



(From left to right) Kim Kelly, PhD; Reid Adams, MD; Elizabeth Good, MSN, RN, ACNP; and Todd Bauer, MD, represent the full spectrum of research and care UVA offers pancreatic cancer patients.

Taking Aim at Pancreatic Cancer

Lake Cowart is Overcoming the Odds and Giving Back

For Lake Cowart, what began as a fairly routine CT scan turned into 18 months of treatment for pancreatic cancer that is still ongoing. His journey included surgery and multiple treatments as part of an innovative clinical trial. Today, Lake, owner of an oyster business on Virginia's bucolic Northern Neck, is winning the fight against pancreatic cancer, a particularly stubborn cancer that kills nearly 42,000 Americans annually.

"We found the lesion on my pancreas by accident," says Lake, "and, initially, we followed it, not expecting it to be cancerous. When it began to grow, we did a biopsy and found out that part of it was malignant. Luckily, it had not spread to my lymph nodes. During the surgery and following treatments, the care that I received at UVA Cancer Center was tremendous."

Lake's surgeon, Reid Adams, has been by his side throughout the journey. Adams, associate director of clinical affairs and chief of the Division of Surgical Oncology, participates in a unique Pancreatic Cancer Program at UVA that offers screening for high-risk patients as well as novel treatment therapies for those who are diagnosed with the condition.

"Surgeons just don't come any better than Dr. Adams," says Lake, who has now felt the full impact of a cancer diagnosis and its life-changing force.

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SPOTLIGHT

Reid Adams, MD, Associate Director of Clinical Affairs and Chief of the Division of Surgical Oncology

FOR
THE

INVESTING IN

Philanthropy in Action at UVA Cancer Center



After 30 years as an oncologist, I have learned that you have good years and bad years, and if you are lucky, even exceptional years. For the UVA Cancer Center, 2016 was just such a year. Homegrown research translated to excellent patient care, with more than 35% of our 300 active clinical trials initiated by UVA investigators. Sixteen of our physicians were named to the prestigious *Newsweek's* Top Cancer Doctors list. We were awarded MAGNET Status, the highest national recognition for nursing excellence. Our Cancer Center Support Grant was renewed, making us one of the longest running NCI-designated Cancer Centers in the country at 30 years.

All of these accomplishments strengthen my belief that the only way we will ever conquer this disease is by working together. All of us have a role to play, whether it is in the lab, the clinic, or the community. Only together will we be able to make true, meaningful progress. Thank you for being a part of our team. I can't wait to see what 2017 has in store.

-Tom Loughran Jr., MD
Director, UVA Cancer Center



The Patrice Neese Education Fund will provide medical students, fellows, and nurses with the ability to pursue different career and education advancement opportunities.

Education Fund Honors the Role of Oncology Nurses

When a Nurse Becomes the Patient



Patrice Neese, NP

37 years, 18 at UVA Cancer Center.

A nurse practitioner, Patrice worked closely with Dr. Craig Slingluff in the Human Immune Therapy Center. She was there for the first melanoma vaccine trial at UVA and played a critical role in the program's development, delivering treatments to patients and monitoring results and side effects. But that's not all. She became her patients' cheerleader, celebrating victories and helping them through difficult times.

"Oncology nurses build lasting relationships with their patients," Patrice explains. "I was their first advocate, the one they saw at every visit for several years. I knew their families and the challenges they faced."

Patrice's first cancer diagnosis came when she was 36-years-old, a mother

with two small children. Her second diagnosis—this time for melanoma—came while she was working at UVA. The same program and coworkers she had grown to love would save her life.

Even though she has retired, Patrice is not forgotten. In recognition of the many lives she touched, several patients and colleagues in the Cancer Center established the Patrice Neese Education Fund.

The fund provides support for nurses, medical students, and fellows to attend national conferences and pursue additional training to advance their professional practice. The initial award, she's proud to say, went to a fellow nurse she worked with on that first melanoma trial.

"I hope this fund speeds cancer research and helps empower nurses to take a more active role in oncology clinical trials," Patrice says.

Today Patrice stays close to the Cancer Center. She and her husband Scott are donors to the fund, and Patrice is also a member of Patients & Friends, a committee that raises money for cancer research at UVA.

"My heart is still in oncology nursing. As a member of Patients & Friends, I'll be able to continue supporting cancer patients—now and in the future."

