

# AWARE!



## Understanding PET/CT Imaging: *A Powerful Tool in Disease Detection and Treatment*

**At The Harold Leever Regional Cancer Center, cutting-edge imaging technology plays a crucial role in diagnosing and treating cancer.** One of the most advanced techniques available today is PET/CT imaging, which combines Positron Emission Tomography (PET) and Computed Tomography (CT) to provide detailed insights into the body's internal structures and functional activity.

### What is PET/CT?

PET/CT imaging merges two powerful diagnostic tools. The PET scan detects functional changes in tissues using a small amount of a radioactive tracer, while the CT scan provides a detailed anatomical view. Together, these scans create highly accurate images that help physicians locate and assess cancer with greater precision than either test alone.

### How is PET/CT used?

PET/CT is widely used to detect cancer, determine its stage, monitor treatment effectiveness, and check for recurrence. Different types of radioactive tracers, known as biomarkers, are used to highlight specific cancers.

By offering PET/CT imaging with advanced biomarkers, the Leever Cancer Center enhances cancer detection and treatment planning. These scans allow physicians to tailor therapies more effectively, ensuring patients receive the most appropriate care for their specific diagnosis.

While PET/CT is a crucial tool in oncology, it also plays an essential role in diagnosing and managing non-cancerous conditions. For example, it is commonly used to assess neurological disorders such as Alzheimer's disease by detecting abnormal glucose metabolism in the brain. PET/CT can also help evaluate

heart disease by identifying areas of reduced blood flow, guiding treatment decisions for patients with coronary artery disease.

The continued advancements in PET/CT imaging at the Leever Cancer Center ensure that patients receive the most accurate diagnoses and personalized treatment plans available.

### The Leever Cancer Center offers several advanced PET imaging options, including:

**F18 FDG (fluorodeoxyglucose):** This is the most commonly used radiotracer in PET/CT scanning. It evaluates malignancy by tracking glucose metabolism, which is often higher in cancer cells, making it an effective tool for detecting rapidly growing cancers such as lung, brain, and colorectal cancers, as well as lymphoma and melanoma.

**F18 Fluoroestradiol (Cerianna):** Used for imaging estrogen receptor-positive (ER+) metastatic breast cancer, Cerianna helps determine the extent of disease spread in patients with confirmed ER+ cancer. It aids in detecting ER+ lesions as a supplement to biopsy in patients with metastatic breast cancer.

Continued on page 2 ▶



The continued advancements in PET/CT imaging at HLRCC ensure that patients receive the most accurate diagnoses and personalized treatment plans available.

**F18 Flutemetamol (Vizamyl):** This imaging agent is used to evaluate the brain for beta-amyloid neuritic plaques, which are associated with Alzheimer's disease. It helps estimate the plaque density in adult patients with cognitive impairment, assisting in the diagnosis and assessment of Alzheimer's.

**F18 Pylarify (PSMA):** This scan images prostate-specific membrane antigen (PSMA) in prostate cancer lesions. F18 PSMA binds to prostate tumor cells, highlighting areas of metastatic cancer. PSMA PET is especially useful for patients with rising PSA levels. Unlike CT or MRI, it can detect cancer in hard-to-find areas.

**Ga 68 Dotatate (NetSpot):** This isotope attaches to specific receptors on neuro-endocrine tumors, helping doctors accurately find these rare types of cancer. It is used to locate tumors that have somatostatin receptors.

*For more information or if you have questions about PET/CT imaging or whether it may be beneficial for your treatment, speak with your physician or contact the PET/CT department at the Leever Cancer Center: (203) 555-5501.*

*Note: Patients generally receive an appointment within one week of referral.*



## COMMIT TO QUIT

Want to stop smoking or vaping  
or help a loved one quit?

Tools, tips and support can help.

Visit [lung.org/quit-smoking](http://lung.org/quit-smoking).

The CT Quitline is also available at  
[committoquitCT.com](http://committoquitCT.com) or  
1-800-QUIT-NOW.



