

# Genetic Counseling for Cancer Risk: Knowledge Is Power

By Maude Blundell, M.S., CGC



Cancer is a fact of life for the more than 1.4 million people each year who are diagnosed with the disease and the physicians who diagnose it. Cancer remains one of the greatest challenges in medicine, with a myriad of possible causes, including environmental exposure, lifestyle and diet. It also weighs on our economy — cancer treatment costs in the U.S. totaled an estimated \$219.2 billion in 2007.

One of the most exciting and promising areas of research in the identification and possible prevention of certain cancers is cancer genetics. An estimated 5-10% of cancer cases occur in

individuals who have a genetic predisposition to the disease.

## SSCC NOW OFFERS GENETIC COUNSELING

To help patients learn all they can about cancer risk, the Sutter Solano Cancer Center (SSCC) now offers an educational program about genetics as a risk factor. SSCC provides genetic counseling, risk assessment, screening recommendations and, when appropriate, genetic testing. There's a great need for these services in the North Bay, and the SSCC is keeping pace with technology and the ever-changing field of genetics by offering cancer

risk genetic counseling to its patients.

Genetic counselors aim to:

- determine the likelihood that cancer in a family is inherited
- discuss options for early identification and risk reduction
- provide information about the benefits, risks and limitations of genetic testing
- coordinate the testing process and accurately interpret the results
- give referrals for appropriate research studies

Advances in genetics have made improvements in prevention, diagnosis and treatment possible. For people with

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