



## CORE Family Studies

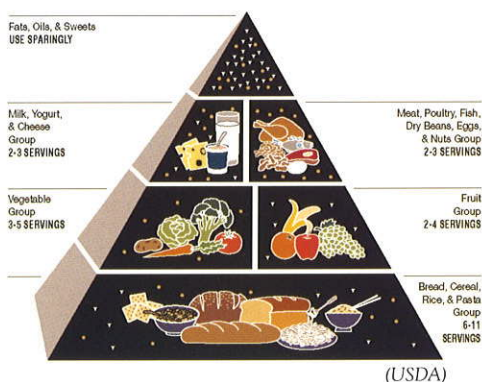
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## Eating for Good Health

Dietary choices play an important role in staying as healthy as possible. The Food Guide Pyramid, developed by the US Department of Agriculture, is a great guideline to follow when making your own healthful dietary choices.



- Eat at least five servings of fruits and vegetables every day including raw vegetables. Try to include cabbage-like vegetables whenever possible.
- Fiber is also important for a healthy diet. A fiber rich diet includes starchy vegetables—like potatoes and corn, whole grains—such as brown rice and barley, and dry beans.
- No more than 6 ounces of lean poultry, meat or fish are recommended per day. Further, fried or heavily darkening cooking methods should be avoided.
- Fat should be limited and reduced to less than 30% of your entire daily caloric intake.
- Folic acid or folate and calcium have been associated with lowering the risk of colorectal cancer. Supplements can be helpful in meeting this recommended daily requirement.

In addition to making good dietary choices, try to exercise for at least 20 minutes three times a week. Diet and exercise are two of the most beneficial ways to lower your risk for colon cancer and other disease.

Greetings and Happy New Year!

We are pleased to bring you our second edition of CORE News. In this issue, we'll update you on the progress of our CORE Studies. In Genetics 101: Discovering Your Family's Medical Tree you'll learn why your family's medical history is an integral part of our CORE Family Studies. In Specialist's Corner: Does Gender Have Something to Do with Colon Cancer? you'll read about our companion study, CORE Hormones and Health, and what we hope to learn from this study.

March is **National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month**—a month devoted to generating widespread awareness about colorectal cancer and encouraging prevention of this disease through regular screening and a healthy lifestyle. Among the many activities planned for the month is the 1st Annual Colorectal Cancer Survivors Conference in Northern Virginia. This conference is being organized by the Colorectal Cancer Network (CCN), a non-profit organization dedicated to saving lives through patient support and advocacy. See inside for more information on the CCN and the events planned for March 2001.

We were delighted to have had the opportunity to meet many of you during the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center's 25th Anniversary celebration last September. It was terrific to thank you personally for your participation in our research. For those of you who were unable to attend, you can read all about it, and learn more about Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center on page 4.

Our studies are making steady progress! It is wonderful to have our efforts greeted with your enthusiasm. We truly appreciate your contributions.

Sincerely,



John Potter,  
MD, PhD



Polly Newcomb,  
PhD



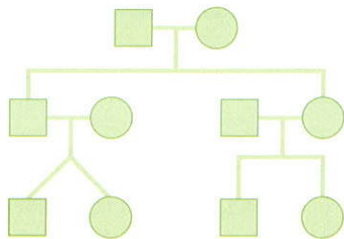
Deb Bowen,  
PhD



## Genetics 101— Discovering Your Family's Medical Tree

by Julie Culver, MS

Learning about your family's health patterns can help guard your own health and well-being. Your knowledge of family health problems may allow you to take steps to prevent these problems and stay as healthy as possible. You may be able to get medical advice on routine medical tests and to make changes to your lifestyle that could help you stay healthy. If you ever do become ill, you and your doctor may be able to use information from your family medical history to diagnose problems earlier, when treatment is often more effective.



