

# M.D. NEWS

A BUSINESS AND LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE FOR PHYSICIANS



## High-Tech, High-Touch

A Legacy of Care: Cancer Center  
of Santa Barbara

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## A Legacy of Care: Cancer Center of Santa Barbara

By Susan Cushing

Built on a rich heritage of community support and cutting-edge technology, Cancer Center of Santa Barbara continues to be in the vanguard of prevention, diagnosis and care for thousands every year. Much like the city it serves, Cancer Center of Santa Barbara is an incredible facility steeped in tradition as well as at the forefront of progress.

Established some 60 years ago through a generous donation made by local resident Elisha Converse in honor of his late wife, Lillian, the facility has continued to grow and prosper in this same spirit of advancing the understanding, diagnosis, treatment, cure and prevention of cancer.

Nestled between mountains and sea, the quiet city of Santa Barbara boasts small town “friendly” as well as big city art and culture. In much the same way, Cancer Center of Santa Barbara, while keeping pace with some of the largest and most highly regarded cancer research/treatment centers in the world, remains focused primarily on the patient.

“There is a lot of dedication within this organization,” says President Rick Scott. “Actually, 17 years ago, I inherited much of what makes this place so special, so I feel very fortunate to have the opportunity to be a part of all of this for so long.

“We like to say, ‘high-tech, high-touch,’ but the history of that goes back 60 years. We have a rich history of a tremendous physician staff; right now we have physicians on staff that come to us from Stanford, UCLA, Mayo Clinic and Harvard. Plus there’s a real commitment by this organization to stay on the cutting edge of technology. The most recent example of this would be our acquisition of a Novalis TX platform for image-guided radiosurgery. That’s our 60th birthday present to the community.

### Rick Scott, President, Cancer Center of Santa Barbara



PHOTOS BY VINIT SATYAVRATA, PURE LIGHT PHOTOGRAPHY

The Novalis TX platform for image-guided radiosurgery (IGRS) offers Cancer Center of Santa Barbara patients fast, accurate nonsurgical treatments for cancer and other conditions in the brain, head, neck and body. By incorporating advanced imaging, treatment planning and treatment delivery technologies from Varian Medical Systems and BrainLAB, this technology enables doctors to carry out highly precise, noninvasive IGRS procedures quickly and with great accuracy.

IGRS involves quickly delivering precisely focused, high-energy radiation to a localized area to destroy tumors throughout the body that often cannot be addressed by conventional surgery, including some malignant and benign lesions, brain metastases, arteriovenous malformations and other functional conditions such as trigeminal neuralgia.

“We’re very excited to bring this technology to Santa Barbara and the Central Coast,” says Medical Director of Radiation Oncology Thomas H. Weisenburger, M.D. “The Novalis TX is a state-of-the-art machine that provides capability not only for radiosurgery in the brain, but also stereotactic body radiosurgery for lung, potentially liver and para-spinal tumors. It provides complete radiosurgery capabilities as well as being a very versatile machine, allowing us to treat more standard radiation oncology problems more efficiently and quickly, and that obviously increases patient comfort.

“Most importantly,” he adds, “because we have this, patients who need these types of radiosurgical techniques will now be able to get them close to home.”



“We began 60 years ago with our benefactor providing the means to acquire a 1-million-volt linear accelerator, which was one of only seven in the country,” adds Scott, “and now we’re one of the first on the West Coast to have this industry-leading technology.”

## TRANSCENDENT TECHNOLOGY

The arrival of Novalis TX is just the most recent addition to Cancer Center of Santa Barbara’s powerful arsenal of innovative and ever-evolving technology. With three superbly staffed medical departments, each is ever vigilant, acutely aware of the newest, most effective therapy and technology.

“Our nuclear medicine department was one of the first in California to have a dedicated PET scanner, and well before its time,” Scott points out. “Our commitment to remaining at the forefront of cancer care means that the Cancer Center will continue to carefully evaluate new technology and upgrade or add equipment which holds significant promise.”

