

A Message From Our Chair

Dear community member,

Thank you for your support of another successful Sarcoma Cancer Awareness Week! Across Canada we saw engagement in our communities on the ground and online. Let's carry this momentum into the rest of the year! Thank you to all of you who shared your favourite resources with us during the week. The best advice is from all of YOU and sharing your tips, who you've reached out to and what has worked for you and your family is a great way to lighten the load for someone else. We encourage you to continue to share what's helping you throughout the year.

Please reach out to us if you're looking for support or to connect with someone else on their sarcoma journey. Sharing your story is also a fantastic way to connect with others across our community. We're grateful to be able to share Cheryl's story with you below which has inspired all of us. If you're interested in sharing your experience, please let us know.

Thank you all for your ongoing support of SCFC and of each other,

Diana Arajs
Founder & Chair
SCFC

Sarcoma Cancer Awareness Week Wrap Up

Thank you to all of our community members who participated in this year's Canadian Sarcoma Cancer Awareness Week. We want to take the opportunity to thank those who have, and continue to, show strength in the fight against sarcoma. In our last newsletter we asked you to share some of your favourite resources with us, in hopes of raising visibility for others! Your picks included:



- [Inspire.com Sarcoma Support and Discussion Community](https://www.inspire.com/groups/sarcomaconnect/) - Connects patients, families, friends and caregivers for support and inspiration. This group is specifically for those with a sarcoma diagnosis.
<https://www.inspire.com/groups/sarcomaconnect/>

- [Wellspring.ca Cancer Support](https://wellspring.ca/) - A network centre that provides emotional and psychological support free of charge to individuals and families living with cancer. Programs are offered across the country. <https://wellspring.ca/>
- [SmartPatients.com Sarcoma Community](https://www.smartpatients.com/communities/sarcoma) - An online community for sarcoma patients and their families. <https://www.smartpatients.com/communities/sarcoma>
- [The Canadian Cancer Trials Group](https://www.ctg.queensu.ca/) - A cooperative oncology group that designs and administers cancer clinical trials. Find them on social media @[CDNCancerTrials](https://www.ctg.queensu.ca/) <https://www.ctg.queensu.ca/>

As we move through the summer we encourage you to explore the variety of ways that you can make a difference in your communities and across the country. Continue to share the support and resources that have made a difference to you, or simply spread the word about sarcoma on social media. And don't forget to tag us by using hashtags [#littlethingsaddup](#) and [#knowsarcoma](#).

Navigating the Fear and Emotional Aftermath of Cancer



In May, the Canadian International Sarcoma Symposium (CISS) welcomed speakers covering a variety of topics. One of these special guests was Dr. Aliza Panjwani, a Clinical Health Psychologist and Clinician-Scientist in the Department of Supportive Care at the Princess Margaret Cancer Centre. She works with people of all ages and a range of cancer diagnoses, helping to navigate the emotional challenges that come with diagnosis, treatment and survivorship. Her research is directly shaped by the conversations she has with patients in her clinical practice and focuses on issues like fear of recurrence, fertility distress, and the emotional aftermath of cancer.

In this newsletter, Dr. Panjwani provides some helpful insight into what fear is, how to acknowledge it, and coping strategies to mitigate and manage its interference in your life.

"Q. What is fear of recurrence?"

A. Fear of recurrence, often called FoR, is the worry that cancer might come back. It's something many people feel after finishing treatment or even during long-term monitoring. This fear can show up in small moments, like waiting for scan results or more broadly when thinking about the future.

It's completely understandable to feel this way. After everything you've been through, your sense of safety may feel shaken, and when the future feels uncertain, fear is a natural, human response.

Some people experience what's called fear of progression, which is the worry that the cancer might worsen or spread. Whether it's recurrence or progression, these fears are very real, and you're not alone in facing them.

Q. How common is FoR?

A. FoR is actually more common than one might think. Studies show that up to 95% of people who've had cancer experience some level of worry that it might come back. That's nearly everyone.

For many, the fear is occasional and manageable. But for about 1 in 2 people, the fear is moderate, and for others, including many living with sarcoma, the fear can feel severe, intense and harder to shake.

Up to 45% of sarcoma patients report FoR in the severe range, meaning it's persistent and disruptive to their daily life. And almost 70% of people with sarcoma say they would like help managing this fear.

