

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

**Friday, February 1, 2013**

### **Patient Navigation Plays Integral Role in Cancer Journey**

London, ON – On World Cancer Day, Monday, February 4, Sue Stein will be attending a conference in Toronto with colleagues who share her passion and dedication to improving the cancer journey for lung cancer patients. Stein is a nurse navigator – a relatively new role at the London Health Sciences Centre and South West Regional Cancer Program. The role of the nurse navigator was introduced to support patients through their cancer journey from suspicion of cancer, to diagnosis, treatment, surgery – and all testing in between.

Navigating the cancer system can be a long, confusing process that causes stress and anxiety for many patients. The nurse navigator helps to alleviate those fears and empowers patients to make informed decisions regarding their care. Debbie Lefebre is a lung cancer patient from London who was referred to Stein upon suspicion of cancer. “Hearing the doctor tell you that you have cancer is like becoming Alice and stepping through the looking glass,” explains Lefebre. “Everything is upended, suddenly frightening and overwhelming.” Stein helped Lefebre to manage and coordinate months of tests, explained procedures, reviewed options, and most of all, was there to support and advocate on Lefebre’s behalf.

Over the past year and a half, Stein has helped over 580 lung cancer patients from London and the region through the system. As the only patient navigator in the thoracic program, Stein works tirelessly to ensure her patients receive the best possible care. “I feel privileged to meet such inspiring people and be a part of truly unique stories,” says Stein. “It’s like becoming an extension of their family... you get pretty attached.” Stein is available to patients 24/7 and often keeps in touch after their hospital stay and recovery.

A unique aspect of the program in London is the important relationships that have been developed with hospitals throughout the region. It is through these established partnerships that Stein is able to coordinate diagnostic imaging tests for her patients in their own community hospitals. Cancer care delivered close to home reduces travel time for patients and allows them to navigate their journey with family and friends nearby for support.

(more)

Stein is hopeful that the nurse navigator role will be expanded to include other disease sites in the future as preliminary studies have proven that nurse navigator programs do, in fact, improve patient outcomes in cancer care. “The role that Stein fills is truly invaluable for patients,” concludes Lefebre. “She was my safety net – there to ensure I didn’t plunge into panic or fall between the cracks.”

**Sue Stein and Debbie Lefebre are only available for interviews on Friday, February 1.**

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**South West Regional Cancer Program** oversees the delivery and quality of cancer services for the counties of Grey, Bruce, Huron, Perth, Middlesex, Oxford, Elgin, and part of Norfolk. It is one of 13 Regional Cancer Programs created by Cancer Care Ontario in 2005 to ensure cancer care is delivered according to province-wide quality standards. For more information visit [www.southwestcancer.ca](http://www.southwestcancer.ca)

**London Health Sciences Centre** has been in the forefront of medicine in Canada for 137 years and offers the broadest range of specialized clinical services in Ontario. Building on the traditions of its founding hospitals to provide compassionate care in an academic teaching setting, London Health Sciences Centre is home to Children’s Hospital, South Street Hospital, University Hospital, Victoria Hospital, two family medical centres, and two research institutes – Children’s Health Research Institute and Lawson Health Research Institute, a joint research initiative with St. Joseph’s Health Care London. As a leader in medical discovery and health research, London Health Sciences Centre has a history of over 50 international and national firsts and attracts top clinicians and researchers from around the world. As a regional referral centre, London Health Sciences Centre cares for the most medically complex patients including critically injured adults and children in southwestern Ontario and beyond. The hospital’s nearly 15,000 staff, physicians, students and volunteers provide care for more than one million patient visits a year. For more information visit [www.lhsc.on.ca](http://www.lhsc.on.ca)

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