## ASK THE DOC

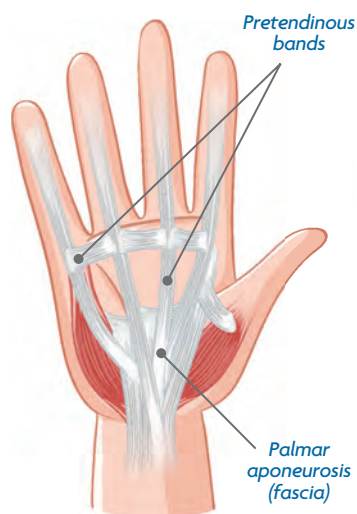
Joseph Ravalese, III, MD Radiation Oncologist, The Harold Leever Regional Cancer Center

### What is Dupuytren's contracture and how is it treated?

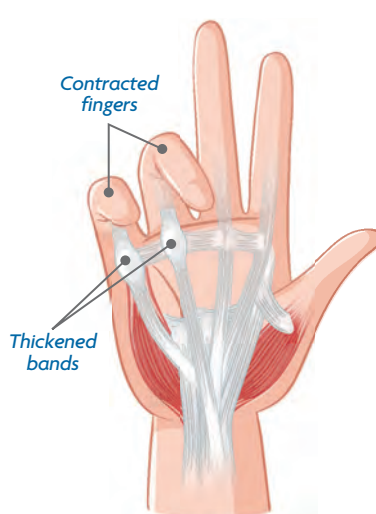
**Dr. Ravalese:** In several sites in our bodies, we have a tough fibrous connective tissue beneath our skin called fascia. This helps to protect the underlying blood vessels, tendons and nerves. In Dupuytren's disease, the fascia undergoes a progressive process causing nodules and cords that you can feel in the palm of the hand along the finger tendons. This can tighten the tendons, resulting in flexion of the fingers.

Treatment can include radiation therapy, surgery, or simply continuing to follow the disease and watching the progression. If radiation therapy is indicated, the schedule is generally two single weeks of treatment (30 minutes in the office each day for a four-to-six-minute radiation treatment) with approximately four to six weeks in between.

Scan the QR code below to listen to our latest podcast "conversation" with Dr. Joseph Ravalese, III, as he discusses how radiation therapy may be a treatment option for patients with Dupuytren's contracture.



HAND WITHOUT  
DUPUYTREN'S



HAND WITH  
DUPUYTREN'S



To catch up on all of our podcast episodes, visit  
[leevercancercenter.org/video-library/leever-cancer-conversations-podcasts](http://leevercancercenter.org/video-library/leever-cancer-conversations-podcasts)

Welcome!

All of us at The Harold Leever Regional Cancer Center are pleased to introduce two new providers joining the practices in our building...



## ROBERT MATERA, MD

Dr. Robert Matera is a hematology and oncology specialist at Smilow Cancer Hospital in Waterbury and New Haven. He primarily cares for patients with genitourinary (GU) cancers. Dr. Matera received his medical degree from Tufts University School of Medicine and completed his residency at Rhode Island Hospital/Brown University, where he served as Chief Resident. He then pursued his fellowship at Yale School of Medicine.

## ALINA GUSEYNOVA, MD

Dr. Alina Guseynova is a hematology and oncology specialist with Trinity Health of New England Oncology Center. Dr. Guseynova's clinical area of interest includes GU oncology, which involves treating cancer-related conditions in the urinary system. She completed her residency and pursued her fellowship at Ascension Providence Hospital-Michigan State University.



## In the words of the patients we care for...

*"I have recently completed radiation treatment at the Leever Center and I would like to express my profound gratitude to the extraordinary professionals who made this challenging period seem almost normal..."*

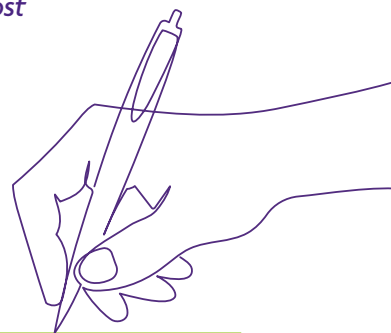
*I am grateful to Dr. Joseph Ravalese for his unhurried attention, clear and straightforward guidance and especially for his patience in responding to my often paranoid concerns.*

