

# ATLANTA AREA MULTIPLE MYELOMA SUPPORT GROUP, INC.

## Meeting Minutes Northside Virtual AAMM Support Group Meeting Minutes

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### Business and News

**Southside group** welcomed back Dr. Jennifer Rooke, MD, MPH, FACOEM, FACPM from Morehouse School of Medicine to present *Achieving Optimal Health through a Plant-based Diet*. Thank you “**For Men Only**” **Group** for suggesting the nutrition topic and to **Ted** for requesting that we extend the invitation to Dr. Rooke.

### New Patient Introductions

The meeting opened with a moment of silence led by **Doris** followed by introductions of five new members who have been looking for a Myeloma Support Group. Welcome to our new members and we look forward to hearing more about their journeys during future meetings. **Caryn W.** was diagnosed in June 2022 and is being seen at Emory by *Dr. Kaufman* and his team. She started on Revlimid-Velcade-Dexamethasone (RVd) regimen but does not yet know her disease. Caryn has completed 4 rounds of RVd. The first 2 rounds were a ‘breeze’, but the third round was a challenge. Caryn does not have the support at home due to a recent separation but is powering through. **Gail V.** was diagnosed in 2017 with an aggressive type of myeloma, t(11;14). She had a Stem Cell Transplant (SCT) in 2018. Gail is on Dara-Pomalyst-Dex (DPd). The dosage of Pom was reduced because of signs of neuropathy. *Dr. Lonial* at Emory Winship is leading her medical team. **Anita J.** was diagnosed with high-risk myeloma in February 2021. Her symptoms started September 2020 in the leg femur. She is being seen at Piedmont for healthcare. Anita’s initial symptoms included very dark urine and jaundice during a primary care appointment. Testing found tumors on many organs in her abdomen, pancreas, and on her thigh. Anita was referred to *Northside Hospital* for myeloma treatment and SCT because Piedmont does not perform them. After further research, her daughter and stepdaughter determined Emory was a better option. *Dr. Nooka* is her Hema-oncologist at *Emory Winship*. Anita had a successful SCT in July 2021 and is on a maintenance program of Kyprolis-Pomalyst-Dex (KPd). She has recently experienced low fatigue and shortness of breath. It is unlikely to be caused by the Pom or Carfilzomib, but rather by an iron supplement. Anita has been attending an *African American Cancer Support Group at Emory*, but she was the only one with myeloma. Her daughter found the Southside Support Group. **Flora D.** was diagnosed in 2019 at Northside Hospital. She received a second opinion from Emory, where she was diagnosed with Smoldering Myeloma (SMM). In March 2020, Flora’s cancer progressed to have active Myeloma (MM), but she also had a cough and was positive for COVID-19. Flora began therapy for myeloma in April, harvesting her cells soon after. She had a SCT in December 2020 and was readmitted due to high fevers and other complications. She has been on maintenance since April 2021, taking Ixazomib (Ninlaro) and Dex. *Dr. Nooka* is her Hema-oncologist. **Monica**

D. was diagnosed in December 2021 at *Tanner Hospital* in Carrollton, GA. She had a SCT in May 2022 and is doing well. Monica is being treated by *Dr. Hoffmeister* at Emory Winship in partnership with Dr. Cue at Tanner. She had started on a plant-based diet some time ago and had lost 85 pounds. She feels this helped her to do as well as she has with her myeloma therapy. All diagnoses are patient specific with different onset symptoms, complications, and approaches to treatment as well as varying levels of support systems at home and medical insurance. Our September meeting will focus on patient and caregiver concerns, shared experiences, and tips for resolving issues.

### **Speaker Presentation: Moving towards a Whole Plant-based Diet: What can I eat?**

Dr. Rooke emphasized the importance of a whole-food, plant-based diet for additional support with cancer regimens to achieve optimal health outcomes. She started the discussion by defining plant-based nutrition, along with its similarities and differences to other diets. Many people choose a “carnism” based diet, eating meat from chicken, cow, and pig but that does not make them carnivores which hunt or scavenge animals for their food source. Vegan and vegetarian lifestyles are more an ideology than an evidence-based science way of eating in support of one’s relationship of not wanting to kill animals. Although Oreo cookies are acceptable in vegetarian or even vegan diets it is **not** whole-food plant-based eating.

Dr. Rooke began her presentation with a brief review of what cancer is to provide a foundation for the role a whole plant-based diet plays in reducing cancer risk and achieving optimal health. Cancer occurs when cells in the body divide uncontrollably versus a normal organized cell division. Contributing factors for this out-of-control cell growth can include cigarette smoke, grilled meats, radiation, and viruses. About 5% of damaged cells might be inherited. The lifetime cancer risk is 45% for women and 40% for men.

