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Kathy Clements

MidState can offer them,” she explains. “From my perspective, that includes straight talk, surgical dress rehearsals, post-surgical care, support group participation and complementary therapies, including Reiki.”

It’s critical that women be allowed to maintain their dignity during this process, Clements says. “Women don’t typically talk about their breasts, but breasts are an incredibly important part of our individual sexuality and who we are as women.

“When faced with the trauma of breast cancer, we need a safe place to share our feelings and anxieties. We also need someone besides our physicians who can offer additional perspective and respond to the dozens of questions and fears that arise out of the doctor’s office.”

When a breast cancer patient is facing procedures such as lumpectomy, mastectomy, radiation or chemotherapy, Clements walks them through each process, step by step, examining what happens, when and why. That’s where Vicki Victorious comes in – as an aide to demonstrate breast reconstruction techniques and solutions. Clements also explains follow-up steps such as breast prosthesis alternatives, clothing issues and how to deal with life after the procedure.

Often, she says, spouses, family members and children of patients need this information, so in addition

to providing educational materials and resources, MidState offers general breast cancer information workshops. But of even greater importance, she stresses, is the variety of support groups offered through the hospital for breast cancer patients and survivors, for their families and caregivers, and for general cancer patients.

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says Abbi Bruce, director of Cancer Care Services at MidState. “Talking with others who are sharing similar fears, experiences and anxieties is very helpful and cathartic for the patient and, separately, for the patient’s loved ones.

“We sponsor facilitated classes here and away from the hospital, and offer groups for English- and Spanish-speaking people,” Bruce adds.

“We serve as a focal point for self-directed groups and also try to steer our patients to useful web sites, exercise programs, American

Cancer Society programs and materials that are easy to understand, reliable and accessible.”

The fears associated with breast cancer may recede, but never disappear, reflects Clements. Often, patients are simply waiting for “the other shoe to fall,” or have questions about sexual relations with their partners, how to deal with their employers, financial planning, complementary therapies, stress management and more.

Says Clements, “We want patients to know they can find help or ask questions about anything on their minds, any time of day.” Patients, she adds, can seek her out on their own, are referred through their physicians, or are identified through MidState itself. She interacts with



these patients at their annual mammograms, during OB/GYN, radiology, oncology and lab visits and when they come to the hospital for regularly scheduled clinical breast exams.

“The most important thing is that you know you’re not alone in this,” Clements concludes – “at MidState, there will always be someone here to listen and to help.”



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