It is important to remember that caregivers and family members may experience FoR too, even if it presents differently. They may also worry about the cancer coming back and often feel powerless to help their loved one, which can be a difficult combination. The strategies discussed below can generally be applied by patients and family members.

Q. How do I figure out whether my FoR needs more attention or support?

A. One way to start thinking about how to manage your fear is by asking two questions:

- *How often is the fear showing up?*
- *How much is it getting in the way of what matters to me?*

Is the fear pulling you away from the things or people in your life that you care about? Is it making it hard to focus, sleep, or feel like yourself?

This can be helpful in figuring out what kind of support or tools might be most useful for you.

If your fear mostly shows up as “**scanxiety**”, that spike of worry leading up to a scan or appointment, but tends to ease up once you get your results, then you may need some targeted tools rather than ongoing support.

For example, in the lead-up to a scan, focus on activities that anchor you (**the 3p's**): things, activities, or people that bring a sense of **p**ease, **p**roductivity, or **p**leasant sensations. These can be small things, such as taking a peaceful walk, doing a breathing practice, enjoying a favourite meal, or spending time with someone who makes you feel safe or helps take your mind off things. When appropriate, I also often encourage doing something like this after scans or appointments to help your nervous system settle and refocus your attention on living in the present.

Q. What if my fear isn't occasional but shows up more frequently and often pulls me away from the things and people I care about?

A. There is no one way to manage FoR, nor will every coping strategy work for everyone or all the time. But there are a few things you can try:

- **Acknowledge it.** It's completely human to want to push fear away. But the truth is, if the fear is already pulling you away from things within your control that matter to you, then it's already shaping your life and ignoring it isn't working.

When fear shows up, our mind often latches onto a thought. The thought often feels like a fact, generating a strong stress response.

"My cancer will come back."

"I can't trust my body."

- **Practicing naming these thoughts is one way to interrupt that spiral.**

Saying, *'I'm having the thought that...'* or *'I'm noticing that I'm having the thought that...'* helps you take a small step back, not to push fear away, but to see it more clearly. You could also name the 'story' your mind is telling you. For example, when that familiar wave of fear shows up, you might gently say to yourself, "Ah, I know this one. It's the *'what if the cancer is back'* story."

The goal of *name it to tame it* is not to change the thought or to suddenly stop feeling afraid. After all, when has the phrase "just don't worry" ever actually worked?! This is about shifting your relationship to the fear: *You are not your fear.*

The purpose of this is to create just enough distance to breathe, to ground, and respond with care rather than reactivity, creating space between you and the fear itself. You start to see it as something you're feeling, not something you are. That shift can help you respond with more clarity and stay connected to what matters, even in the presence of fear. It's a small shift but can be a powerful one. And like anything meaningful, it takes practice.

- **Regulating the sympathetic nervous system (or our body's stress response)**

Sometimes, when our thoughts are racing, it can be hard to calm the mind directly. In those moments, it can be helpful to start with the body by lowering physiological arousal instead. There are many breathing techniques you can practice. Here's one you can try that has scientific backing (*Balban et al., 2023, Cell Reports Medicine*).

Grounding through the Breath: Double Inhale; Long Exhale

1. Inhale deeply: Take a deep breath in through your nose, filling your lungs with air. Allow your diaphragm to expand as you breathe in. Do not exhale.
2. Inhale again: Take a second breath. This one will be shorter, and your diaphragm won't expand as much.
3. Exhale: Release the air through your mouth.
4. Repeat (doing this for as little as 1-3 minutes can have a calming effect, and you may of course do it for longer).

- **Practicing letting fear ride in the passenger seat instead of letting it take the wheel or keeping you from heading toward what matters.**

You may have noticed I haven't said, "Here's how to make your fear go away." That's because fear is a natural response to something as life-altering as cancer.

It often returns during moments of uncertainty. It is important to work toward allowing and accepting that.

Instead of focusing your efforts on getting rid of fear, see if you can take a small step toward what matters to you, even with fear alongside you. This is something you can explore more deeply with a therapist, but it starts with one question: *What's one small step I can take today that reflects what matters to me, even if fear is present?* It doesn't have to be big. It just has to be yours.

