

December 2010 Meeting News

New Members

The group welcomed some new members this month. **Joe** was diagnosed with MM in June 2010. He was feeling fatigued and a bone marrow biopsy led to the diagnosis. Joe has harvested stem cells but is holding off on a stem cell transplant. He has achieved a 90% remission with Velcade, and now is on a combination of Velcade, Revlimid, and Dex; and also gets Zometa. He is being treated at Emory. **John** was diagnosed with MM in December 2009. John had spinal meningitis which was treated successfully, but that also led to a MM diagnosis. John mentioned that his MM is considered to be in a high risk category. He has had two (tandem) stem cell transplants and is now in remission. He is currently on maintenance drugs including Velcade. John has been receiving treatment at the facility in Arkansas.

Business & Other Information

Nancy led the meeting. Approximately 42 members attended. We enjoyed great holiday food during this special annual celebration that has become a tradition for the December meeting. A big thank-you to all who contributed food for the group, and toys for Childrens Healthcare of Atlanta – there was a generous amount of both. As part of this celebration **Joe** commended **Nancy's** dedication to the group, specifically noting how much time she spends on research and events that benefits all of us. In appreciation, **Joe** is collecting donations to pay for Nancy's trip to the **IMF Patient & Family Seminar in Boca Raton, FL** in February. Please see **Joe** if you would like to contribute; and *a very special and heartfelt thank-you to Nancy for all that she does for us!* New programs are being planned for next year. If you have any specific ideas or requests, please contact **Nancy**. The annual **American Society of Hematology (ASH)** Conference was held in early December; stay tuned for more news related to this event in upcoming meetings,

Member Updates & Collaboration

With sadness the group acknowledged the passing of **Jeanine**. Jeanine was a lively group member who contributed a lot when she was able to attend meetings. Jeanine was diagnosed in 2004 and was 77 years in age. She died from blood clots in her lungs. Also passing recently was **Kaye's** husband, Ronnie, who was in remission from MM for a number of years, but died from other complications including MDS and COPD. The group reflected on other members who passed in 2010. We were reminded of how relatively infrequent it has become to hear of members passing compared to just ten years ago; and how much longer patients are living these days with good quality lives. It is something to be very thankful for, and should continue to get even better with the research being conducted, and advances in therapies. Genetic mapping continues to be a hot topic and the MMRF has continued to accelerate clinical trials. Also noted was a vaccine for MM that is in development at UAMS. There was also a discussion concerning issues of stem cell harvesting. Stem cell harvesting should be strongly considered, even for patients who do not plan to actually transplant, or are unsure if they will. Since the window of opportunity to harvest is never better than "early" – i.e. before bone marrow becomes compromised by various therapies; it is a very important consideration. While a stem cell transplant may not seem like a viable option for some now, it may become one later, and patients should consider ensuring that they are prepared and that the *option remains available*. Stem cells can be harvested early, and then frozen for later use as needed, even for mini-transplants, as some members have opted for as a boost. There was also some discussion regarding myelodysplastic syndrome (MDS) which can be a result of some of the MM treatments and is something to be aware of.

Submitted by Wendy