



SMITH CENTER
FOR HEALING AND THE ARTS
community. creativity. cancer support

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Innovative Patient Navigation Training Draws Attendees from Across the Country

Smith Center for Healing and the Arts hosts its annual program for nurses, social workers, and lay navigators with a focus on Integrative Cancer Care this September

August 30, 2012 – Washington, DC - From September 19th to 23rd, a diverse group of physicians, nutrition experts, therapists, patient care advocates, nonprofit professionals, and oncology nurse specialists will converge at Smith Center for Healing and the Arts for a training program that will prepare them to guide cancer patients from screening through recovery.

With a unique focus on integrative health and holistic wellness, Smith Center's Patient Navigation model and training program have grown to attract participants from across the country. This year's group of 20 participants will join together from New York, Illinois, Texas, Georgia, South Carolina, California, and as far away as Hawaii.

Smith Center's groundbreaking Integrative Navigation Model expands the concept of patient navigation to offer comprehensive, holistic support throughout the entire cancer experience. Carole O'Toole, Smith Center's Director of Integrative Navigation, explains that "the aim is to combine medical intervention and complementary supportive modalities in order to facilitate healing on all levels: physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual."

Examples of "supportive modalities" are health-supportive nutrition, psychosocial support, stress reduction tools, and other therapies such as acupuncture, guided relaxation, or massage. Smith Center believes that incorporating these elements can not only support a patient through cancer treatment, but also increase overall wellbeing and quality of life for those facing cancer.

It was Smith Center's integrative approach and dedication to community navigation that convinced Amanda Allison, Coordinator of the HRSA Cancer Patient Navigator Program at The Queen's Medical Center in Honolulu to take part in this year's training. "The interactive nature of Smith Center's program presents a unique opportunity to explore integrative navigation from the inside, out," she explained. "Such a hands-on approach can help to empower adults with cancer to take an active role in their own healing. This can be particularly important for cancer patients who struggle with financial and cultural barriers that make it difficult for them to access proper care."

Amanda hopes to incorporate elements of Smith Center's approach into the work being done back at The Queen's Medical Center in Honolulu and through the 'Imi Hale Native Hawaiian Cancer Network, where she helps provide training and on-going education for patient navigators. "We would like to see Smith Center's work first-hand, and look for ways to join hands as we walk down parallel paths," she said.

During the training, highly-regarded experts in oncology care, psychosocial support, complementary therapies, cancer survivorship, palliative care, nutrition, and stress reduction will offer information and tools to navigators in an immersive retreat setting. The retreat environment is modeled after Smith Center's Weeklong Cancer Retreat Program, which has been at the core of the organization's work since 1996. The training is also made up of a unique blend of didactic and experiential sessions that provides a comprehensive yet deep learning experience in the practice of integrative cancer care navigation.

O'Toole hopes to continue to expand Smith Center's Navigation Training in future years. "We'd love to take it on the road," she explained, "so that more navigators might have access to the Smith Center model and a chance to learn about the deep levels of healing that an integrative approach can provide for cancer patients."

About Smith Center for Healing and the Arts

Founded in 1996, Smith Center for Healing and the Arts is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization located in the heart of Washington, D.C. Smith Center offers a variety of educational and creative resources and programs to enhance health and wholeness, with a special focus on serving those affected by cancer. Programs focus on cultivating each person's innate ability to heal, helping participants explore meaning and maintain hope—even in the face of life's greatest challenges. Now in its 15th year of service, Smith Center (formerly known as Smith Farm Center) has expanded its program offerings to serve more than 10,000 people each year in the D.C. community through weeklong Cancer Retreats, classes and workshops, community outreach events, Hospital-Based Artist-In-Residence programs, Integrative Patient Navigation Services. Smith Center also operates the Joan Hisaoka Healing Arts Gallery, a space dedicated to showcasing art that serves to educate, enlighten, empower, and cultivate healing.

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