You can consider different areas of your life. Relationships could mean reaching out to someone you care about or sharing uninterrupted time with a loved one. Peace, pleasure, or productivity might look like finishing a small project, trying a new recipe, or listening to music that soothes you. Meaning might come from reconnecting with something that reminds you who you are beyond cancer, a photo, a memory, or a reflective question like, "What do I want to carry forward from this chapter?" **Emotional well-being** could mean saying no to something (or someone!) that drains you, resting without guilt, doing a short meditation, or sharing that you're struggling with someone who cares.

Think back to a recent moment when fear showed up and took over the wheel. What did it push you to avoid or do that wasn't aligned with your values? What might you have done differently if you were guided by what matters most instead of fear?

- **Don't wait to ask for help until things feel unbearable.**

You wouldn't wait until a wound is fully infected to seek medical care, so why wait until you're emotionally overwhelmed to ask for support? Your mental health deserves attention and care. If you're struggling, let your medical team know. They can help connect you with support, whether that's one-on-one therapy, a support group, or other resources."

Whether you're a patient or a caregiver, we encourage you to utilize available resources in your community, whether local or online. A great place to start is our website, which offers both support guides and links to support groups and counselling services.

[Visit our Website](#)

Patient Profile: Cheryl Soldaat



"My name is Cheryl and I was diagnosed with Ewing's Sarcoma in 2022. Often our stories begin at diagnosis, but mine began a few years earlier. I am a physiotherapist and through my work I have learned that life and health are not to be taken for granted.

One evening my husband and I (and a bottle of tequila!) decided we should make the most out of life and we made a big decision: we were going to go and sail the world. Fast forward to 2018 and we had sold our home, most of our belongings and had set sail, pointing south towards the Caribbean. Life was at its peak!

We were living on a boat, travelling from country to country, and having an adventure of a lifetime, which turned out to be much more adventurous than we had anticipated! Covid hit while we were down there, and turned us into "honorary" residents of Grenada where we were now living out the pandemic. Grenada ended up being a wonderful place to "get stuck in" though, and we felt lucky every day for the opportunity to get to know locals and visit stunning places without tourists. However, restrictions eventually lifted and we (and our bank account) made the decision it was finally time to begin our long journey home back to Canada.

We left Grenada in September of 2021 and made it to Guadeloupe by Christmas, however this was a struggle due to back pain I was experiencing. Now as I mentioned, I am a physiotherapist, and a decent one I thought, but this back pain was relentless. Nothing I did, nor taught my husband to do, could get control of the pain. I even considered teaching him acupuncture while floating on a boat, in a foreign country, I was that desperate! Guadeloupe, unfortunately, was dealing with conflict and riots within their medical system, so between that and the fact that we didn't speak French, we knew this was not the place to get help.

It's funny, but there was something in my gut that told me I had one move left in me. I could either sail to north to Antigua or fly home to Canada. I was all set to sail to Antigua when my husband said "no, Cheryl, you should fly home to Canada". Well, spoiler alert, he was right! I flew home on New Years Eve and within 2 weeks of landing my back pain progressed into numbness from my armpits down. It took only about 2 hours in the Emergency Department before I was in an MRI machine and they found a tumour on my spine which had begun to press against my spinal cord. As we know, sarcomas can be aggressive, and over the course of 10 days as I waited for my biopsy results, my numbness progressed into partial paralysis. By the time I met my wonderful oncologist, I needed a wheelchair to get to my first round of emergency chemotherapy.

To this day, I still reflect on how differently things could have turned out. If I'd been in the wrong country and the pandemic was at its peak and flights home were unavailable, I truly believe I would not be here today writing this story. As we know, cancer treatment sucks. But throughout my treatment I couldn't shake the immense amount of gratitude I felt. Gratitude for the

healthcare available to us in Canada and the amazing healthcare team I was set up with at Princess Margaret Hospital. I was also grateful for the years I had in the Caribbean, unbeknownst of what was coming. And gratitude for our support network. Not only did our friends and family help us remake a home here in Canada, but they also helped us rescue our boat, which we had abandoned in the Caribbean when we got my diagnosis.

