

## CONTENTS

# Finding Support

BY KATHY LATOUR

Every Tuesday at noon, a group of women with metastatic breast cancer gather to find support. But instead of the usual circle of chairs, these women gather by phone from their homes in Missouri, California, New York, Maryland, and Florida.

For nine years social worker Jane Levy has facilitated the group at noon Eastern time as director of Patient Assistance Programs at CancerCare. The eight or so women who call in to the phone group talk at no charge for an hour with others facing the same issues. Levy says the women get to be very close, often talking other times during the week.

“The nice thing with a phone group is that it is portable. You can follow the women as they go on vacation or even to the hospital,” says Levy. The phone group provides anonymity for women who want it, support for rural women who don’t have services close by, or support for women too ill for a face-to-face group. The women set the tone and bring up the issues, Levy says, and it’s the other women who give them advice.

“There is great variation on how they are doing physically, and they all have treatment decisions. They really need to share about that.” They share information about treatment and symptom relief, communicating with their physicians, coping with anxiety and depression, and their triumphs. The calls are not depressing, Levy says. They can be sad, but members find great hope and inspiration from each other.

Individuals who need help coping with metastatic breast cancer can find support in a number of ways, some of which are listed here.

- > Call your local cancer center to see if it offers support programs or can recommend an external organization, such as [The Wellness Community](#) or [Gilda’s Club](#).
- > Register for the [CancerCare](#) telephone support group by calling 800-813-4673. CancerCare also offers individual counseling and phone groups for caregivers.
- > [Metastatic Breast Cancer Network](#) has information on the group’s annual conference, including slides and audio presentations from the 2007 meeting at M.D. Anderson Cancer Center.
- > The Wellness Community has a discussion board for those affected by advanced breast cancer. To join, register at [virtual.thewellnesscommunity.org](http://virtual.thewellnesscommunity.org). A short phone interview with a staff member and submission of a diagnosis confirmation form ensures you are interacting with people who have been screened. (You can read the posts without joining.) The Wellness Community also

holds a weekly live 90-minute metastatic support group chat led by a trained professional for up to 10 participants.

- > The [Young Survival Coalition](#) offers a free DVD called The Beautiful Eight, which focuses on the issues of eight young women with metastatic breast cancer.
- > Infinite Boundaries retreat for women with metastatic breast cancer is offered by the [Breast Cancer Recovery Foundation](#).
- > Choose from a number of topics to read posts or ask your own questions at [Metastatic Breast Cancer Information and Support](#).
- > Join [Club-Mets-BC](#), a listserv provided by the Association of Online Cancer Resources that functions as a metastatic breast cancer online support group.
- > Women with metastatic breast cancer that has spread to the brain can find information and personal stories from women with brain metastases at [www.brainmetsbc.org](http://www.brainmetsbc.org)