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Online project to help cancer survivors

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Updated: 12:26 p.m. Friday, Jan. 24, 2014 | Posted: 12:00 a.m. Friday, Jan. 24, 2014

BY [SHELIA POOLE](#) - THE ATLANTA JOURNAL-CONSTITUTION

When Moya McKoy was diagnosed with Stage IV ovarian cancer two years ago, she immediately tried to find information about the disease, treatment and holistic ways to beat the monster growing in her body.

What she found was daunting.



BOB ANDRES / AJC

Cecilia Hammond, shown with her husband, Steve, saw her life change 18 years ago when she heard the words "you have ... [Read More](#)

"There wasn't a lot of cohesive information that was relevant," said the 40-year-old Realtor and a mother of two. "I wanted information about nutrition. I wanted to know about the mind, body connection."

She also wanted a way to continue the support she received from

doctors during treatment. "When you're going through chemo, you see your doctors weekly or every two weeks and you feel pretty much in the fight," she said.

But when treatments end, there can be a void. "You feel a little drop-off," McKoy said. "There's this anxiety."

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Education (CORE) hopes to bridge that gap. Later this year, the Atlanta-based

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nonprofit, which seeks to improve the quality of cancer care in Georgia, plans to launch an interactive, comprehensive online resource center that will help cancer survivors such as McKoy navigate the complex “after-cancer” world.

The site will be mobile-enabled and housed on GeorgiaCancerInfo.org, said Georgia CORE Vice President Angie Patterson, who is a breast cancer survivor. It will include tools and interactive maps to locate navigators, survivorship programs and resources as well as blogs, chats and social media.

“The oncologist’s whole job is to get rid of the cancer, then you transition back to your regular physician and the new normal,” Patterson said. “They no longer have this team of providers behind them, and that’s when a lot of survivors feel lost. A lot of people really struggle with the emotional aspects of cancer. We’re trying to empower people to get the the knowledge and tools out there.”

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In the past, much of the research on cancer has has been on causes, treatment and prevention. Little attention has been paid to the physical, social and psychological issues that arise after one survives cancer. By one estimate, there are roughly 336,000 cancer survivors in Georgia.

The initiative recently received a \$100,000 donation from Tom and Karen Chapman to launch the one-stop site, which is designed to benefit cancer survivors, their caretakers and health care professionals.

The Chapmans know all too well the toll that the disease can take on an individual and his or her family. Tom Chapman’s first wife died of cancer, and he survived throat cancer. When he was diagnosed with cancer, Karen Chapman served as his caregiver as well as the caregiver for another close relative who had cancer.

In 2011, the Chapmans donated \$250,000 to the Georgia Cancer Coalition, which later became part of the Georgia Research Alliance, expand a program to eliminate barriers that cancer patients face. The barriers could exist within the medical system, or they could come from outside the system, such as a need for transportation to get a patient to treatment. Georgia CORE now manages the program.

Tom Chapman served as a caregiver to his first wife, and the retired chairman and chief executive officer of Equifax said he was sometimes

frustrated in trying to find resources to help.

Survivors still face issues such as late- and long-term side effects, psycho-social issues and physical issues, he said in an email. "Survivors need to understand the risks they have after treatment ends," Chapman said. "Once you complete your treatment and return to your primary care physician, you need a survivorship care plan. We personally feel that cancer patient navigators can help develop the care plans for survivors, and this information center will help highlight the work of the navigators."

Even 18 years after she was diagnosed with breast cancer, Cecilia Hammond thinks she can benefit from the initiative.

Although she was a nurse, Hammond didn't know a lot about the disease or its treatments.

Information was out there, but "it was all over the place," said Hammond, a 55-year-old medical liaison for a pharmaceutical firm and a member of the advisory board for the Georgia CORE project. "At first you're worried about whether you're going to die. Then you worry about what's going to happen to your family. Then you're in the throes of finding out more about your disease and what to do about it. Back in 1996, it wasn't quite as easy to find stuff on the Internet."

Georgia CORE could alleviate such frustration.

"For some people, being a cancer survivor starts at the time of diagnosis or when treatment ends," she said. "This can help every step of the way."

Cancer survivorship facts:

- Sixty-four percent of survivors have survived five years or more; 40 percent has survived 10 years or more; and 15 percent has survived 20 years or more after diagnosis.
- Among survivors, the most common cancers include female breast (22 percent); prostate (20 percent); colorectal (9 percent); and gynecologic (8 percent).
- The number of cancer survivors is projected to increase by 31 percent, to nearly 18 million, by 2022.

Source: Website of the National Cancer Institute, Cancer Survivorship Research, <http://cancercontrol.cancer.gov/ocs/>

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