



TRIPLER ARMY MEDICAL CENTER

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at (808) 433-5785 or TAMCPublicAffairsOffice@amedd.army.mil

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Oncology on Canvas helps patients reflect on their cancer journey

*by Jan Clark, Public Affairs Officer
Tripler Army Medical Center*

TRIPLER ARMY MEDICAL CENTER – Happen by Tripler’s 10th floor conference room when it has been transformed into an art studio for Oncology on Canvas – and you can’t walk away – the event, held May 7 and 8, just pulls you in, and when you do finally take your leave, you take with you a melancholy, but also a joy and hope.

The expressive arts program is one of many therapeutic methods the Tripler staff uses to give cancer patients the opportunity to reflect on their cancer journey. This year, over 100 patients, family members and friends joined Tripler nurses, social workers and psychologists and shared their experiences through art.

“As the only military treatment facility that has this program, we are proud to be in our fourth year, providing an alternative method for our patients to help deal with the many challenges they face,” said Dr. Pat Nishimoto, oncology clinical nurse.

Kayleigh Andres is one of those patients. The seven-year-old daughter of retired Navy Cmdr. Robert and Lisa Andres, Kayleigh was medevaced from Japan to Tripler in February. Her treatments are expected to last between two and two-and-half years.

“We expect to live here for the duration of Kayleigh’s treatment. My husband and I are both civil servants and are transferring jobs to remain in Hawaii. And Kayleigh is well enough to have started first grade about four weeks ago,” Andres said.

While Kayleigh hasn’t experienced any serious side effects, such as nausea, her life now revolves around her chemotherapy sessions, having blood drawn and taking medication.

“I don’t think she understands the gravity of cancer, which is good. I think that’s actually good that she doesn’t, you know- she takes it with a smile,” said Andres. “I, on the other hand, am an emotional person to begin with, so I think everything is new for me-- the whole process. But she is so brave--braver than I am, so I try.

“The hardest thing for me has been when you find out. You think the world basically is over and it’s a constant struggle for me to remind myself that it is not. While I’m not certain this leukemia

is curable, it can go into remission, so like before she was diagnosed, I just try to make sure she is happy. Being here today makes her happy, so we are here,” Andres said.

The ever-expanding program welcomed for the first time, Punahou Junior ROTC cadets, who volunteered their time to help with the event. Nishimoto’s excitement at their participation was evident.

“To have these young people come in and help out; well their presence is appreciated. They’ve added tremendously to this year’s event,” she said.

Within days of the event, Nishimoto was flying to San Diego to attend the National Oncology Nurses’ Society Congress. There she provided a presentation on how Tripler provides nursing care for its cancer patients.

Nishimoto and colleagues have submitted a research proposal for a study on how participants perceive using artwork to express their emotions. Already by the Scientific Research Committee it is now before the Human Use Committee for evaluation. If approved, a study will begin here this year.



As mom Lisa Andres looks on, seven-year-old oncology patient Kayleigh creates a masterpiece. Kayleigh was one of more than 100 participants in the Tripler Army Medical Center Oncology on Canvas event held May 7 and 8.



Patients, family members and Tripler staff came together May 7 for Oncology on Canvas. The fourth annual event brought in over 100 participants to share their cancer journey.



At center is Dr. Pat Nishimoto, oncology clinic nurse. Nishimoto, along with numerous Tripler staff came together with oncology patients and family members to experience Oncology on Canvas May 7 and 8.