In addition to the recently acquired Novalis TX, emerging technology at Cancer Center of Santa Barbara includes intensity-modulated radiation therapy, image-guided radiation therapy, positron emission tomography (PET), PET/computed tomography (CT), PET mammography, gamma cameras and dynamic-single photon emission CT cardiac imaging.

## A STELLAR TEAM

Utilizing a multidisciplinary, collaborative approach to the diagnosis and treatment of cancer, Cancer Center of Santa Barbara takes particular pride in its ability to attract world-class doctors. These are specialists from the world’s leading learning institutions who bring with them not only a wealth of experience, but also the same compassion that has been the hallmark of Cancer Center of Santa Barbara since its inception.

Working in tandem with research, wellness and support services, the physicians of Cancer Center of Santa Barbara are committed to providing excellence in patient care. Guided through the diagnosis and treatment process by an engaged and experienced group of professionals, patients are assured a thorough understanding of their therapy so that they might embark on their treatment course with confidence.

**Lindsay Blount, M.D.,**  
radiation oncology



**Alan Bryce, M.D.,**  
hematology/medical oncology



**Tammy Stockero, R.N., D.C.N.,** is with a patient in the infusion room. Therapeutic services are provided in chemotherapy suites under the care of highly skilled and compassionate nursing teams.

## NUCLEAR MEDICINE

Typically, the Nuclear Medicine Department is one of the first stops for a new patient. Nuclear medicine imaging provides a noninvasive and usually painless evaluation of the cancer and other medical conditions based on the biological or molecular changes of the organ, tissue or bone.

Led by Drs. Pawan Gupta and William Pace of Nuclear Medicine Associates, the department is comprised of highly trained technologists with over 125 years of combined experience utilizing specialized equipment and is accredited by the Intersocietal Commission for the Accreditation of Nuclear Medicine Laboratories.

## RADIATION ONCOLOGY

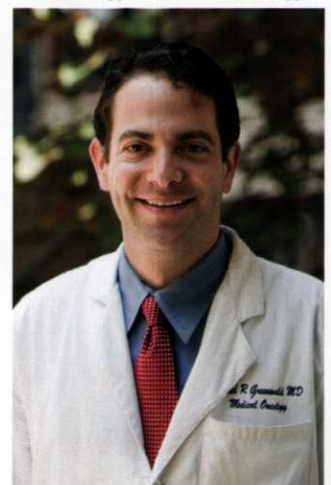
Recognized as one of the most sophisticated on the West Coast, physicians from Radiation Center Medical Group Drs. Thomas Weisenburger, Lindsay Blount, George Cheng and W. Warren Suh lead the Department of Radiation Oncology along with a team of highly skilled medical professionals experienced in the most advanced approaches to treatment. This quality, individualized care continues to attract patients from the entire Central Coast.

At the helm of this vital department is Medical Director of Radiation Oncology Thomas H. Weisenburger, M.D.

**George Cheng, M.D., Ph.D.,**  
radiation oncology



**Daniel Greenwald, M.D.,**  
hematology/medical oncology





**Clinical Research Coordinator, Alexis Langston-Cooper**

“I’ve had the privilege of being part of this incredible center for nearly 25 years,” says Dr. Weisenburger, “and continue to be impressed with the degree of dedication to our mission statement by every member of this team.

“The Cancer Center started 60 years ago with the dream of Dr. Henry Ullmann, Lillian Converse’s physician, who wanted to buy the latest equipment, and here we are more than a half-century

later still striving to stay on the front lines of radiation oncology treatment delivery.”

## HEMATOLOGY/ONCOLOGY

Another step along the collaborative treatment path is with the Hematology/Oncology Department focusing on both blood disorders and cancer treatment.

Under the direction of Santa Barbara Hematology Oncology Medical Group physicians Drs. Fred Kass, Tom Woliver, Donna Walker, Dan Greenwald and Alan Bryce, patients receive expert care with treatment plans designed for the specific medical, psychological, social and logistical needs of each person.

