PATIENT’S PERSPECTIVE

Being Nonbinary

Jen Poblete-Scaglione, Patient

As an assigned female at birth, I had the usual menstrual cycles every month. I started having irregular cycles with light bleeding between weeks, which slowly turned into daily light bleeding. I chalked it up to stress. The summer went by and I discovered a mass. I didn’t think too much of it, I wasn’t in pain. It was just uncomfortable. Finally, my wife told me to set up an appointment and get checked by a gynecologist, so I did.

It started out routinely and then I brought up my concern, the irregular bleeding. After an exam and an unexpected trip to the emergency room the doctor placed a call to Moffitt and got me an appointment two days later.

“Assigned female at birth” means when I was born my gender was noted female based on my biology. Just like how the seasons change my gender identity has also changed. Here I am now, 34 years later, scooting along the gender spectrum and living my authentically proud self as a nonbinary transmasculine person. Breaking that down, it means nonbinary: not identifying as either fully male or female, outside the gender binary.

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CO-CHAIR COLUMN

Shani Parkin, Co-Chair, Patient and Family Advisory Council

Thanksgiving is traditionally the time when we enjoy the company of our friends and family. For many of us, it’s the official start to the holiday season. As you read this article, plans are most likely already in place for the upcoming holidays. If you are in active treatment, you may have some concerns about what you can or cannot eat, that festivities might be too tiring for you or you simply just don’t feel up to the sparkle and the glitz of the season. I encourage you to discuss this with your clinical team, social worker or visit Moffitt.org/Thanksgiving.

The holidays are a special time for many, and you as a cancer patient, a survivor or a caregiver are a very special person. We have so much to be thankful for like our friends and families who support us through our cancer journey. And let’s not forget the amazing Moffitt team members who cheer us on through the good times and the not-so-good times.

Thanksgiving is often the time when we give some thought to the small things that mean so much to us or recall things that happened over the past year for which we are grateful. It’s also not unusual to think about ways to give back. Perhaps by giving to a favorite charity, providing a Thanksgiving lunch for an elderly neighbor or volunteering at a homeless shelter to provide a warm and comforting meal to those less fortunate than ourselves. Giving thanks and helping others improves our emotional and spiritual well-being, and can remind us how well-supported, loved and blessed we are.

Wishing you and your loved ones a very safe & happy Thanksgiving!

To learn more about the Patient and Family Advisory Council, including how to be a Patient Advisor, please email PatientAdvisors@Moffitt.org.

EDITOR’S NOTE:

While we gather during this Thanksgiving holiday, let us pause and remember another side of history surrounding this day.

As we celebrate this tradition with good food and loved ones, we must do so with awareness of the injustices of the past and those of the present.

Let’s also remember the marginalized who might not have a family to be with or a hot meal to eat, as well as the injustice and discrimination that still exists today.

May the values of cultural humility and acceptance allow us to embrace our fellow human with dignity. Thanksgiving can be a day where we reflect and learn from the mistakes of our forefathers. A time where we can truly embrace a spirit of unity regardless of our differences.

Did you know...

The blood draw area at the USF Magnolia campus is now offering extended weekend hours? To schedule an appointment please call 1-888-663-3488.
Being Nonbinary

Trans: identifying under the transgender umbrella. Masculine: leaning and presenting more masculine than feminine. But what does this have to do with my cancer journey? It means that along with the uncomfortableness that is cancer itself a heightened sense of dysphoria tags along. While undergoing treatment parts of me were constantly looked at. I'm not ashamed of my parts nor do I hate them or wish they weren’t there. I just wish I didn’t have to pay so much attention to them. Enter my Moffitt care team.

Right off the bat I knew I was in a safe place not just physically but mentally. I knew my care team didn’t judge me. Everyone I’ve met, including volunteers and nonmedical staff, have accepted and welcomed me with open arms. When someone is sick the last thing they want to worry about is how their medical team is going to view them. People like me want to be treated like any other patient regardless of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

I was never formally asked what pronouns I use but there is an online form that asks what your pronouns are. My pronouns are they/them/he/him but I’m also OK with she/her. My main goal was to work with my care team so I can get better and so they can provide the best care for me during my treatment and recovery. I consider myself lucky because not all trans/nonbinary people are accepted and well-cared for. Some avoid any sort of medical appointments for fear of being rejected or discriminated against.