Gathering your family health history is the first step toward this goal. After that, you can look for patterns. In general, the more relatives who have had a particular condition, the greater the chances that it could have a genetic basis. Also, look at the ages when your relatives were diagnosed to see if they developed the condition at younger ages. Such a trend could indicate that your relatives were more genetically susceptible to developing the condition. Keep in mind that the health history of your close relatives, such as your siblings and parents, is more relevant to you than the health history of more distant relatives, such as your cousins or great-grandparents.

Most cancer is not inherited in families. In fact, only 5-10% of all cancers are thought to be caused by inherited genes. Most of the time, having a family member with cancer does not mean others are at significantly increased risk. However, if several blood relatives have had the same type of cancer or they have been diagnosed at younger than average ages, you or other family members may wish to ask a health care provider about early-detection strategies that can help find cancer when it's most treatable.

If you identify health patterns in your family history, it will be helpful to share them with your health care provider to get a qualified medical opinion. If you are concerned about your risk for a specific medical condition or are interested in seeking genetic testing, you may want to consult a genetic counselor or medical geneticist who can determine your risks and help you find genetic testing in your area.

Finally, be sure to share your knowledge with your siblings, children, and other interested family members. Taking the time to construct and update your family medical tree will help you and other family members to stay as healthy as possible.

### Resources

- *Growing Your Family Medical Tree* by Fran Carlson
- *How Healthy Is Your Family Tree? A complete guide to tracing your family's medical and behavioral history* by Carol Krause
- **Pacific Northwest Regional Genetics Group** This organization provides information on how to find a qualified genetic counselor or medical geneticist. Phone: 541-346-2610 · <http://mchneighborhood.ichp.edu/pacnorgg/index.html>

## Stephanie Whitten, BS — Biospecimen Specialist

by Debra Lands

Stephanie Whitten, CORE Studies Biospecimen Specialist, came from rural Georgia to urban Seattle to pursue her interest in science and her desire to make a difference. Stephanie's journey in these areas began in college, where she focused her studies in psychology and the sociology of aging.



Stephanie hails from Sharpsburg, Georgia, south of Atlanta. Sharpsburg has a strong sense of community. It is populated by farmers and is full of family owned businesses. It isn't surprising, then, that Stephanie would seek work that focuses on connection, family and community.

Many factors led Stephanie to Seattle, including a desire to live in a different part of the country, to meet different kinds of people, to have new experiences and to be near the water.

Stephanie is thrilled to be a part of the CORE Studies team where she does work she loves and is able to have contact with participants. She says, "I gain a lot of wisdom from the participants and enjoy their zest for life and knowing I may be helping them and others through this research."

As the Biospecimen Specialist, Stephanie has a variety of responsibilities. She:

- Coordinates all of the blood draw appointments;
- Trains the telephone interviewers on biospecimen protocols;
- Answers the study phone line, 1-800-276-0127, and contacts participants to discuss their study questions;
- Is involved in data quality control.

Stephanie believes in the importance of this research. She says, "it may be the crucial step that leads to answers. There is a lot of information in the specimens. This is especially true for the blood that participants so willingly donate. Everyone who donates a specimen increases the validity of the study."

Stephanie exemplifies the commitment of the staff who work on this project. She is motivated by the studies' participants and by the belief that this research is important. For the CORE Study, her journey from Georgia to Seattle is much appreciated.

### How can we improve this newsletter?

Comments or suggestions for articles and features to improve our newsletter can be emailed to Allyson Templeton: [atemplet@fhcrc.org](mailto:atemplet@fhcrc.org). We would love to hear from you!



## CORE Studies Help Celebrate 25 Years of Cancer Research

by Debra Lands

Over the summer, CORE Studies sent local study participants an invitation to attend the Center's 25th Anniversary Open House. You may have wondered, when you glanced at the envelope, what the anniversary of a cancer center had to do with you and your family.

You received this invitation because your participation in our CORE Studies makes you an important part of the work of the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center.

The Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center is one of 37 comprehensive cancer research centers in the United States. Its mission is to eliminate cancer as a cause of human suffering and death. The Center conducts research of the highest standards to improve prevention and treatment of cancer and related diseases. The Center's scientists work with scientists from all parts of the world. CORE itself is an example of this type of national and international collaboration, as it is part of a consortium of family registries including those in Canada and Australia.