“With the arrival of our newest medical oncologists, Drs. Dan Greenwald and Alan Bryce, we are proud to offer incredible expertise in the areas of lymphoma and myeloma,” says Dr. Kass.

Always on the leading edge of innovation, medical oncology at Cancer Center of Santa Barbara features targeted therapy. This personalized treatment regimen is based on the molecular and genomic features of the individual’s tumor. One of the most impressive outcomes of this program is the effective treatment of the cancer.

“Ultimately, the real mission has to be the nuts and bolts of providing topnotch care,” explains Dr. Kass. “But the fun part of our job is knowing that we’re part of an entity that has been able to redefine the scope of cancer care and dramatically broaden what both doctors and patients should consider an integral part of healing.”

Therapeutic services are provided in chemotherapy suites under the care of highly skilled and compassionate nursing teams. Cristine Fernandez, physician assistant, complements the teams.

## PUSHING THE ENVELOPE — SAVING LIVES

Hope is the life vest we all cling to, whether dealing with cancer or any other life-threatening event. And while every component of Cancer Center of Santa Barbara is focused on providing services that foster that hope, perhaps one of the most aggressive is research.

Cancer Center of Santa Barbara’s research program, under the direction of Dr. Kass, supports advances in the fight against cancer, posing the question, “What if?” Tirelessly, they explore new possibilities through three primary areas of involvement: clinical

**Pawan Gupta, M.D.,  
nuclear medicine**



**Fred Kass, M.D.,  
hematology/medical oncology**



**William Pace, M.D.,  
nuclear medicine**



**W. Warren Suh, M.D., M.P.H.,  
radiation oncology**



PHOTO BY M. BRADLEY ELLIOTT



**Nutrition, exercise and other Wellness Programs have become a major component of Cancer Center of Santa Barbara's mission.**

research, basic science research and education.

From molecular level research in the laboratory, to new drug therapies in the clinic, to educational programming that reports on the latest findings in cancer research, Cancer Center of Santa Barbara is on par with the best facilities in the world.

As part of a strong research and trials network, Cancer Center of Santa Barbara has participated in more than 230 clinical trials to date, partnering with national cooperative groups, private research networks such as UCLA's Translational Oncology Research Institute and major pharmaceutical and biotech companies.

"We truly are 'fighting the good fight,'" observes Research Manager Barbara Conviser, M.P.H. "If you want to talk about the war on cancer, the front line is clinical research! Because without being able to test new agents in humans, we cannot move forward.

"Of course, we actively support all research," she clarifies. "While basic research is not what we do here at the Cancer Center, we partner with the University of California – Santa Barbara by providing grants from our research endowment fund to facilitate and foster that work."

### **FOCUSED ON CANCER — CENTERED ON YOU**

It's more than a clever marketing slogan; these words are at the

**Donna Walker, M.D.,  
hematology/medical oncology**



**Thomas Weisenburger, M.D.,  
radiation oncology**

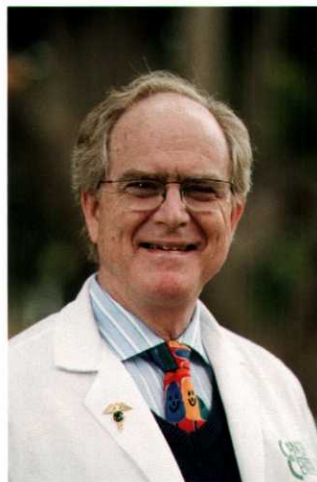


PHOTO BY VINIT SATYAVRATA, PURE LIGHT PHOTOGRAPHY

**Wellness Program**

heart of what makes Cancer Center of Santa Barbara so unique.

"Treating the whole person is integral to our success," Scott points out. "There's so much more to oncology care than just technology. Of course, the best treatment is important to us, but we also understand that it's a journey — a journey where we serve as guides. A cancer diagnosis impacts every aspect of a patient's life and that of their family. Our comprehensive approach addresses

not only the immediate medical care with superb doctors, innovative research and evolving technology, but also their emotional, psychological and even financial needs."