I share my story because I hope someone like me will connect with it and feel good knowing Moffitt cares for the whole person, not just the cancer-affected area. My hope is also that the medical community continues to learn and educate itself on LGBTQ+ health care, specifically transgender and nonbinary. There are too many people in the community who are scared to go to the doctor because they may not identify with their birth assignment and fear being turned away or judged. To the trans and nonbinary community, it is incredibly important to continue or start going to yearly wellness appointments. Ask someone to go with you, research doctors, find LGBTQ+ accepting offices and use local resources for recommendations. Your health is important and you don’t want to end up with a cancer scare like I did. As of right now I am not 100% cancer free, but we’re headed in the right direction.

To view Jen’s Community of Courage video about their cancer journey, visit Moffitt.org/Courage.

Move for What Matters

Help fund lifesaving cancer research by participating in the annual Miles for Moffitt. Join virtually or in downtown Tampa on Nov. 20 to move for what matters - love, courage and finding the cures for cancer.

Virtual Relaxation & Meditation

Every Wednesday
12:15 – 1 p.m.

Meditation can help:
• Reduce stress
• Manage symptoms such as pain and fatigue
• Improve mood and sleep

Class is free. All are welcome.

To register, visit Moffitt.org/Meditation or call 813-745-6052
In June, 2020, in a landmark decision, the Supreme Court of the United States affirmed that LGBTQ+ workers are protected from discrimination under the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Before this historic case was decided Moffitt Cancer Center was a consistent leader in providing strong support for the LGBTQ+ community by conducting health disparity research and educational programs specifically for this population and for its LGBTQ+ workforce.

As recurrently one of the nation’s top hospitals for its strong commitment to diversity, according to DiversityInc magazine, Moffitt leads by example. The institution offers employee training and development programming, team member engagement networks and supportive policies and benefits. Strongly supporting gender and sexual minority team members as colleagues and supporting a Moffitt culture of inclusivity is the foundation of having a workforce provide equitable and supportive care to LGBTQ+ patients.

Moffitt offers team members dozens of learning and development opportunities for providing affirming LGBTQ+ care. The core educational opportunity, “Beyond the Binary,” educates team members on the differences between sex, gender and sexuality and offers concrete guidance on providing culturally competent care to all sexual and gender minorities. In 2019 Moffitt hosted a first of its kind LGBTQ+ oncology care symposium to equip the clinical care team in providing best evidence care and practice for LGBTQ+ people with cancer.

“Unity@Moffitt” is a longstanding Team Member Engagement Network (TMEN) for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer team members and their allies that promotes cultural awareness of the LGBTQ+ community at Moffitt. It also educates the LGBTQ+ community about cancer and Moffitt’s nondiscriminatory health care. Finally, it continuously educates Moffitt team members about the importance of diversity while providing a safe space for those who are struggling with their sexuality, gender identity or gender expression. Its input helped to establish Moffitt as a Leader in LGBTQ+ Healthcare per the Human Rights Foundation Campaign, an annual distinction Moffitt has earned nine times. You may have seen UNITY at Pride events throughout Tampa Bay.

Moffitt was one of the first National Cancer Institutes to develop policies and procedures for team members to gender transition at work. In addition to the workplace policy, supportive tools and guidance are offered for the department and leader to promote an inclusive team for those who are gender transitioning at work. Moffitt’s team member benefits are also inclusive of all identities and orientations resulting in a workforce that is as supportive of its employees as its employees are of patients.

For more information about how Moffitt promotes a culture of diversity and inclusion, visit Moffitt.org/Diversity.
PATIENT AND FAMILY SUPPORT GROUPS

Due to social distancing, we are offering virtual support groups via Zoom. To learn more about any of the support groups offered, including times, please call the Social Work office at 813-745-8407 or visit Moffitt.org/SupportGroups.

General Cancer Support Group
Weekly meeting for patients diagnosed with any cancer type to connect with others and share mutual support. Meets every Tuesday, 1-2 p.m., via Zoom meeting. To register, please call 813-745-8407.

Family and Friends Support Group
Weekly meeting for families and caregivers of patients with any cancer type to connect with others and share mutual support. Meets every Wednesday, 1-2 p.m., via Zoom meeting. To register, please call 813-745-8407.

Metastatic Breast Cancer Support Group
Meet with people who have been diagnosed with stage IV metastatic breast cancer to share mutual support. Meets every Tuesday from 11 a.m.-12 p.m. via Zoom meeting. To register, please call 813-745-8407.

