.

In light of the new treatments for the disease, Kavanagh does not believe that the current myeloma survival statistics of one to five years tell the whole story. She cites her husband's longevity as one of the reasons why she titled *AzMN's* annual conference, held this year on Saturday, March 27<sup>th</sup> at the Scottsdale Conference Center, as "*Living with Myeloma.*" Kavanagh's mission with Arizona Myeloma

Network is addressing what the many people living with myeloma may need most - help in pulling together community resources to be able to cope with the challenges that patients, caregivers, family members, and others face with the disease.

Kavanagh asserts that these resources facilitate the ability to *live* with cancer. "The more support we get, the more helpful it is to all of us," she said, "because medicine alone can't manage a disease."

Loyal supporters of AzMN, the Valley Black Bear Diner restaurants, provided refreshments for student attendees of the event.

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### **About Arizona Myeloma Network:**

AzMN was founded in June 2004 by Barbara B. Kavanagh with the mission of promoting awareness, education, and advocacy for the improved treatment for and quality of life of multiple myeloma patients, their families, and caregivers. AzMN membership is comprised of patients, families, health care providers, medical researchers, volunteers, and others concerned about myeloma. AzMN is a nonprofit (501) (c)(3) charitable organization that conducts outreach events and educational programs, with special consideration for the underserved African-American, Asian-Pacific, Hispanic American and Native American populations.

### Our Vision

- To continue to build a network of support and resources for myeloma patients, their families and caregivers
- To increase knowledge about cancer research through community cancer awareness programs and seminars
- To encourage stronger cancer patient advocacy through training and education
- To provide culturally appropriate cancer information and outreach to the underserved
- To develop a collaboration of cancer patients, science, business and the community to support cancer research, and improve cancer treatment for all

**About Barbara Baroff Kavanagh:**

Arizona Myeloma Network's founder and president, Barbara Baroff Kavanagh, started AzMN as a grassroots cancer advocacy and community education organization with the purpose of supporting cancer patients like her own husband, thus preventing them from being forced to fight their disease alone. Since then, Kavanagh has founded the *Tissue Donation Awareness Program (TDAP)™*; was instrumental in coordinating two successful fundraising events to further AzMN's awareness, education and advocacy programs; and is currently in the process of developing a unique cancer caregivers' education program. Kavanagh has been awarded both the *Health Care Heroes Award for Education* from *Phoenix Business Journal* and *Volunteer of the Year* from the *Arizona Rural Health Care Association*. In 2009, she was honored with the prestigious *Hon Kachina Award* – Arizona's most prestigious honor for volunteerism.

**About Midwestern University:**

Midwestern University is a graduate degree-granting institution specializing in the health sciences, with campuses located in Downers Grove, Illinois and Glendale, Arizona. The Glendale Campus is home to 1,713 students and offers 15 degree programs in osteopathic medicine, physician assistant studies, pharmacy, biomedical sciences, occupational therapy, bioethics, perfusion/cardiovascular science, health professions education, nurse anesthesia, podiatric medicine, dental medicine, and clinical psychology.