### Family Ties Lead to Creation of Research Center

What makes the celebration of 25 years of cancer research work important? It began as an act of love and respect. It grew out of one family's tragedy and a brother's dream to create something positive as a result. The birth of the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center is a great story. It is as interesting as the research that is conducted here.

Twenty-five years ago, William Hutchinson, a Seattle surgeon founded a research institute to honor his brother, Fred Hutchinson, after his death at age 45 from lung cancer. Although Fred had lived a fairly short life, he was well known to baseball fans. He was a major league pitcher for the Seattle Rainiers of the Pacific Coast League. Eventually he left the Rainiers to play for the Detroit Tigers. He then went on to manage the Tigers, the St. Louis Cardinals, and the Cincinnati Reds, taking the Reds to the 1961 World Series.

After Fred died, William wanted to create a research institute that focused on the disease that had killed his brother. With a lot of support, he established the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center in 1975. The institute that carries his brother's name has since become famous for its life-saving bone marrow transplants and cutting-edge research in cancer biology. That pioneering work in bone marrow transplants earned E. Donnall Thomas a Nobel Prize for Medicine in 1990, which you may have seen at the open house.

### Celebrating 25 Years

The dedication and commitment that led William Hutchinson to establish a cancer center is shared by the scientists and staff who work here today, a quarter of a century later. The 25th Anniversary Open House, which was held on Saturday September 16, was a way to invite the public to learn about the work being done in the hope of treating and preventing cancer.

If you were able to attend the 25th Anniversary Celebration, you have already been exposed to some of the activities conducted at the Hutchinson Center. If you were not able to make it, here is a taste of the experience:

- A blood drive and free bone marrow typing by the Puget Sound Blood Center;



Members of the Hutchinson family celebrate 25 years.

- A display depicting the development of the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center and the steps that made William's dream a reality;
- Booths and displays from studies throughout the Public Health Sciences Division, including one from CORE Studies;
- A depiction of life as a bone marrow transplant patient by the Clinical Division;
- Displays by the labs of the Basic Sciences, Human Biology and Clinical Divisions of DNA spooling along with a diagram of the human chromosomes arranged in a 23-piece puzzle;
- Information about the Science Education Partnership, a program that works with teachers to enhance their science programs.

### The Work Continues

Today Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center scientists conduct cancer research through the Center's four scientific divisions:

- The Basic Sciences Division focuses on fundamental life processes—how cells and genes function and how they relate to the causes of cancer;
- The Clinical Research Division works directly with patients to develop and test new treatments and includes the largest bone marrow transplant program in the world;
- The Public Health Sciences Division, home of CORE Studies, focuses on understanding the roles of lifestyle and environment to help people avoid cancer;
- The Division of Human Biology uses tools of molecular biology and genetics to understand human biology and disease useful in developing treatments for cancer and other diseases.

In future editions of this newsletter we will describe the work of each of these divisions in more detail.

"Advancing Knowledge, Saving Lives" is our motto at FHCRC. Your participation in CORE studies is an important part of that effort. Each piece of information you provide enhances the knowledge we need to learn how to best prevent, detect, and cure cancer. Thank you!



## The Colorectal Cancer Network

by Pamela K. McAllister, PhD

*Fear makes the wolf bigger than he is.*  
— German proverb

If you search the web site of the Colorectal Cancer Network (CCN), you may find this or other inspiring phrases rolling across the bottom of the screen. The CCN is a non-profit organization dedicated to saving lives through patient support and advocacy. Its founding members formed this organization because of their direct experience with colorectal cancer as patients, caregivers, or loved ones.

The Network is comprised of survivors and their loved ones who are standing up to say, "Not one more person should die from this cancer!" They plan a three-part attack on this problem:

- Create a support network to ensure that no one goes through this illness alone.
- Advocate for aggressive awareness, screening, and early detection programs.
- Support legislation in areas such as pain management and privacy issues, encourage increases in the CDC/NCI budget, promote the Patient Bill of Rights, and encourage prescription drug benefits.