Breast Cancer Connection
Monthly support group for anyone who has been diagnosed with breast cancer. Meets the first Tuesday of every month, 6-7 p.m. via Zoom meeting. To register, please call 813-745-8407.

Families First: Parenting During Cancer
A support group for parents raising young children and teens while living with cancer. Meets via Zoom meeting. For dates, times and to register, please call 813-745-8407.

Finding Our Way Through Grief and Loss
An eight-week virtual bereavement program for those who have lost a loved one to cancer. Meet via Zoom meeting. For dates and times and to register, please call 813-745-8407.
Thanking Our Patient and Team Member Veterans

Every year, Moffitt celebrates our patients and team members who have served in the armed forces at the annual Veterans Day flag-raising ceremony at the Magnolia Campus. This year, in honor of those who have sacrificed the most for our country, we asked our patients and team members about their service, what it means to them to be thanked and how they celebrate this special holiday.

“I feel very proud when people thank me for my service. It removes a lot of stress – just for saying thank you. Many veterans deal with a lot of prior military issues that nonveterans don’t ever understand.”

– Herman Bennett Middleton, U.S. Marine Corps, Moffitt Caregiver

“I am honored to be serving our country. Although I was born in a different country, the U.S. welcomed me and my family with open arms. My military service gives me an advantage in my role at Moffitt because I can confidently lead others and show great respect to our team members and patients.”

– Iliana Simo, U.S. Army Reserves, Moffitt Team Member, Patient Experience

“It’s nice being recognized for my service. It humbles me. I’d do it all over again. When I see someone who respects the service, it gives me hope for the next generation.”


“As a retired, active duty Navy, Air Force and Civil Service, I was honored to serve my country. My family and I traveled around the world where we met quite a few friends that we are still in touch with. I appreciate when people thank me for my service, but it was an honor to serve my country. We raised three beautiful children. What more could you ask for?”

– Harry Mains, U.S. Air Force, Patient Advisor, Patient and Family Advisory Program
“Continuing to be of service to others is the best honor for me and taking the oath of protecting our country is for everyone. No one is excluded, regardless of race, color or religion. I defended the freedom of speech for us all. For Veterans Day, I would like to see more people giving back as a day of service to those in the community.”

— Tyesha Stewart, MSN, ARNP, FNP-C, U.S. Army, Moffitt Team Member, Heck & Neck

“I was proud to serve and I am so happy for everything the VA and Moffitt has done for me. When people thank me for my service, I get emotional. It makes me happy. I wear a veteran’s hat and get a lot of thank-you’s, especially from young kids.”

— John Krusinski, U.S. Army, Moffitt Patient

“Unless you serve in the armed services, I think civilians don’t realize that military life involves a great number of sacrifices of comfort and security, as well as absence away from family. Since I did lose military friends to several helicopter crashes in Thailand and had to learn to cope with their loss, I feel far more empathic with my patients and their families as they face life-threatening or life-ending cancers.”

— Lary A. Robinson, MD, U.S. Air Force, Moffitt Team Member, Thoracic Oncology

“It has been a while (over 30 years) since we were active duty, but we occasionally get thanked for our service when people find out we served. It is always nice to hear, but we feel that we are thankful to have been able to serve and to contribute to keeping our country free.”


“To me, Veterans Day is a celebration of service. While we celebrate those who have served in the armed forces, I encourage anyone to use this day as an inspiration to serve others – true patriots are willing to sacrifice of themselves for the benefit of others, whether overseas or in the local community. That is the spirit of Veterans Day to me.”

— Bill Johansson, U.S. Navy, Moffitt Team Member, Radiation Therapy

“It was an honor for me to serve. Most Americans aren’t aware there are many trying to take away the precious freedoms we enjoy in this great country. Without the many sacrifices of dedicated military professionals, they would be successful. These sacrifices are done without expectations, but it’s really appreciated when someone thanks us for our service. Even though I was injured and missed many family celebrations and holidays, I would do it all over again without hesitation.”

INTRODUCING…

Moffitt’s Chief Operating Officer Sabi Singh Committed to Improving Patient Care & Outcomes

Sarabdeep “Sabi” Singh, Chief Operating Officer

When people step through the doors at Moffitt Cancer Center, they expect superior patient care and outcomes. It’s what Moffitt is known for.

As Moffitt’s new chief operating officer, I want to ensure we continue to have a system in place for patients to receive the best care. I have had the opportunity to develop systems of care aimed at improving clinical quality and safety using some of my previous experience in the automotive industry coupled with over 15 years in the health care field.

