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Cancer Is a Medical and Mental Challenge

By Martin Toombs
Southern Tier Editor

Hornell — The public's perception of cancer, and the best way to deal with a person who has the disease, were the focus of discussion at a forum on the social, cultural and ethical aspects of cancer treatment at the St. James Mercy Hospital School of Nursing May 5.

A panel of two doctors, two clergymen, an RN, and two members of the local Make Today Count chapter addressed various issues in a two-hour program primarily attended by nurses and nursing students.



Focus on Disabled

A strong case was made by the speakers for telling cancer patients exactly what is wrong with them, and then providing sufficient information so they will understand the value and need for treatment.

Speaking in the forum were Drs. M. Al-Hussaini and Stoner Horey; Father Eugene Emo, St. James chaplain; Rev. David Salico of the Hornell

First Baptist Church; Barbara Bohomey, who specializes in cancer treatment at St. James; Eva Edwards, whose husband died of cancer; and Margaret Carey, a cancer patient.

Speakers told of situations when the diagnosis had been withheld from patients, and of the consequences.

Rev. Salico said that although some patients say they don't want to know, a lack of information becomes a barrier around the patients, causing a difficult situation for family, professionals and religious counselors.

Dr. Horey agreed, saying that the lack of communication "creates an insurmountable barrier" as such an important topic is avoided by everyone around the patient.

Mrs. Bohomey told of a patient being cared for by her daughter who had not been told she had cancer. The secrecy caused many problems, she said, and prevented them from dealing with their personal relationship. The daughter has had a difficult time dealing with her mother's death, she said.

Mrs. Edwards, whose husband died of cancer two years ago, confirmed the views of the professionals. She said that during the time before her husband's death, he "gave me the strength to go on," while she "gave him the strength to die."

Dr. Al-Hussaini pointed out



The panel for the program on cancer at the St. James Mercy Hospital School of Nursing are, from left, Dr. M. Al-Hussaini, Father Eugene Emo, Eva Edwards, Barbara Bohomey, Margaret Carey, Rev. David Salico and Dr. Stoner Horey.

the problems caused by society's view of death and of cancer. But while he expressed hope for less negative reactions to the disease, he also said that he knows of two doctors who committed suicide after discovering they had cancer.

The speakers also supported the hospice concept of care for the terminally ill. Dr. Horey stated that it is important for professionals not to abandon a patient whose treatment has failed.

Father Emo explained St. James' efforts to help cancer patients and their families, which includes work by his department, the hospital's oncology program, and the now-beginning hospice program. He expressed "great hopes for hospice," and said

that those not in the program also will benefit from the professionals' knowledge of hospice concepts.

Emphasizing the need for emotional support for the patient, Dr. Al-Hussaini noted that he has patients who are cured of cancer, but they act as though they are terminal. They are permanently affected by the fact that they had cancer. That problem is

complicated by the public's perception of cancer, he said.

Responding to a question, Dr. Horey called refusal to accept treatment another sign of society's unnecessarily fatalistic view of the disease. Refusal can be the right of a mentally competent person, he said, but it is a sign of failure on the part of health professionals to get the patient to understand the treatment offers; and chances for a cure.



Sister Susan Dunford, RSM, speaking at the Church Women United's May Fellowship Day at St. Anthony's, Elmira.

Speaker Criticizes Society's Attitude Toward Disabled

By Martin Toombs
Southern Tier Editor

Elmira — The word "handicapped" comes from the "cap-in-hand" with which, historically, such persons used to beg for their sustenance, Sister Susan Dunford, RSM, told the May Fellowship Day gathering of Church Women United at St. Anthony's Parish Center.

"We actually foster" dependency among the "handicapped," Sister Susan stated, and hold to the stereotypes about various disabilities. Some persons without disabilities feel relief when they see someone disabled, she said, glad that they don't have such difficulties.

A therapist in the Twin Tiers Rehabilitation Center at St. Joseph's Hospital, Sister Susan said that disabled persons should not be identified by their disability.