I am incredibly proud to share that I am writing this story to you from my boat! Through the hard work of many healthcare professionals and myself, I have made a full recovery. I've been in remission for two years and am not only walking again but also sailing once more. There were so many times when I was in the thick of chemo, radiation and spinal cord recovery where I couldn't see this life for myself again, so I am here to share that it is possible. It's not exactly the same as what it was, but nor should it. I believe that life moves forwards, and our story builds as we go."

[Read Cheryl's Full Story on Our Website](#)

Celebrate Your Summer Sweet Tooth with These Easy and Healthy Desserts!



Fresh Peach Cake

Ingredients:

- 1 and 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/4 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 cup oil (olive oil, vegetable oil, or melted coconut oil)
- 2/3 cup granulated sugar, plus 1 tablespoon for the peaches
- 2 large eggs, at room temperature



Key Lime Pie Bars

Ingredients:

Crust

- 12 full-sheet graham crackers (1 1/2 cups graham cracker crumbs)
- 6 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
- 1/4 cup granulated sugar

Filling

- 4 ounces full-fat brick cream cheese, softened to room temperature

- 3/4 cup plain Greek yogurt, at room temperature
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 1/2 teaspoon almond extract
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon lemon zest
- 2 cups sliced fresh peaches (peeled or unpeeled, about 3 peaches)
- optional: 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- optional: confectioners' sugar for topping

Directions:

In a large bowl, whisk the flour, baking powder, baking soda, and salt together until combined. Set aside.

In a medium bowl, whisk the oil, 2/3 cup sugar, eggs, yogurt, vanilla and almond extracts, lemon juice, and lemon zest together until combined. Pour wet ingredients into the dry and whisk until combined. Batter is creamy and slightly thick.

In a medium bowl, toss the peach slices with 1 tablespoon of sugar to coat. Divide in half, moving half of the peaches to another bowl. Add cinnamon to one half of the peaches and gently stir to coat. The cinnamon is optional.

Pour and spread half the batter into the prepared pan. Place the cinnamon-sugared peaches in an even layer on top. Spread the remaining batter on top of the cinnamon peach layer. Place remaining sugared peaches on top.

Bake for 50–55 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted in the center of the cake comes out clean. Around the 30-minute mark, loosely tent with aluminum foil to prevent over-browning.

- 4 large egg yolks
- 14-ounce can of sweetened condensed milk
- 1/2 cup key lime juice
- 2 teaspoons lime zest
- optional for garnish: whipped cream and lime slices

Directions:

Preheat oven to 350°F. Line a 9-inch square baking pan with parchment paper, leaving an overhang on the sides to easily lift the bars out of the pan. Set aside.

Make the crust: If you're starting out with full graham crackers, use a food processor or blender to grind them into fine crumbs. Stir cracker crumbs and sugar together in a medium bowl, and then stir in the melted butter. Press into the bottom of the lined pan.

Bake the crust for 10 minutes. Cool for a few minutes as you prepare the filling.

Make the filling: Using a handheld or stand mixer fitted with a paddle or whisk attachment, beat the cream cheese on medium-high speed until smooth, about 1 minute. Beat in the egg yolks. Beat in the sweetened condensed milk, key lime juice, and lime zest until combined. After mixing the filling with your mixer, give it a final whisk by hand to make sure there are no cream cheese lumps at the bottom of the bowl. Pour/spoon filling evenly onto the warm crust.

Bake for about 18-20 minutes, or until the edges of the bars appear set and the center is only *slightly* jiggly.

Remove the cake from the oven and set the pan on a wire rack. Allow to cool for at least 30 minutes before slicing, or cool completely. Dust with confectioners' sugar, if desired, before serving.

[View Full Recipe](#)

Remove from the oven and allow to cool for 30 minutes at room temperature on a wire rack and then chill in the refrigerator for at least 2-3 hours.

Lift the parchment paper out of the pan and cut into squares. Feel free to garnish with whipped cream, lime slices, and/or extra lime zest.

[View Full Recipe](#)

Help Make an Impact

When you give to SCFC you add your voice to the growing community working to raise awareness, fund crucial research, and ultimately eradicate sarcoma. One of the easiest ways to make your voice heard is to consider a single time donation, or setting up a small monthly donation. Every donation made, no matter how small, makes a big impact on the Canadians and their families going through a sarcoma diagnosis and treatment. **#littlethingsaddup**

[Donate Today](#)

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