For Moffitt to draw patients from every county in Florida, all 50 states and more than 130 countries, we also want to provide the best experience possible. From the first phone call, to parking at and navigating the center, to communicating along the continuum and evaluating access, we must put our patients first. Designing care systems and implementing patient-centered values across our health system is also a priority.

My first day at the cancer center was July 12 and currently, I am observing and absorbing the Moffitt way. That includes meeting with the Patient & Family Advisory Council to understand our patients’ needs and concerns. Your insights will help us build systems to enhance outcomes and the patient experience in a meaningful way. We need your help now more than ever.

We won’t accomplish this overnight. But by partnering together, we will improve the journey.

I feel so blessed to be part of a cancer center where we’re making a difference in people’s lives. Together, we have an opportunity to help shape the future for all cancer patients.

For more information about Moffitt’s new chief operating officer, please visit Moffitt.org/SabiSingh.
Creating Memories for our Loved Ones

Sean T. Powell, MSW, LCSW, CCM, OSW-C, Director of Social Work and Patient and Family Services

We all want to be sure our loved ones have something to remember us by when we are no longer here. In the world of psycho-oncology, we call this leaving a legacy. Those left behind find comfort in holding on to items that had meaning for those no longer with us and bring back memories that help us feel like we still have a connection to the person. As I look around my own home, I find my grandmother’s cookie jar, a painting that hung over my dad’s bed and a chest made by my great-grandfather. For a moment, they are here with me.

Unfortunately, not every person with cancer we see at Moffitt will survive their diagnosis. As social workers, we are trained to help individuals reflect on their lives, achievements and most prideful moments to come to peace with unfilled goals and develop a legacy for those that they leave behind. One of the ways we can help is through a legacy activity.

Through a collaboration with the Department of Social Work and the Arts In Medicine Program, Moffitt has offered the ability to capture a person’s handprint to share with loved ones. The initial process was a bit messy. Attempts to roll paint onto a hand that was sometimes weak or in pain and applying it to paper to obtain a recognizable print could be a difficult process. Due to the messy nature of paint, it did not provide the dignified experience we want for our patients and families.

The Department of Social Work has an End-of-Life Committee that reevaluated our handprints and decided more could be done to help our patients create a legacy. Through a grant from the Hank’s Hope Foundation, we were able to expand our legacy activities to include new inkless handprints, memory jars, scrapbooks and memory bracelets. These can be tailored to the individual; one child may want a bracelet while another wants a handprint. As social workers talk with patients and families about end of life, we now have an inventory of different interventions we can use to help create memories and meaningful mementos.

If you are interested in discussing end-of-life issues and creating a legacy, our Department of Social Work is ready to help you. You may request to meet with your social worker by calling 813-745-8407.

Patient and Family Orientation

Learn how to:
- CONNECT WITH PROGRAMS AND SERVICES
- PARTNER WITH YOUR CARE TEAM
- FIND YOUR WAY AROUND MOFFITT

• Presented in English and Spanish
• View online at MOFFITT.org/Orientation

813-745-1690 | Orientation@Moffitt.org
Mindfulness has received a great deal of recent attention as a means of reducing stress and enhancing our well-being. But often the first question is, “What is mindfulness?”

Most people don’t realize that we all have moments of mindfulness throughout our normal day. These moments often occur when we are completely present with some simple, concrete experience or activity. The simplicity of mindfulness is easily overlooked and easy to undervalue.

While you’re exercising, you may have a moment where you are aware of just being present with the exercise or “being in the zone.” Or while you’re eating, you just let yourself be present with the taste, smells and textures. Or while walking in nature, in a forest or on a beach, you have a moment of just being exactly where you are with no other thoughts. This is being present. Being in the moment. Being mindful.

Caregivers have a significant responsibility in caring for their loved one and can experience high levels of stress during this process. Using mindfulness as a tool to manage distress and uncertainty may be beneficial. Mindfulness facilitates the ability to shift attention to experiences purposefully and with a sense of acceptance. Mindfulness helps one notice thoughts, emotions and sensations as they arise without necessarily acting on them in that moment. Instead, one is encouraged to observe what arises before responding. Mindfulness encourages a pause — stopping for a moment before acting.

Importantly, mindfulness may be most beneficial for those who experience high levels of stress, as it can aid in emotion regulation, reduce stress reactivity and improve physical relaxation. As such, mindfulness may be particularly useful for caregivers.

