

Relay for Life Cancer Awareness Fundraising Event

Guest Speaker

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Natural Sciences

Family members and/or friends of cancer patients, do everything in their power to help their loved ones who have cancer to become cancer free. I personally lost my nephew, Zion to cancer at the age of only four years. As a matter of fact, Zion's father my brother-Dr. Kosj Yamoah, has both his MD and PhD degrees in oncology-the study of cancer; and rightly so, he did everything in his power to try to save his son Zion from a rare and fast growing cancer known as Atypical Teratoid Thabdooid Tumor (ATRT). ATRT most often affects children age 3 or younger. After Zion passed on, the organization, Out-Of-Zion Incorporated was born. Out-Of-Zion has both a free creative arts program component and a research component known as Hope4ATRT. The creative art program is geared towards children with medical and special needs, to create a joyful and supportive environment for these children and

their families who are fighting similar medical battles; while the Hope4ATRT research entity of Out-Of-Zion Inc., is dedicated to support ATRT research and additionally, direct resources and available research to families in the fight.

I was called upon recently to share and speak at a Relay for Life Cancer Awareness event. The Relay for Life Cancer awareness fundraising event was begun by Dr. Gordon Klatt, who had successfully battled stomach cancer. In May 1985, Dr. Gordon Klatt walked and ran for 24 hours around a track, to raise money to help the American Cancer Society in their effort to fight cancer. His friends, family, and patients watched and supported him as he walked and ran, circling the track. He raised \$27,000 through pledges to help save lives from cancer. Dr. Klatt imagined having teams participate in walking tracks as an attempt to have a 24-hour fundraising event. The following year, several individuals were involved, forming teams who engaged in the first Relay For Life event, raising \$33,000.

I am also a member of the youth council board at Hastings on Hudson. One of the goals of the board among many others is to raise the preventative awareness consciously in our youth, who are our future generation and leaders. At Hastings on Hudson, the first Relay for Life event was organized where I was called upon as a speaker to share on preventative and curative measures associated with cancer. Some of those participating in the event together with me were Dr. Elizabeth Galletta, organizer and co-chair of the Youth Council Board; Nicola Armacost, Mayor of Hastings on-Hudson; Peter Swederski, the former Mayor; and Tracy Pyper, cancer survivor and the wife of Peter Swederski.

Frankly, the fight against cancer is everyone's fight and not only the individuals or families or friends affected by it. As a matter of fact, we all are constantly fighting off cancer in every single cell of our bodies, without being consciously aware of the process. Basically, cancer results from either internal and/or external environmental signals impacting our cells and causing the cells to deviate from their normal state into a cancerous state. Thus our loved ones who end up with cancer are subjected to what I call a cellular tug of war between the cancer cells and the normal cells housing their bodies; mind you, both of these cell categories – cancer cells and normal cells, are rightful inhabitants of the body, just that cancer cells are our normal cells that have lost their way. Relay for Life, Hope4ATRT, together with other cancer organizations are all advocating for the fight against cancer by increasing the awareness of both preventative and curative measures to help eradicate the signaling molecules of cancer, both in our foods and the environment.

What can we all do? For preventative measures, we should personally embrace and be the voice that will encourage policies and lifestyles, and support programs geared towards healthy choices and cleaner, toxic free, greener environment for ourselves our loved ones, and future generations. Furthermore we should get routine check ups to foster early detection and hence treatment.

For curative measures, we can support ongoing research that focuses on genomic based cancer research. This means that natural scientists study the cells in the patient's body that have become cancerous, by focusing on the underlying or controlling mechanisms going on within these body cells that are causing them to become cancerous. These mechanisms may differ from patient to patient and/or cancer type to cancer type. Medications are then designed to disrupt the signaling pathways within the body cells that may be causing the normal cells to become cancerous, and hopefully produce a regression that will switch the cancer cells back to normal cells. That way we reduce the current way of just focusing on the destruction of the cancer cells in the body via chemotherapy and radiation. We have to remember that cancer is just our very own normal cells that have "lost their way" meaning lost the normal way in which they operate biochemically, and/or metabolically, and/or physiologically, and have become cancerous. Genomic based treatment of cancer, utilizes a person's genes, proteins, and environment to prevent, diagnose, and treat cancer. In cancer, personalized medicine uses specific information about a person's tumor to help diagnose, plan treatment, find out how well treatment is working, or make a prognosis.

Current research on genomic based cancer treatment is underway globally. One such study conducted by Dr. Kosj Yamoah's research team, is the VANDAAM - Decipher study that focuses on prostate cancer. The study helps to determine the specificity of the genomic based bio-molecular impact in each cancer cell, from patient to patient.

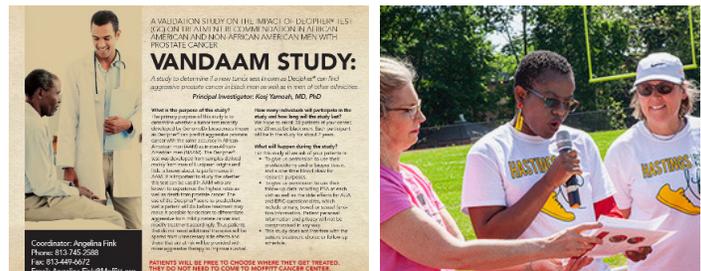
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BIOGRAPHICAL PROFILE

Dr. Damaris-Lois Yamoah Lang is a Behavioral Neuroscientist. Apart from having a doctoral degree in Biology, she attended medical school and in addition has two master degrees in Biology. Dr. Lang has over fifteen years of experience in higher education and is currently an Associate Professor at The City University Of New York – Hostos C.C. In addition to her faculty role, she serves as the program coordinator for both the Forensic Science/ Dual Degree and the Liberal Arts and Science A.S. Degree Programs, at Hostos; and CUNY-Wide. She is the Vice Executive Director and Awards Program Director for the CUNY Academy for Humanities and Sciences. Dr. Lang's research interests include exploring external inputs that influence the neuronal development of paternal care; and sensory pathways in learning.