If you check out the CCN web site (<http://www.colorectal-cancer.net>) you will find various resources to help guide you through this journey:

- Support groups for people with colorectal cancer along with others where caregivers, family members and friends meet regularly to share their experiences. (See Support Box)
- Chat rooms are Internet sites people can visit simultaneously to discuss issues, concerns and experiences. Thus, you can connect to this support network from the privacy of your own home with anonymity.
- A matching list that helps connect newly diagnosed people with long term survivors.
- A library with extensive information on colorectal cancer and other relevant topics.
- Website links to other useful websites related to cancers of the large bowel.

The Network is open to all whose lives have been touched by large bowel cancer. You can join as a member, start a support group, or just contact the group for information at:

**Colorectal Cancer Network**  
PO Box 182  
Kensington, MD 20895-0182  
301-879-1500

or visit the web site (<http://www.colorectal-cancer.net>) for membership information.



*Here are some Colorectal Cancer Network sponsored events taking place during National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month:*

### **1st Annual Colorectal Cancer Survivors Conference and Retreat**

This conference is being held March 22-25, 2001 in Northern Virginia. Up-to-date information about colorectal cancer research treatment will be presented and quality of life issues will be discussed. This conference hopes to offer a place for survivors, family members, friends, and caregivers to connect with one another in a supportive healing environment.

### **The Orange County California Run/Walk for Colorectal Cancer Annual Fundraiser**

This will be held on March 23, 2001. This date also marks the beginning of the Orange County Support Network Chapter of the Colorectal Cancer Network.

### **Columbia's Cure**

Held in memory of Marilyn Yetso, this is a 5 kilometer run/walk and 15 mile bike ride to raise money and awareness to fight colon cancer. Columbia's Cure beginning date of March 23, 2001 marks a community wide effort in the global battle to eradicate colon cancer from our lives and help support the survivors and families affected by this disease. (<http://www.columbiacure.com>)

### **A golf tournament in honor of Babe Diedrikson Zacharias**

Babe Diedrikson Zacharias was an Olympic Gold Medalist and pioneer in women's sports. The event is held yearly to raise funds for Network activities and to increase awareness of colorectal cancer. This year, the second annual tournament will be held in Poolesville, Maryland on April 2, 2001.

## **Support**

The CCN is active in a wide variety of cancer advocacy and support organizations that benefit colorectal cancer patients. Support Groups have been formed in seven states, with ten more projected for 2001. Please visit the CCN website for information on established support groups and/or how to start a support group in your area. <http://www.colorectal-cancer.net>.



## Specialist's Corner: Does Gender Have Something to Do with Colon Cancer?

By Polly Newcomb, PhD

Women are less likely to be diagnosed with colon cancer than men are—in fact, the risk difference in 2001 is now 35%. Survival after diagnosis also appears to be better in women than in men. What factors might be responsible for this difference, and why are rates in women continuing to fall? We hope to help answer this important question in our National Cancer Institute funded project *CORE Hormones and Health Study*. This study is a companion to our colorectal family study entitled, *CORE Family Studies*.

The focus of this research is to determine how female hormones—both the kind naturally found in women's blood and in pills taken for birth control or menopause—might protect against colon cancer. We are also investigating how hormones might enhance longevity in women after diagnosis. To do this we need to understand the biological mechanisms of hormones on the colon. For these studies, we are examining how some women may metabolize hormones differently than other women, and how colon tumors may have receptors that activate hormones. These laboratory evaluations require a small amount of DNA from blood or mouth swishes. We also ask women who have been surgically treated for colorectal cancer, to give us access to small sections of archived tissue for laboratory evaluations.

This study will be the largest ever to investigate the relationships between hormones and colorectal cancer. It is significant that this project will begin to estimate, on a population level, the biologic mechanisms that may be responsible for the observed benefits of hormones in colorectal cancer. The results of this research may help women and their physicians better understand the benefits of hormones and hormone replacement therapy.