How do you start practicing mindfulness? You may choose to download an app that provides guided mindfulness meditations or even join a class at Moffitt that provides formal instruction on mindfulness. You can also practice mindfulness in your daily life — take a pause right now and just look around you. What do you see? Are there sounds present? What do you notice happening in your own mind and body?

By simply training ourselves to look at these moments more closely, we can often enhance our health and well-being without investing a huge amount of time. We already have these moments, but we can choose to look at them mindfully.

Moffitt offers free meditation and mindfulness classes for patients and caregivers via Zoom. To register, visit Moffitt.org/Meditation or call 813-745-6052.
COPING WITH CANCER

Coping with the Holi-daze

Donna DiClementi, Manager of Outpatient Social Work

That time of year is upon us when the holidays begin to take over our lives. What can be a wonderful time of the year often turns into more stress and pressure. People living with cancer and their loved ones often experience holiday planning and events as an added complication to their already busy lives. COVID-19 and experiencing another yearend holiday season during a pandemic creates additional concern.

Not every holiday needs to be the exact way it’s always been. The picture perfect holiday we see on TV or in our social media feeds doesn’t reflect what is true for most people. We may think that only large in-person gatherings, the best gifts, well-behaved relatives and appreciative children equal a great holiday. What if we adjusted our expectations of what the holidays should be? What if we instead plan for what is meaningful and safer at this point in our lives?

Let’s be curious about a holiday that is fun, meaningful and less stressful. Before the season takes over, sit down with your loved ones, decide which traditions mean the most and just do those. Maybe this is the year that you create a new tradition and take a break on all the others. Could this be the year that gift exchanges with adults stop? Try to commit to seeing the small joys of each day – notice a holiday decoration you hadn’t paid attention to before; reflect and smile at a meaningful commercial; watch a couple walk hand in hand down the street. These simple tasks may fill you with joy.

Let this be the year that you reassess your holiday expectations and celebrations. The holiday season has been an important part of the year long before TV, credit cards, social media and online shopping. Invite your loved ones to join you in focusing on what is truly meaningful about the holidays.

Simplifying the holidays may be what is truly magical this season.

For more resources to help with coping this holiday season, please reach out to the Department of Social Work at 813-745-8407.
Building a Dream One Step at a Time

By Jonesa Rodriguez, Public Relations and Strategic Communications

When Amy Bondon first learned about Miles for Moffitt, she was in no state to compete in the event. She was in a very fragile condition, undergoing treatment while living at the Hope Lodge.

“I was reading about Miles for Moffitt while I was walking the halls of the Magnolia campus,” said Bondon. “I thought to myself, I could do that.” Despite the challenges she faced, such as being unable to go outside due to chronic infection, Bondon pushed herself to keep walking, putting in eight to 12 miles in the halls of Magnolia.

Determined to participate in the annual event, she entered the race right before the deadline.

“I didn’t have a team or a clue,” said Bondon. “Just a burning desire to get there and do something for this incredible place and every person from every aspect of my very complicated and extensive experience, who have blessed me beyond measure.”

On race day, she pulled up to Amalie Arena and tears of joy filled her eyes.

“I marveled at the precious T-shirts, group causes, team logos and just the palpable love,” Bondon said. “Mr. Moffitt was there mingling and talking with us all. I saw doctors and beloved nurses of mine, met their friends and family. The volunteers were incredibly affirming in their energy and zeal to serve us all with such warmth and encouragement.”

In her first year of participating, she raised over $5,000. And even with the challenges of COVID-19 in 2020, she was still able to raise over $3,500.

Bondon, who now volunteers as a patient advisor at Moffitt and is going into her third year of participation, says her reason is simple: the funds raised go to support cancer research.

“Miles for Moffitt spotlights research and the absolute significance it plays in every aspect of our outcomes as cancer patients,” she said. “The calling to do what this team does and the love and empathy with which they do it – Well, they need research to press on with excellence in all the myriad of ways they come together to give us a good outcome.”

Over the past 16 years, Miles for Moffitt, presented by AutoNation, has raised over $7 million supporting lifesaving cancer research at Moffitt and has gained millions in additional federal support, helping patients like Bondon.

Join Bondon in her pursuit to help contribute to the prevention and cure of cancer at this year’s Miles for Moffitt on Nov. 20 in downtown Tampa. For more information or to register for Miles for Moffitt, visit MilesforMoffitt.com.