For example, a person is not a "Mongoloid," but a person with Down's Syndrome. Likewise a person is not a "retard," but a person who is retarded.

And people should not assume that when one disability exists, others do as well. "When one cannot talk,

we assume one cannot hear," she said.

And the disabled are exploited as well, she said, when they are seen as "cute," or used to elicit sympathetic responses. She criticized the appearance of disabled children on telethons, and the selling of products based on the fact that they were made by disabled persons.

She also stated that "society teaches us to taunt and to tease" the disabled; they are often victims of violence. She also pointed out that in movies, evil persons often are portrayed as being disfigured.

In this International Year of the Disabled Person, she is disappointed to see the impact the proposed federal budget cuts will have, especially reduced Medicaid coverage and nutrition programs. The loss of food stamps and the Women, Infants and Children nutrition program is "frightening," when the importance of nutrition for pregnant mothers and infants is considered, she said.

Sister Susan's talk came during the 40th anniversary celebration for Church Women United. About 100 women from many churches in Chemung County attended the luncheon, meeting and prayer service May 1.

Steuben Assembly Focuses on Vocations

Bath — A keynote address and four workshops on vocations, a follow-up to last December's evangelization program, and a sharing supper have been scheduled for the Steuben Region for 3:30 p.m., Sunday, May 17, at St. Mary's Parish.

Father Eugene Sweeney, St. Pius V, Cohocton, pastor, will deliver a keynote address titled "Nurturing Vocations in the Family and Parish Family" to begin the day's program.

Four workshops will follow. The first, offered by Joanne and George Martinec, will discuss the family and vocations. The second, titled "My Vocation and My Family," will be presented by Sister Mary Lu Mitchell and her mother, Kay Mitchell.

Raymond Defendorf, a candidate for the permanent diaconate, will discuss "What this Vocation Means to the Church and My Family." A seminar also will be conducting a session.

Following the workshops, there will be a follow-up to Father Alvin Illig's evangelization presentation which took place at a Steuben Regional meeting last December. Parishioners from St. Mary's, Bath; St. Patrick's,

Corning; and St. Ann's, Hornell, will share their experiences with evangelization efforts.

A sharing supper will follow, with participants asked to bring a dish to pass based on the first letter of their last name. A through J are asked to bring a salad or vegetable casserole; K through R, a main dish; and S through Z, a dessert.

The Steuben Regional Coordinator is Father Michael Hogan, St. Mary's, Corning, pastor. Heading up the planning committee for the event is Sister Agnes Catherine, pastoral assistant at St. Patrick's, Corning.

Officers Installed

Elmira — St. Mary's Rosary and Altar Society installed its new officers Tuesday, May 12, at a pass-a-dish supper in the Marian Center.

The new officers, installed by Father John Leary, are: Theresa Hourihan, president; Kathleen Fogarty, vice president; Mrs. Donald Burris, secretary; and Mrs. Fritz Clark, treasurer.



SISTER ELIZABETH ANNE



ROBERT AGAN

Two Named to Board

Elmira — Sister Elizabeth Anne LeValley and Robert E. Agan have been elected to the St. Joseph's Hospital Board of Directors.

Sister Elizabeth Anne is a member of the central administration of the Sisters of St. Joseph. Agan is executive vice president and chief operating officer of Hardinge Brothers, Inc., of Elmira.

Agan has been associated with Hardinge Brothers since 1956, and was appointed to his current position in 1978. He also is a director of Swift Glass, a member of the Notre Dame High School Board of Governors, and a director of the Chemung County Chamber of Commerce. He graduated from Notre Dame High School, attended Elmira College and is in the final stages of receiving a bachelors

degree from Binghamton State College. He and his wife, Sharon, have eight children and reside at 309 Holly Road, Elmira.

Sister Elizabeth Anne is a graduate of Nazareth College in Rochester, where she received her bachelors degree in English. She also has received a masters degree in theology from Notre Dame University.

She served for seven years in the Nazareth Academy Theology Department. She also is active in several congregational committees and commissions and is a member of the Diocesan Catholic Health Care Council.

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