Local Golf Tournaments Celebrate Friendships and Hope

Funds Raised Benefit Ovarian Cancer Research, Awareness, and Patient Care

When Marty Whitlow was diagnosed with ovarian cancer in 2009, her friend, Dotty Bohannon, could only watch as Marty faced her diagnosis and treatment. But quickly, Marty began to look beyond her own illness. She wanted to set up a fund to help other patients like herself.

Marty, along with her family and friends, formed "Team Teal" and began to hold a series of events to raise money for ovarian cancer awareness and research at UVA Cancer Center.

"In 2012, Marty was excited that her fund was approaching the \$50,000 mark and that meant she could add her name to the donor wall at the Cancer Center," remembers Dotty. "Then she had a scare with her health. Many of her friends were concerned, but determined that she would see her name on that wall."

A golf lover and employee at Birdwood Golf Course, Dotty called on a small group of friends to join her for a tournament that would become known as Golf for Life. "This was something we could

do to support Marty's fund and help raise awareness. We started with a small group of women playing nine holes. Now, we have a strong organizational team and we're up to 68 golfers playing 18 holes. The tournament expanded this year when a group from Glenmore rallied around one of their own battling ovarian cancer."

Even though Marty passed away in 2014, Golf for Life is still going strong, raising \$13,000 this year and bringing Team Teal's total fundraising to almost \$200,000. Funds support the Marty Whitlow Ovarian Cancer Research Fund, mobilizing the community around ovarian cancer awareness and promoting collaborations that make research possible—and keeping Marty's dream alive.

In the Shenandoah Valley, the popular Barb Winegord Ovarian Cancer Awareness Tournament, which raised \$11,000 this year, is also a celebration of life.

"Barb was the sunshine," remembers Lisa Jenkins, Barb's sister-in-law and



Friends and family came together in memory of two extraordinary women who fought for ovarian cancer awareness.

organizer of the tournament. "She lit up a room. There was no stopping her."

Started at first to help Barb pay for her treatments, the tournament continues on in her memory, easing the burden on patients and families by helping pay for meals, gas, and hotels. What's more, Barb and Marty's families have become friends. This year, teams from the two events crossed Afton Mountain to play in each other's tournament.

For ovarian cancer patients and their families at UVA, the dedication shown by the family and friends of two extraordinary women will touch the lives of countless others in meaningful ways—especially as the network of women battling this disease continues to grow. As more women are diagnosed with ovarian cancer, some will use these golf tournaments as a way to battle back.



UVA Cancer Center received our highest *U.S. News & World Report* ranking ever, coming in 31st in the nation. We were also listed as a top 100 oncology program by *Becker's Hospital Review*, which firmly places us in the top 2% of all cancer centers nationally, and on par with cancer centers that have double or even triple our patient volume. *U.S. News & World Report* further recognized eight UVA Health System specialties and ranked UVA as the number one hospital in Virginia.



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INVESTING IN HOPE

“It’s inspiring to see the Cowarts push us forward to a better future in caring for pancreatic cancer patients. Research is absolutely the best path to that goal.”

– Dr. Reid Adams

continued from front cover

As a result of the experience, Lake and his wife Ellen have made a broader commitment to fighting pancreatic cancer. They gave UVA a property valued at almost \$200,000 and have pledged \$10,000 a year for life to support pancreatic cancer research at UVA Cancer Center.

“It’s our small effort to contribute a portion of what we have to help others beat this disease,” says Lake. “It’s an opportunity to help other patients, and, hopefully, sometime in the future, find a cure for pancreatic cancer and save more lives.”

“This is a generous and heartfelt gift,” says Adams. “It’s inspiring to see the Cowarts push us forward to a better

future in caring for pancreatic cancer patients. Research is absolutely the best path to that goal.”

Adams is part of an active research effort in pancreatic cancer, led by his colleagues Todd Bauer, MD, associate professor of surgical oncology, and Kim Kelly, PhD, an associate professor of biomedical engineering at UVA. Both Bauer and Kelly share a specific interest in understanding the fundamental mechanics of how cancer metastasizes, as a possible way to interrupt the spread of the disease. Kelly, along with Bauer, has already discovered a biomarker, or indicator, in the blood that’s a sign of cancer cells in more than 90 percent of all pancreatic tumors. The marker could become a critical element in early detection—and a way to attack the cancer before it can spread. Bauer also studies the molecular makeup of tumors with the aim of developing new, personalized treatments for pancreatic cancer.

“We have some unique and very promising research taking place at UVA aimed at improving the outcomes for patients with pancreatic cancer,” says Adams. “The Cowarts’ generosity will help create a path forward to new therapies, some of which we haven’t yet imagined.”

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