*The nurses were absolutely fabulous, showing true caring and compassion and causing me to laugh many times by their little funny tricks, such as wearing shining shoes of different colors. I do not even need to mention their impeccable professionalism.*

*But I am most grateful to the extraordinary team of Radiation Room "East." Their kindness, empathy and genuine caring made all the difference. Their ability to convince patients (me) that they were sincerely interested in my plans for the weekend, or that they would truly want to have the recipe for the dish I cooked the day before, really made me forget, for a time, where I was and why. Also, their skills in making what really was a very undignified procedure feel almost normal are amazing and precious.*

*Kindly convey my profound gratitude to all of the Center's professionals!*

*Sincerely, S.K.*



Our patients and their families are at the focus of everything we do. The Harold Leever Regional Cancer Center joins in thanking our dedicated staff. We appreciate each one of you.



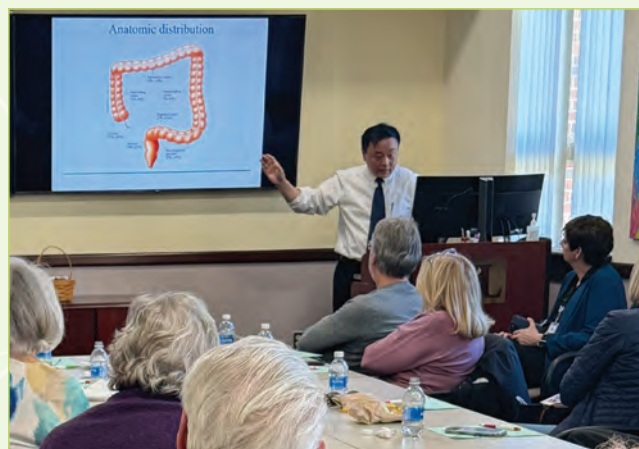
# HLRCC Hosts Free Community Events To Raise Awareness About Colorectal Cancer...

In recognition of Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month, we hosted a special community program on Thursday, March 27, to educate attendees about colorectal cancer prevention. Colorectal cancer is one of the most common cancers in the U.S., but it is also one of the most preventable with early detection and lifestyle changes.

As pictured here, Dr. John Zhang, MD, PhD, FACS, FASCRS, Program Director of Waterbury Hospital's National Accreditation for Rectal Cancer, led the discussion, covering key topics like risk reduction, genetic factors, and the importance of regular screening.

Participants also received valuable nutrition insights from HLRCC Nutritionist Karen Sabbath, MS, RD, CSO.

Attendees left with a greater understanding of how to take charge of their colorectal health and the steps they can take to reduce their risk. Thank you to everyone who joined us in this important conversation about prevention and early detection!



## Connecting Patients with Emergency Assistance Resources

At The Harold Leever Regional Cancer Center, we understand that undergoing cancer treatment can create unexpected financial challenges. To help ease some of the burden, Leever partners with the Connecticut Cancer Foundation, the American Cancer Society, and other organizations to offer limited emergency financial assistance for patients facing genuine hardship.

These grants can help cover basic living expenses such as transportation, food, rent, and utilities. However, because funding is limited, assistance is reserved for emergency situations and patients with the most pressing financial needs.

If you're struggling with basic expenses due to the impact of cancer, HLRCC social worker Melissa Seres is here to help. She can guide you through the application process, connect you with available grants, and identify additional community resources. These may include local programs, payment plans, and support services that can offer ongoing relief.

Please keep in mind that financial assistance is not guaranteed and is based on the availability of funds at any given time. The goal of these grants is to serve as a last resort for those in immediate need, helping patients overcome critical barriers to care.

*If you have questions or need emergency limited support, please contact Melissa Seres, MSW, LCSW, OSW-C, at (203) 575-5511 or [mseres@leevercancercenter.org](mailto:mseres@leevercancercenter.org).*



## “Beyond Par” Support

We are incredibly grateful to the Watertown Police Department once again for organizing and hosting its ninth annual golf tournament to benefit the Leever Center. Over the last nine years, they have raised more than \$140,000 to help us fund various support groups in our community.

