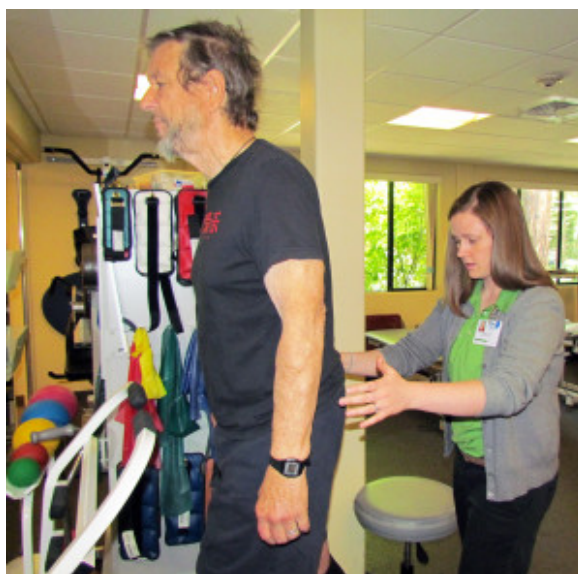


Cancer program focuses on exercise, nutrition

By Angela Moniot

Since 2009, South Lake Tahoe resident Rick Robinson has been battling cancer. He traveled more than an hour to Truckee for chemotherapy, and 45 minutes down the hill to Carson City for radiation treatments.

While being treated in Truckee, Robinson learned of Tahoe Forest's cancer wellness program that focused on exercise, yoga, and nutrition. Seeing the program's benefits, Robinson knew a similar program would benefit cancer patients on the South Shore.



Physical therapist Kelly Skelly assesses Rick Robinson's balance. Photo/Provided

Robinson was inspired to partner with Barton Health's director of Rehabilitation & Sports Medicine, Alan Barichievich, to help create Barton's Cancer Wellness Program.

As Robinson puts it, "I was a guinea pig of sorts," as he helped pioneer the program now available to cancer patients in South Lake Tahoe.

Funded by the Barton Foundation, the free program is designed to help community members undergoing, or who have undergone, cancer treatment. Patients reach an improved state of wellness through guided exercise, yoga, meditation, and nutrition.

"When you are undergoing treatment, there are times when it is very difficult to motivate yourself to get up and move," Robinson explains. "That is why having this program is so fantastic. I know that it has kept me stronger and has helped fight my battle better."

Today, Robinson continues to ride his bike, take occasional hikes, and enjoy life to the fullest.

Kelly Skelly, a physical therapist with Barton Rehabilitation & Sports Medicine, leads the "Exercise for Energy" classes – a series of supervised exercise classes that incorporate strength training, stretching, breathing, balance, cardio, and wellness education.

"Exercise has been shown to improve not only a person's ability to complete activities of daily living, but it also can help with decreasing pain and cancer-related fatigue," Skelly explains. "I try to make the exercise class fun and as individualized to a person's goals as possible."

In addition to exercise, the program includes free yoga classes. Health benefits from yoga include relaxation and stress reduction. Yoga also helps improve the quality of life.

"Yoga provides a peace of mind and a way of helping you to relax versus the more physical aspects of the exercise for energy program," Robinson states.

The program also offers free nutrition classes, which include

nutritional advice, cooking tips, and recipes. Led by Barton Health's registered dietitians, patients learn how a healthy, well-balanced diet plays a key role in overall health during cancer treatments, throughout recovery, and into long-term survivorship.

A physician referral is required to participate in Barton's Cancer Wellness Program. As with any wellness program, it is important to consult your physician to determine if the program is right for you. If you experience abnormal symptoms associated with the program, please discontinue the wellness program and contact your physician immediately.

Interested in the Cancer Wellness Program? Call 530.543.5896 or go online.

Angela Moniot is Barton Health's marketing specialist.