

MSHQ Oncologist Hosts Cancer Survivors Day

Engracio P. Cortes, M.D., an attending oncologist at Mount Sinai Hospital of Queens in Astoria, described what lured him to specialize in caring for cancer patients.

"Thirty years ago, when I was a medical resident at Lemuel Shattuck Hospital in Boston, I was drawn to the oncologists who seemed, by necessity, to be so well rounded. Cancer was a specialty that allowed you to treat the whole body," Cortes said.

Given the fact that there were only two chemotherapy drugs available in the 1970s, Cortes has witnessed an era that has seen a boon of promising drugs (more than 200 available now), expanded radiation and surgical treatments, and the promising dawn of genetic breakthroughs. "Oncology is a very dynamic specialty that changes year to year. You must keep up to date so you and your patients will not be left out," he said.

Cortes received his medical degree from Far Eastern University in Manila, The Philippines. Following his residency at Lemuel Shattuck Hospital, he completed a fellowship in oncology at Roswell Park Cancer Institute in Buffalo.

Cortes, who has been in solo practice since 1981, functions as the hub of the team that treats cancer patients. Sometimes he oversees treatment entirely on his own. Often he works in collaboration with surgeons or radiation oncologists. His patients include adults from all walks of life, in all age groups, and with a wide variety of cancers, including lung cancer, malignant lymphoma,



Engracio P. Cortes, M.D., an attending oncologist at Mount Sinai Hospital of Queens (r.), and his wife, Lilia Cortes, at National Cancer Survivors Day celebrations at Mount Sinai Hospital of Queens June 8.

colon cancer, and ovarian and breast cancer, among others.

"The most gratifying thing is to see how much longer cancer patients survive now," Cortes, who hosted a National Cancer Survivors Day celebration on June 8, said. "The different outlook for a patient being diagnosed with cancer today versus



(L. to r.) Lilia Cortes, Elena Parrotta, Dr. Cortes' nurse, and Dr. Engracio Cortes with cancer survivors at Mount Sinai Hospital of Queens National Cancer Survivors Day celebrations. (Photo left) Dr. Cortes and Caryn Schwab, Mount Sinai Hospital of Queens executive director.



even just 10 years ago, is amazing and hopeful." National Cancer Survivors Day is an annual, worldwide "celebration of life" that is held in hundreds of communities throughout the United States, Canada, and other participating countries. Participants unite in a symbolic event to show the world that life after a cancer diagnosis can be a reality.

In most areas, National Cancer Survivors Day is traditionally observed on or near the first

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