

Woman takes personal stake in halting obscure form of disease

78-year-old took up cause after husband died

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Marie Murray holds up a picture of her late husband, Maurice "Murph" Murray, who died in 2001 of the rare disease carcinoid cancer. Murray is selling black and white bracelets that say carcinoid cancer (like the one on her wrist) in order to raise awareness of the illness. E-G photo by Ken Ritchie

LANCASTER - A local woman is leading the fight to raise awareness of a certain type of cancer.

Seventy-eight-year-old Marie Murray has been as far as California to inform people about carcinoid cancer. She said part of the reason many people don't know about the illness is that some doctors don't even know about carcinoid cancer.

"Some doctors have never seen it," she said. "I have a cousin who was a doctor for 45 years, and he never saw one case of it."

Carcinoid cancer is a slow-growing cancer. The tumors can sometimes take up to 10 years or more before they reach two centimeters. The cancer often begins in the person's intestines or bowels. The tumor is sometimes detected when a person goes to the doctor for another health issue.

Her husband, Maurice "Murph" Murray, died of carcinoid cancer in November 2001. He lived with the disease for at least six years after he was diagnosed in 1995. A 5-pound tumor removed from Murph's liver. Doctors also removed one-third of his liver.

Murray said she and her husband were told several times there were no treatments available for carcinoid cancer. But research shows if the cancer is totally removed, the person can be cured, according to www.carcinoid.org.

That's why Marie is trying to raise awareness about carcinoid cancer. She is selling bracelets to help educate people about carcinoid cancer. She also has a limited supply of stuffed animal zebras and T-shirts to sell.

Murray is looking for a vendor who will let her sell the items in a store. So for now, people can come to her house, at 234 Kanawha Road, and purchase the items. Murray said people also can call her home to order the items.

She wants to sell about 1,000 wristbands. She's sold about 175 to date. All proceeds from any item sold will go to raising awareness about carcinoid cancer and medical research, Murray said.

What is carcinoid cancer?

- Carcinoid cancer is a slow-growing cancer.
- The person can be cured if the cancer is totally removed.

Where to buy bracelets:

- Stop by Marie Murray's home, at 234 Kanawha Road, Lancaster, to purchase bracelets. The bracelets are \$2 each. For more information, call Murray at 740-654-0429.

More information:

- The Carcinoid Cancer Foundation Inc. accepts tax-deductible contributions to its fund. The address is 333 Mamaroneck Ave., 492 White Plains, New York 10605.

The toll-free telephone number is 888-722-3132.

On the Net:

- www.carcinoid.org

There are about 8,500 new cases of the disease every year. Murray said she learned - through her church - of two other people in the area with carcinoid cancer. She has yet to meet the people. Dr. Kanwaljit Singh, an oncologist affiliated with Fairfield Medical Center, said the disease is rare and the causes of carcinoid cancer are unknown.

He said it can spread to the liver, and cause difficulty breathing, a skin rash or diarrhea. Those symptoms are known as carcinoid syndrome and generally mean the disease has spread, said Singh.

"In the early stages there are no symptoms," he said. "It causes symptoms such as bowel obstruction or bleeding in the stool."

Murray laughs nowadays when she talks about the dealing with doctors who didn't know much about the disease. She said her husband would laugh about it, too.

"It's not going to do you any good to be upset about it," she said. "That was his feeling, too. It happens."

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