Special thanks to Tournament Coordinator Officer Austin Keeney, the volunteers, sponsors, and participants who made this day another huge success.

This year's event will be held on Friday, October 3 at Crestbrook Golf Course in Watertown.

*Above: On April 30, Officer Austin Keeney, Tournament Coordinator (left) presented a check to Tom Belzek, HLRCC Finance Director (right).*

## ...And to Screen for Oral, Head & Neck Cancer

According to the National Cancer Institute, approximately 71,100 people in the United States were diagnosed with cancer of the oral cavity, pharynx, or larynx, the major types of head and neck cancer, in 2024.

Individuals who frequently or heavily use alcohol, tobacco, or tobacco products are considered high risk and should undergo regular screenings.

On April 16th, the Leever Center offered free screenings for oral, head, and neck cancer to the community. Dedicated providers and staff volunteered their time to assess individuals at higher risk for these cancers.



Cherie Pritt, RN; Silvia Villacorta Rosales, MA; and Samantha Conway, RN.



(Left to right) Jacqueline Dibble, APRN; Dr. Chris Loughlin; Dr. Zafar Sayed; Dr. Joseph Ravalese, III; Dr. Neil Schiff; Dr. Ray Winicki; and Dr. Meriem Mokhtech.

17

17 people were screened

14

14 were referred for routine follow-up care with PCP

3

3 were referred for further head and neck evaluation

1

1 was referred for immediate consultation for suspected neoplasm

**71%** of survey respondents said that the program increased their knowledge and awareness of this disease.

**66%** of survey respondents said that they were not aware that certain types of HPV may cause cervical cancer and have been linked to head and neck cancer.

**0%** of survey respondents had received the HPV vaccine.



## “ReLei” For Life

*New Theme and Location for 2025 Event!*

Get ready for the 2025 Greater Waterbury Relay For Life! This year's event, which will be held on June 14 starting at 12:00 PM, has a new location and a new theme. After many years at Holy Cross High School, the 2025 event has moved to Crosby High School, 300 Pierpont Road in Waterbury.

The theme of the event is “ReLei” For Life — a playful twist on a Hawaiian luau — so don your best Hawaiian shirts and bring your best island vibes!

The Greater Waterbury Relay For Life is a celebration of life, hope, and the fight against cancer. Mark your calendars, spread the word, and we hope to see you there!

## MENU

Hummus Heaped with Tomatoes and Cucumbers  
Grilled Boneless Chicken Thighs or Breast, or Salmon with a BBQ Rub  
Grilled Pineapple Rings  
Grilled Potato and/or Sweet Potato Slices  
Fresh Corn Salad  
Apple 'n Cabbage Slaw with Cider Vinaigrette

### HUMMUS HEAPED WITH TOMATOES AND CUCUMBERS

Deb Perelman, *The Smitten Kitchen*  
[smittenkitchen.com](http://smittenkitchen.com)  
Servings: 4-6

#### Ingredients

- 2 cups prepared hummus
- Olive oil
- 1-1/2 cups (8 oz.) cherry tomatoes, chopped small, plus more to taste
- 8 oz. small cucumbers, washed, unpeeled, chopped small
- 1/4 medium red onion, chopped small
- Juice of half a lemon
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- Sumac and/or za'atar (optional)
- 1-2 tablespoons finely chopped parsley, or a mix of parsley, mint, and chives, plus more for garnish
- 4 large pitas, toasted, cut into wedges

#### Instructions

- 1 Spread hummus on a large plate with the back of a spoon. Drizzle lightly with olive oil.
- 2 Mix tomatoes, cucumbers, onion, lemon, about 1-1/2 tablespoons olive oil, plus salt and pepper to taste in a bowl. Stir in herbs.
- 3 Heap salad on hummus, arrange pita wedges all around. Finish with za'atar, sumac, and/or fresh herbs.

# WHAT'S COOKING?

## Spring & Summer BBQ

Spring and summer are a great time to celebrate warm weather and the abundant assortment of fresh produce while enjoying the company of friends and family. Here is a barbeque menu that is filled with fresh produce and healthy lean proteins on the grill. Enjoy!

