

REDEFINING CANCER CARE

“I have stage IV lung cancer,” says Colleen Ring. “When I received my diagnosis three years ago, the first doctors I consulted told me I had about seven months to live.”

Colleen quickly understood that the doctors she was consulting saw only her illness — not her, not her determination, not her spirit.

Colleen wanted to find a doctor who would help her live well through her journey with cancer and who would help her find the best treatment choices that advanced science and complementary approaches had to offer. Her search led her to board-certified oncologist Hema Rao, MD, of Vero Beach Hematology Oncology.

“Dr. Rao was the first doctor who told me her goal was to help me live a long life,” recalls Colleen. “When we met, I spoke with her for more than an hour. Her gentleness and understanding felt like home to me.”

That was more than two and a half years ago, and Colleen is still going strong.

Unique approach

“Cancer is not only about the physical illness that invades the body,” says Dr. Rao. “Cancer affects every part of a person’s life: the emotions, spirit, lifestyle, and relationships.”

Hema Rao, MD, is board certified in medical oncology and internal medicine. She completed residency training in internal medicine at the Ohio Valley Medical Center, Wheeling, WV, and went on to complete fellowship training in hematology and medical oncology at the Medical College of Georgia. He has been in practice since 1994.

Madhusudan Soni, PhD, FACN, received his postdoctoral training at University of Mississippi Medical Center, Jackson and Jichi Medical School, Japan.

Vero Beach Hematology Oncology

Hema Rao, MD

Madhusudan G. Soni, PhD, FACN

“When a patient comes to our office, they need a doctor and staff who are loving, caring and competent — who live up to the highest standards of meticulous and ethical treatment. We use the most sophisticated standards of medical care and the most effective and nurturing complementary approaches available to help our patients live well as we seek their best outcomes. We also counsel our patients and help them connect with all the community resources

that can help them deal with their illness and support their highest quality of life.

“We do not simply treat a cancer patient,” emphasizes Dr. Rao. “We serve a whole, living, feeling person and that person’s family and circle of support. Everyone on our staff contributes to our multidisciplinary team, always with the patient and loved ones at our center and with his or her highest quality of life as our goal.”

Empowering the patient

“With Dr. Rao and her team I can do things to help my body fight my cancer,” says Colleen. “From the very beginning Dr. Rao encouraged me to take charge of my disease by continuing the massage therapy and vitamin and exercise regimens I’d already begun and introduced me to Chi-kung to help me relax and breathe more deeply to nourish the healthy cells in my body. I’m Catholic, and Dr. Rao supports my prayers, too. She referred me to a holistic MD who helped me balance my hormones. And she *hugs* me, as comfort and encouragement.

“Today, I feel like I’m in overall better shape than I was three years ago, and I preach this to the world: *If you have cancer, you need to come see Dr. Rao.*” **FHCN**—Billie S. Noakes



FHCN PHOTO BY NERISSA JOHNSON

Advancing excellence

Vero Beach Hematology Oncology is the first center in Vero Beach to actively participate in phase II and phase III clinical trials of breakthrough drugs that specifically target cancer cells. This is important because traditional chemotherapy is not selective: It destroys cancer cells, but it also damages healthy cells.

“As research provides us with important information about cancer at the molecular level, we are able to develop medicines that attack the very function of cancer cells, halting their growth, depriving them of nutrients, inducing apoptosis [natural death] of cancer cells, or unlocking their defenses, while leaving healthy cells essentially untouched,” observes Madhusudan Soni, PhD, FACN, the practice’s director of research.

“Participation in clinical trials of these breakthrough targeted therapy drugs or therapeutic vaccines to stimulate the immune system represents a significant commitment for a practice to make to its local community,” states Dr. Soni. “Having a research center within the practice means Dr. Rao’s patients do not have to travel to distant cities to participate in trials of promising new therapies. Her patients can receive these therapies several years before the medications are available to the general public.”

VERO BEACH HEMATOLOGY ONCOLOGY

Where knowledge and caring go hand in hand

981 37th Place • Vero Beach
(772) 299-4255 • www.vbho.com

Dr. Rao welcomes your calls and questions if you or a loved one is living with cancer.