Two essential components to this philosophy are the Wellness and Support Services departments.

### **WELLNESS**

Nearing two decades of affiliation with Cancer Center of Santa Barbara, Dr. Kass has served in various capacities, including his dual roles as

**Thomas Woliver, M.D.,  
hematology/medical Oncology**



PHOTOS BY M. BRADLEY ELLIOTT



PHOTO BY M. BRADLEY ELLIOTT

**Peggy Gayda, RT (T), Radiation Therapist. Heart felt dedication is the essence of the Cancer Center of Santa Barbara**

hematologist/oncologist as well as Medical Director of Research and Wellness.

“Nutrition, exercise and other wellness programs have really become such major components of the Cancer Center’s mission,” says Dr. Kass. “And I get the pleasure of being involved and developing those kinds of programs, which is an aspect of my job I truly love.

“The Wellness Program has had such a profound impact on patients with cancer,” he continues. “I think it’s important to note that the program was created in part through the inspiration of a patient of mine who, through her battles with cancer, created the Cancer Well-Fit Program for patients undergoing cancer treatments. Not only has this understandably had a tremendous impact on patients, helping them stay healthy through the rigors of treatment, but it’s also influenced doctors in our perception of how to keep patients healthy during therapy.”

Christine Brown, M.S., R.D., who has served as the Wellness Manager for more than 10 years, is committed to helping those living with cancer optimize their wellness by achieving a calmer mind, a healthier body, a strengthened immune system and a renewed capacity to cope.

“This piece of the puzzle, if you will, is just as critical as any other component here at the Cancer Center,” says Brown. “What ‘wellness’ provides is a sense of empowerment. Wellness is something patients can choose to do for themselves to enhance their health and recovery. This includes a wide range of activities, classes and

complementary medicine services such as yoga, exercise, nutrition, art therapy and healing touch.”

“We know that finding answers to cancer-related questions can be overwhelming,” Brown acknowledges. “Our multimedia Cancer Resource Library, staffed by trained professionals, is a unique, one-stop shop for patients, their family members and health care professionals to find the support, answers and resources they need.”

Other critical components include cancer education, prevention and community outreach. Cancer Center of Santa Barbara’s outreach programs, which serve over 1,400 community members annually, are primarily focused on, but not limited to, the early detection and prevention of colon and skin cancer.

## SUPPORT SERVICES

“Obviously, cancer impacts lives in a multitude of ways,” notes Support Services Manager Mary Solis, L.C.S.W. “We are here to offer emotional and practical support for patients, their families and their friends.”

Solis and her team do this through a variety of grounded programs, including support groups and counseling that have grown out of the day-to-day needs of their patients.

Solis, who was recently honored as the National Oncology Social Worker of the year in Washington, DC, says some of the most successful programs were inspired by patients she’s worked with.

“These support services are offered at no charge to anyone in our community who is touched by cancer, not just Cancer Center patients,” she explains.

## HEARTFELT DEDICATION

“The essence of the Cancer Center of Santa Barbara is its big heart,” says Scott. “When you come to work every day and focus on the patient, it makes it a wonderful job. But that big heart also refers to this community, which has continued to generously support and grow this facility.”

Director of Development Art Merovick agrees. “Talking to people about the cause of the Cancer Center is not a difficult job,” he says. “In fact, I am often amazed at the compassion and generosity of those who contribute to ensure the Cancer Center goes on providing this caliber of cancer care. I think it’s an expression of confidence in amazing physicians, Rick and our entire team, and we will make sure we live up to that.”

*Cancer Center of Santa Barbara is a nonprofit cancer diagnostic and treatment center that remains the only institution in Santa Barbara with a longstanding, reliable commitment to cancer care for everyone in its community, regardless of their ability to pay. Cancer Center of Santa Barbara is located at 300 West Pueblo Street, Santa Barbara, CA 93105. For more information please call (805) 682-7300 or visit [www.ccsb.org](http://www.ccsb.org). ■*

