



Photo Caption: (on the left) Barbara B. Kavanagh, MSW, founder/president, Arizona Myeloma Network with (on the right) Heather Cunliffe, Ph.D., Investigator/Head, Breast Cancer Research Unit, Translational Genomics Research Institute (Tgen) and Co-Chair of the AzMN/TDAP™ Planning Committee

Photo Credit: Michael Northrop, 2009.

For Immediate Release

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Arizona Myeloma Network Offers Tissue Donor Awareness Project At Glendale Community College

August 10, 2009 (*Glendale, AZ*)

The Arizona Myeloma Network (AzMN) is offering "The Glendale Tissue Donor Awareness Project (TDAP™): What You Need to Know About Donating Tissue for Cancer Research" at Glendale Community College on Saturday, September 26, 2009. The two-hour workshop, which includes a panel of cancer specialists, researchers, patient advocates, and leaders of the cancer community, is free and open to the public.

Registration, followed by a continental breakfast, will begin at 8:30 a.m. The program, which begins at 9:30 a.m. and runs through 11:30 a.m., includes a presentation of the "Tissue Issue," a panel discussion, and question and answer session. A TDAP™ booklet will be distributed. Networking and booths offering cancer and healthcare information will be available from 11:30 a.m. until noon.

The workshop, which is sponsored by a community grant through the John C. Lincoln Health Network, provides an opportunity for people to ask questions and share experiences to better equip cancer patients to participate in their own treatment and choices.

Online registration is available at www.azmyelomanetwork.org (click on "Glendale TDAP™ Workshop"). Phone registration or cancellations can be made by calling 623.388.6837, via e-mail to azmyelomanetwork@cox.net or via fax to 623.243.6580.

About AzMN's Tissue Donor Awareness Project (TDAP™)

A month before their wedding in 1991, Barbara and Jack Kavanagh learned he had multiple myeloma - cancer of the bone marrow plasma cells. Eighteen years later, Jack Kavanagh is still in remission. Barbara Kavanagh, a former social worker, established the Arizona Myeloma Network (AzMN), as an education and awareness organization for others dealing with this rare, and often misdiagnosed, form of cancer.

AzMN is committed to promoting education, awareness, and advocacy, and to bringing together the leaders in cancer treatment and research on behalf of myeloma patients and families while reaching out to underserved groups.

AzMN launched its Tissue Donor Awareness Project (TDAP™) in 2007 with free, half-day presentations to diverse focus groups in Phoenix, Prescott, and Tucson. More than 500 patients, family members, healthcare providers, and caregivers learned how tissue samples are collected for staging and diagnosis, and why tissue is critical in diagnosing cancer and developing treatment strategies.

The Tissue Donor Awareness Project (TDAP™) supports Arizona's Cancer Control Program's 14th objective, which is to "educate the public regarding the importance and relevance of participating in cancer clinical trials" through bio-specimen (or tissue sample) donation. The need for tissue sample donation is essential for cancer research in order to find a cure. The cancer community needs to become more aware of and understand the "tissue issue" (the need for tissue sample donation). Increased patient awareness and understanding of the importance of donating tissue for cancer research and clinical studies will help to build a bridge of knowledge and communication between the cancer community (researchers, doctors and patients).

Kavanagh explains, "We developed a collaborative committee of scientists, researchers, oncology specialists, and cancer patients, to design and deliver our free TDAP™ programs to the public. Topics covered during the program included What is tissue? Why is it important to consider donating excess tissue for cancer research? How is tissue used in research? How can cancer patients help in the search for a cure?"

Dr. Michael Berens, an esteemed cancer researcher at the Translational Genomics Research Institute (Tgen), states, "The use of tissue in research is vital for medical science to advance. The fastest way to accelerate breakthroughs in cancer diagnosis and treatment is to ensure access by researchers to properly consented, accurately annotated, and carefully preserved clinical specimens. Patients need to be aware of the enormous role that they can play by agreeing to allow an 'excess' portion of their clinical specimens to be used in discovery and validation studies."

"One of the most critical actions a patient can take," says Kavanagh, "is to add to his/her medical records a signed consent form that authorizes tissue donation. Even if you have a very good doctor, you really have to speak up. Patients have to become the driving force. We know, through the example of breast cancer awareness and advocacy, that patients can push the issue. However, many people are not comfortable self-advocating, and that is part of what the workshop is designed to assist with."

According to Kavanagh, many of the strongest advocates for tissue donation are parents of children with cancer. As caregivers, they feel empowered to support, defend, and speak up on behalf of their children. Consequently, roughly 40% of tissue donations are from child patients. "We all need to get involved in order to insure that more research and advances in treatment are available to all cancer patients," said Kavanagh.

About Barbara B. Kavanagh and the Arizona Myeloma Network (AzMN)

Barbara B. Kavanagh, MSW, founded the AzMN, a non-profit organization in June 2004. The AzMN provides outreach and education for myeloma cancer patients; their families and caregivers, with special consideration to under served populations such as African Americans, Asian-Pacific, Hispanic, and Native Americans. Myeloma is a blood-plasma cancer that attacks the bone marrow. The cause is unknown. There are more than 1,600 new cases of myeloma diagnosed each month in the United States alone. Although there is no cure, myeloma is treatable. With new research, better treatment, and new medication, lives can be saved.

Since its inception, the AzMN has provided cancer prevention/intervention education to approximately 1,500 individuals through small group information sessions, forums and conferences, educational workshops, and community networking events. The AzMN is particularly focused on helping medically under served, high-risk populations, and collaborating with other healthcare and cancer resources to serve these populations. The AzMN, with support from the John Wayne Cancer Foundation, and other sponsors, presented the 2nd Annual Ft. Defiance Cancer Awareness and Advocacy Conference for the Navajo Nation last month.

A member of the Glendale Chamber of Commerce, the AzMN was awarded a grant from the Susan G. Komen Foundation and the Arizona Cancer Control Program to implement a Diné Breast Cancer Education/Training program on the Navajo reservation, called 'Women Helping Women'.

Kavanagh was a recipient of *The Business Journal's (Phoenix)* prestigious 2008 Health Care Heroes Award in August, 2008. She will be honored on September 26th with a Hon Kachina award for her impressive advocacy work with the Navajo Nation, dedication to myeloma patients and families, and leadership in advancing an understanding of cancer research for all patients.

Visit www.azmyelomanetwork.org for more information about the Arizona Myeloma Network and its upcoming September 26th TDAP™ conference at GCC or call Barbara Kavanagh at 623-388-6837.

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