GHS and YMCA expand exercise options for cancer survivors

GREENVILLE, SC – Greenville Health System (GHS) and the YMCA of Greenville are making it easier for cancer survivors to get the exercise they need thanks to the new Wellness Works Rx Exercise Navigation program. The program is available to any cancer survivor, but it’s especially helpful to those suffering from a debilitating side-effect of cancer known as cancer-related fatigue.

Fatigue is described as a daily lack of energy, an unusual or excessive whole-body tiredness not relieved by sleep. It is not to be confused with tiredness, which happens to everyone and is expected at the end of a long day. Instead, cancer-related fatigue is often described as paralyzing and can prevent survivors from functioning normally.

“Fatigue is the number one complaint of cancer survivors,” said Mark O’Rourke, MD, medical director of GHS’ Center for Integrative Oncology and Survivorship. “Through our oncology rehabilitation program, Moving On, we have found exercise to be an effective way of treating fatigue and helping improve quality of life for cancer survivors. Now, thanks to a partnership with the YMCA, we can make the healing effects and benefits of exercise available to more survivors in our community.”

Through the Wellness Works Rx Exercise Navigation program, survivors are connected with a certified personal trainer, known as an exercise navigator, who helps navigate the exercise process. The navigator is familiar with the personnel and programs at the GHS Life Center and all five YMCA of Greenville locations and can make recommendations on which programs are best for the survivor based on their individual needs and goals. The navigator can also assist the survivor in completing membership forms, applying for financial assistance and scheduling appointments. Once enrolled, the navigator monitors the survivor’s progress through regular phone calls.

“Joining a fitness facility and establishing an exercise routine can be overwhelming for anyone, especially those battling a serious disease like cancer. This program seeks to make the process more manageable and empower survivors to take charge of their health,” said Dr. O’Rourke.

Mary Ann Brown, a cancer survivor and former Moving On participant, has used the Wellness Works Rx Exercise Navigation program and found it to be successful.

“I went through GHS’ Moving On program at the Life Center, but when it was over, I wanted to continue exercising. The Life Center wasn’t close to my house, but I found I could continue gaining...
support and exercise in a similar program called Wellness Works Rx at the George I. Theisen Family YMCA in Travelers Rest. I’ve been exercising at the Y for seven months now, and I love it. I feel great, and I look forward to going each week,” said Brown.

The YMCA of Greenville is a critical component to the Wellness Works Rx Exercise Navigation program not only because of its shared commitment to improving health but its accessibility and affordability, said Dr. O’Rourke.

“Our role is to eliminate barriers to exercise. We want everyone to have the opportunity to live life to the fullest, which is why we have multiple locations and never turn anyone away because of an inability to pay,” said Scot Baddley, CEO of the YMCA of Greenville.

Since its launch in March 2015, more than 80 patients have enrolled in the Wellness Works Rx Exercise Navigation program.

About Greenville Health System
Greenville Health System (GHS) — an academic health system that is the largest not-for-profit healthcare delivery system in South Carolina — is committed to medical excellence through research, patient care and education. GHS offers patients an innovative network of clinical integration, expertise and technologies through its eight medical campuses, tertiary medical center, research and education facilities, community hospitals, physician practices and numerous specialty services throughout the Upstate. The 1,358-bed system is home to 15 medical residency and fellowship programs. GHS is also home to the University of South Carolina School of Medicine Greenville, a joint effort of USC and GHS. Visit ghs.org for more information.

About the YMCA of Greenville
The YMCA of Greenville is a non-profit community service organization in Greenville, SC. Begun in 1876, the Y serves more than 85,000 people annually through programs that include afterschool, resident camp and day camp, aquatics, youth and adult sports, and health and wellness. Programs are offered through four family branches, the Verdae YMCA, Y Camp Greenville, Judson Community Center, the YMCA Program Center-GHS and Hollingsworth Outdoor Center. The Y is also home to Y teen services and the SC Youth in Government program. To learn more, visit ymcaofgreenville.org

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