### National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month

Each year, the Cancer Research Foundation of America, the National Colorectal Cancer Roundtable and the American



Founded by the Cancer Research Foundation of America

Digestive Health Foundation hope to generate widespread awareness about colorectal cancer and to encourage people to learn more about how to prevent the disease through regular screening and a healthy lifestyle.

March is National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month. Talk to your health care provider about colorectal cancer. Colorectal cancer is preventable, and is easy to treat and often curable when detected early. Ask your health care provider what kind of screening test you should have and when.

To learn more, call 1-877-35-COLON or visit <http://www.preventcancer.org/colorectal.htm>

## Frequently Asked Questions

*How did you get my name?*

You may have been identified through the Cancer Surveillance System (CSS), a cancer registry at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center that is supported by the Washington State Department of Health and the National Cancer Institute. In 1990, the Washington State legislature added cancer to the list of reportable conditions and mandated the Department of Health to establish a statewide cancer registry program. Citing the Revised Code of Washington (RCW) Title 70.54.230 Cancer Registry Program:

"It is the intent of the legislature to establish a system to accurately monitor the incidence of cancer in the state of Washington for the purposes of understanding, controlling, and reducing the occurrence of cancer in this state. In order to accomplish this, the legislature has determined that cancer cases shall be reported to the department of health, and that there shall be established a state-wide population-based cancer registry."  
[1990 c 280 § 1.]

Access to this information is restricted to accredited investigators conducting legitimate health research in compliance with state and federal regulations governing the protection of human research subjects.

*I don't have cancer, how did you get my name?*

As a potential participant selected to represent the general population (an individual without colorectal cancer), we obtained your name from one of two sources:

- If you are younger than 64 years of age, your name was randomly selected from a list provided to us by the Washington State Department of Licensing;
- If you are 64 years of age or older, your name was randomly selected from a list provided to us by the Health Care Finance Administration (HCFA), which manages Social Security and Medicare.

Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center has formal agreements with these organizations to use their lists for the purpose of identifying individuals from the general population to be approached for research studies. All research must be approved to access to these data and must adhere to strict use and confidentiality policies.

*Why do you need a blood sample?*

We are collecting blood samples from study participants in order to study the biological and genetic factors important in this disease. Obtaining a small sample is an important part of this study and will help us better understand the causes and prevention of cancer. In general, we will be comparing a number of characteristics of participants with colorectal cancer to those without the disease. This might include looking for genes that make people more or less vulnerable to colorectal cancer risk or enabling us to detect colorectal cancer sooner.

*How much of cancer is genetic?*

Although cancer can be inherited in families, most cancers are not. Only 5-10% of all cancers are believed to be caused by genetic inheritance. Things to consider are whether several family members have been diagnosed with the same type of cancer or if a relative may have been diagnosed.



## 6 Steps to Lowering Your Risk of Colorectal Cancer

1. Get regular colorectal cancer screenings beginning at age 50. If you have a personal or family history of colorectal cancer or colorectal polyps, or a personal history of another cancer or inflammatory bowel disease, talk to your doctor about earlier screening.
2. Eat between 25 to 30 grams (about 1 oz.) of fiber each day from fruits, vegetables, whole grain breads and cereals, nuts and beans.
3. Eat a low-fat diet.
4. Eat foods with folate such as leafy green vegetables. A daily multivitamin containing 0.4 mg of folic acid may also be helpful.
5. If you use alcohol, drink only in moderation. If you use tobacco, quit. If you don't use tobacco, don't start.
6. Exercise for at least 20 minutes three to four days each week. Moderate exercise such as walking, gardening, or climbing steps may help reduce your risk.

## Where can I get more information about cancer?

You can call the Cancer Information Service at 1-800-4-CANCER (1-800-422-6237) and they will answer your questions and send you information at your request.



### CORE Family Studies

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Address Correction Requested

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## Contact Us

- Are you moving?
- Did you miss our last newsletter?



Please call the study line at 1-800-276-0127 to keep us updated or to request information at any time.