The *three stages of cancer development* are **Initiative**, where the DNA is damaged, **Promotion**, and **Progression**. Most people, even if not diagnosed with cancer, have some cancer cells in the body. The cancer cell growth in the first stage, *Cancer Initiative*, is caused by environmental pollutants or foods we eat. The body’s natural defenses attack and kill cancer cells when our immune system is strong. Our natural defenses are aided by [phytonutrients](#) found in fruits and vegetables. The second stage, *Cancer Promotion*, can take years to increase those cells that grow uncontrollably, aggravated not only by the environment, but also by psychological stress like poverty, stressful relationships, including divorce, and other health determinants. The damage to cancer cells can be *reversible* at this stage by strengthening the immune system through increasing the intake of phytonutrients from fruits and vegetables. Meats do not provide these protective nutrients. By third stage *Cancer Progression*, uncontrollable cancer growth has spread to other tissues in the body accelerated by a weakened immune system, meats that contain oxidized cholesterol and cortisol, and high protein diets in general. Improving the diet with nutrients from fruits and vegetables provides essential phytonutrient *benefits to the body*. Dr. Rooke highlighted charts and graphs showing countries that consume the most meats also have the highest cancer rates. In addition, African Americans consume more meat in general, fewer fruits and vegetables, and even more chicken than other races/ethnic groups and may account for differences in cancer incidence (new cases) and mortality. In 2015, the International Center for Cancer Research determined that processed meats are a Group 1 Carcinogen. That is the same category as arsenic and smoking cigarettes. Animal proteins, psychological stressors, alcohol, and environmental pollutants all suppress the body’s natural killer cells. There is evidence that shows that cancer cells that are genetic in nature may be changed by what you eat (Dean Ornish, 2007). There are about 500 genes that can be influenced by lifestyle changes. Countries that use the most **spices** have shown to have lower cancer rates. *Rosemary, cloves, cinnamon, thyme, ginger, garlic, and turmeric* are popular spices with medicinal properties.

**So, what do we eat? Where will we get our protein?** Dr. Rooke continued by addressing several nutrition facts and myths. One fact is that we eat too much protein. A myth is that plant protein is incomplete. Think how elephants get their protein – elephants only eat plants. Our bodies seek **amino acids** for nutrition to make the proteins it needs. All the amino acids can be found in plants. *Vitamin B-12* is the only vitamin supplement we may need to take. Even animal-based diets are supplemented with B-12. It is made from the bacteria in the soil and the colon. The best source for *Vitamin D* is the sunlight. It is actually a hormone, not a vitamin. The body produces and stores Vitamin D. [African Americans store more Vitamin D](#) and have fewer bone fractures that occur. It is best to take Vitamin D3 versus D2. Dr. Rooke compared many pictures of prepared food plates for examples of breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Recommended breakfast was a bowl of fruit medley instead of egg and sausage biscuit. Lunch and dinner plates included lots of green vegetables, grains like rice and quinoa, legumes and colorful vegetables filled with vitamins and nutrients. mushrooms. For dessert, instead of ice cream, try frozen fruit.

**Group questions:**

**Q:** Instead of *dairy milk*, do we drink almond, soy, or oat milk? **A:** Although not optimal, *plant-based* alternatives are better than *animal* milk. As adults, we no longer need milk. Many refrigerated plant-based milks in the grocery stores are highly processed with chemicals and preservatives. Some milks contain no almonds at all – just artificial almond flavor. **Read the labels.** Eat the whole almonds for nutrients or consider making your own almond milk using a blender. **Q:** What about *coffee, salmon, and stevia*? **A:** Some studies have shown *coffee* is good, but *caffeine* is a vasoconstrictor. Studies on caffeine have shown the brain may be deprived of oxygen when caffeine is consumed which can cause issues over time. *Omega 3* studies have shown that *Salmon* and other fish do not help protect the heart or brain as previously thought. A study in Japan has shown that men who consume only fish had a 54% increase in prostate cancer. Artificial sweeteners are processed foods that should be consumed sparingly. *Stevia* is plant based made from stevia leaves that is 200x sweeter than sugar and should be consumed sparingly. Try more natural sweeteners, like natural maple syrup. **Q:** What are the best mushrooms to eat? **A:** [Grocycle](#) **Q:** Where can I find more information on plant-based nutrition? **A:** Go to [nutritionfacts.org](http://nutritionfacts.org). Dr. Michael Gregor reviews studies, provides evidence, and presents the results in video format. Also, [Forks Over Knives](#) empowers people to live healthier lives by changing the way the world understands nutrition.

Dr. Rooke has a Wednesday evening [Optimal Health Lifestyle Intervention Workshop](#) group on whole food plant-based eating. She is also conducting a study that compares plant-based eating to other diets recommended by the American Diabetes Association. This is recommended for diabetics and pre-diabetics. The old information that diabetics cannot consume fruit has been disproven. **Register in advance to join the classes in this series.** Optimal health also includes going outside, the practice of mindfulness, maintaining strong social networks being an important part of immune system strengthening. Mother nature in her infinite wisdom gave us fruit with naturally occurring sweeteners.

**Link to workshop:** <https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tj0tdO2tjiovHdOzcl-zWVjsyvybtLnFRWK0>

Respectfully submitted,  
gail