### FRESH CORN SALAD

By Jennifer Segal, *Once Upon a Chef*  
[onceuponachef.com](http://onceuponachef.com)  
Servings: 4-6

#### Ingredients

- 5 ears of corn, shucked
- 1/4 cup vegetable oil
- 2-1/2 tablespoons white wine vinegar
- 2 scallions, white and green parts, finely sliced
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper, freshly ground
- 1/3 cup fresh basil, finely sliced
- Sugar (optional)

#### Instructions

- 1 Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil (see note). Boil the corn until tender-crisp, 3 to 4 minutes. Do not overcook. Drain the corn and immerse it in very cold water to stop the cooking process. Place the corn on a clean dish towel set over a cutting board, then use a serrated knife to cut the kernels of the cobs. (The towel both dries the corn and prevents it from bouncing all over.)
- 2 In a large bowl, combine the kernels with the oil, vinegar, scallions, salt, and pepper. Cover and refrigerate until ready to serve.
- 3 Just before serving, toss in the fresh basil. Taste and adjust seasoning, if necessary. If the salad tastes too tart, add a bit more oil; if it tastes bland, add a bit more vinegar or salt and pepper. Try adding 1/4 teaspoon of sugar if the corn isn't as sweet as you'd like. Serve the salad cold or at room temperature.

*Note: Be sure to add enough salt that the water tastes like the sea. Try adding a few tablespoons of sugar to the water as well - it will enhance the corn's sweetness.*

### APPLE 'N CABBAGE SLAW WITH A LIGHT CIDER VINAIGRETTE

Jamie Banewicz Cassman,  
[picturetherecipe.com](http://picturetherecipe.com)  
Servings: 4-6

#### Ingredients

##### For slaw:

- 2 cups red cabbage, shredded\*
- 1 cup green cabbage, shredded\*
- 1-1/2 apples, cut into matchsticks
- 2 carrots (about 1 cup)\*
- 3 green onions, sliced
- 1/2 cup chopped cilantro

##### For dressing:

- 2 tablespoons canola oil
- 2 tablespoons honey
- 2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar
- Juice of one lime (about 1-2 tablespoons)
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Dash of cayenne

#### Instructions

- 1 Mix slaw ingredients together in large bowl.
- 2 Mix dressing ingredients together.
- 3 Add dressing to slaw and allow to sit for at least 2 hours before serving.

\*Pre-shredded vegetables are fine.



# A Community of Caring

Our immense gratitude for the contributions from our community including:

- **The Women's Golf Association of East Mountain** for their generous donation raised during their recent Breast Cancer Awareness Tournament in memory of **Renee Leone**.
- **Frisbie Elementary School in Wolcott** for contributing the proceeds of "Pink Week" in memory of their beloved colleague **Gilda Burns**.
- **Holy Cross High School** for their much-appreciated donation to HLRCC.
- **The Volunteer Fire Department of Prospect** for donating the funds raised from their No-Shave November event, and to the Department for matching all the donations!
- Meaningful cards of hope and support from **Post University**.
- Patient care bags thoughtfully gifted from **Krista Palomba, friends, and family**.
- **Ralph Nicefaro** from **Catholic Academy of Waterbury** for bringing care packages to each of the three offices at Leever in appreciation of their hard work.



## THOUGHTFUL COMFORT

Chemo care bags and warm blankets were contributed by **St. Anthony Church of Prospect**.

We are grateful to all the crafters who continue to donate handmade and other special items (some are pictured at right). Your creativity and generosity brighten the days of our patients and their families! Thanks to:

- **United Church of Christ, Southbury** and the **Busy Bees Farmingbury Women's Club, Wolcott** for comfort caps, port pillows and comfort pillows.
- **Falls Avenue Senior Center Knitting & Crocheting Group, Watertown Senior Center, Oakville** for lap blankets, prayer shawls, and miraculous medals.
- **Maryann Jackson** for multiple donations of machine washable chemo caps donated with thoughts and prayers.
- **St. John of the Cross, Middlebury** for prayer shawls, personal care items, and bags of candy for Leever patients.
- **The family of Bernadine Orintas** for the gifts of quilts and wigs.
- **Mary Ann Mizeski** of **Naugatuck** and **Robert and Barbara Hunter** of **Beacon Falls** for beautiful knit scarves and other knit items.
- **Joan Judson** of **Woodbury** for a large donation of hats.
- **The Knitting Group, North Congregational Church, Woodbury** for prayer shawls with "care squares."
- **Chris Jones** for wonderful handmade quilts.
- **Karen Beeman** of **Waterbury** and **Gloria Shelley** of **Middlebury** in memory of **Olga Cole** and **Pastor Bruce Shelley** for warm crochet shawls.
- **Dolores Milo, John Lana, and Carol Vagnini** for patient wigs.
- **Nicci Fiorucci** and **The Center for Academic Success Team** at **Post University** in honor of **Michael Fiorucci** for blankets, puzzle books, personal care items and hats.



"Hoping these little crafts I have made with all my heart (and my daughter) help put a smile on at least one person's face!"

– **Rosa Felix** of **Naugatuck**



## HANDMADE WITH LOVE

## aware!

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We encourage your feedback.  
If there is a cancer topic you would like covered, to respond to an article you've read, or to be put on our mailing list, please call 203-575-5555 or email: [dparkinson@leevecancercenter.org](mailto:dparkinson@leevecancercenter.org)



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# Monthly Support Groups



**IMPORTANT TO KNOW:** The Leever Center is undergoing a transformation process as we update and expand our building to better serve our patients. During this time, there will be some changes to our monthly support groups.

The following groups are on hold till further notice: Greater Waterbury Area Ostomy Support Group, and Living with Stage 4/Incurable Cancer Support Group.

## ART THERAPY CANCER SUPPORT GROUP

Second and fourth Tuesday of every month  
3:30 - 5:00 PM

Location: Family & Children's Aid ♦♦  
30 Holmes Avenue, Waterbury

To register, call 203-790-6568 x109 or email  
clientservices@annsplace.org.

## BRAVE AT HEART: WOMEN'S BREAST CANCER SUPPORT GROUP

First Wednesday of every month  
7:00 - 9:00 PM

Location: Jesse Camille's, Naugatuck  
For more information, please contact  
Sue Ascencao: 203-232-3026 or  
sasencao@yahoo.com.

## COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Second Thursday of every month  
6:30 - 9:00 PM

Location: HLRCC Main Lobby ♦♦

For more information, please contact  
Kathy Daisey: 203-723-5067 or  
Sharon Burns: 860-384-1398.

## CT MULTIPLE MYELOMA FIGHTERS SUPPORT GROUP

Second Wednesday of every month  
6:00 - 8:00 PM

Location: Prospect Library

For more information, please contact  
Robin Tuohy: 203-206-3536.

## HOPE MUTUAL AID GROUP FOR PATIENTS AND THEIR LOVED ONES

First and third Tuesday of every month  
4:00 - 5:00 PM

Location: HLRCC PET Reception Area ♦♦

For more information, please contact Melissa Seres, MSW, LCSW, OSW-C: 203-575-5511 or  
mseres@leevecancercenter.org.

♦♦ Please note new meeting location for these support groups



**"Unity is strength... when there is teamwork and  
collaboration, wonderful things can be achieved."**



– Mattie Stepanek  
Author and motivational speaker

## HELPFUL RESOURCES

For programs providing  
support and information:  
211 or 211.org

### Direct numbers for specific resources:

#### Domestic violence

888-774-2900 English  
844-831-9200 Spanish

#### Suicide

866-794-0021 Greater Waterbury

#### Child abuse

800-842-2288

#### Crisis hotline for young adults

Text "listen" to 741741

#### Elder abuse

888-385-4225

#### Sexual assault

888-999-5545 English  
888-568-8332 Spanish

#### Veterans crisis hotline

800-273-8255 and press 1  
Text: 838255

or veteranscrisisline.net

#### Alcoholics Anonymous

866-783-7712 English or ct-aa.org

#### Narcotics Anonymous

800-662-4357/800-420-9064  
ctna.org

#### National Alliance of Mental Health (NAMI)

800-215-3021

#### Food resources

ctfoodbank.org  
(Local food pantries can be  
looked up by zip code)