



## NAVIGATING THE JOURNEY OF CANCER: FROM SURVIVING TO THRIVING

WRITTEN BY Kirsten West, ND, LAc, FABNO

Cancer is a word that carries weight. It can bring fear, uncertainty, anger, and grief all at once. It confronts us with our mortality and what it means to be human. So, how do we navigate this journey? How do we not just survive, but thrive?

Once the initial shock of a cancer diagnosis fades, it's important to take action. Clear, reliable information becomes essential, and a well-informed treatment plan is crucial. Many patients initially consult with a team that may include surgical or medical oncologists. But the short amount of time spent with the doctor, often discussing medical terms and treatments that are new to the patient, often leaves them with a limited understanding of their cancer, treatment options, and the reasoning behind those options. Fear can make it hard to take everything in, making it easy to overlook the need for a deeper comprehension.

As a practicing naturopathic oncologist at the Riordan Clinic, I witness the transformative power of education daily. This is why we adopt a 'co-learning' approach with our patients. While we teach, we also learn about their needs. Together, we explore both conventional and integrative

treatment options to understand how to best support them through diagnosis, treatment, prevention, and thriving beyond cancer. Our goal is to help patients achieve a level of health that surpasses their pre-diagnosis state. Cancer serves as a signal of underlying physiological disharmony, indicating a need for cultivation and a shift toward building a stronger, more supported foundation for health.

Beyond education, we must also nurture our nervous systems. The stresses of a technology-driven world, social media pressures, and societal disconnection can weigh heavily on us.

### Understanding the Nervous System

To understand this, it helps to look at our nervous system, which consists of two main branches: the sympathetic nervous system (SNS) and the parasympathetic nervous system (PNS). Think of the SNS as the "gas pedal" and the PNS as the "brake." While the SNS is often viewed negatively due to its association with stress, it plays a crucial role in our survival. It becomes problematic when we experience chronic activation, leading to elevated cortisol levels, ▶

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inflammation, immune suppression, disrupted sleep, digestive issues, and hormonal imbalances. Conversely, the PNS is linked to rest, digestion, and healing—where true restoration occurs. Supporting balance in the nervous system plays an important role in how the body recovers.

In integrative cancer care, heart rate variability (HRV) serves as a valuable indicator of how well the body is handling treatment, managing stress, and building resilience. HRV measures the variation in time between heartbeats; greater variability signifies better adaptability, while lower variability indicates a nervous system stuck in a stress response. Low HRV has been associated with poorer outcomes and quality of life in cancer patients. Fortunately, HRV can improve with lifestyle changes such as breathwork, movement, restorative sleep, and nervous system practices.

### The Role of an Integrative Team

To navigate this journey effectively, the role of an integrative care team is essential. Understanding options is one step. Putting a plan into place is another. From the moment of diagnosis, patients should reach out not only to traditional oncologists but also to integrative oncology practitioners. These professionals support patients' needs and facilitate a holistic approach to care.

At Riordan, we collaborate with conventional oncologists to mitigate side effects without compromising treatment efficacy, using evidence-based recommendations. We leverage current treatments for optimal outcomes, conduct advanced testing to identify nutrient imbalances, and create structured follow-up plans—all with the goal to support the body through treatment and recovery. This co-learning partnership empowers patients to take ownership of their health, fostering renewed energy, purpose, and long-term wellness.

### Seeking Support

Patients often seek support from integrative providers later in their cancer journey. At the time of diagnosis, many patients feel overwhelmed. There is a lot of information, a lot of decisions, and often very little time to process it all. This can create a stressful and physiologically taxing experience. Assembling an integrative oncology team may feel daunting and overwhelming, but doing so from the moment of diagnosis can significantly ease this journey by providing clarity and reducing stress. This additional guidance and support facilitate progress beyond the disease and toward healing. It's not just about targeting cancer cells; it's also about nurturing the surrounding environment, the terrain that fosters health. Essentially, integrative oncology aims to create an inhospitable environment for not just cancer, but for disease as a whole. Integrative oncology focuses on supporting the whole person alongside treatment.

### Looking at the Bigger Picture

To thrive amidst the challenges of cancer, consider the following steps:

- 1. Ask Questions:** Knowledge is power. Consult oncology practitioners who can provide clarity and help you sift through the overwhelming general information available online that is usually not specific to one patient's particular diagnosis or conventional treatment plan.
- 2. Gather Your Team:** Surround yourself with practitioners who approach your journey with humility and a willingness to learn alongside you.
- 3. Utilize Testing:** Data-driven decisions guide your treatment plan and overall well-being.
- 4. Give Yourself Space:** Remember, this journey is a marathon, not a sprint. Allow yourself grace during setbacks.
- 5. Seek Connection:** Foster relationships with loved ones and nature. Social media interactions don't replace genuine connections.
- 6. Maintain Faith and Hope:** Empower yourself to take proactive steps in healing and rebuilding trust in your body's ability to recover.

### Daily Practices for Healing

Incorporate these daily tasks into your routine:

- 1. Breathwork:** Focus on elongating your exhales to engage your parasympathetic nervous system, where healing occurs. Even five minutes of meditation can make a difference.
- 2. Rest:** Prioritize downtime to rejuvenate your mind and body.
- 3. Movement:** Engage in physical activity, whether walking, yoga, or weight training. This is essential for healing.
- 4. Limit Screen Time:** Avoid screens for at least 2-3 hours before bed.
- 5. Nourish with Food:** Use food as medicine. Be mindful of the quality of your diet, as much of our food production can be detrimental to health.
- 6. Connect Daily:** Reach out to at least one loved one each day to reinforce your support network.
- 7. Tailor Your Approach:** Work with your integrative oncology team to create a personalized plan that addresses your unique needs.

Cancer isn't an overnight occurrence; it often develops over years. Therefore, the journey of survivorship begins at diagnosis. Understand your options, assemble a supportive team, and feel empowered in your treatment decisions. Working through fear is an important part of the early stages, but true thriving comes from feeling supported by your team, informed about your choices, and proactive in your actions. We thrive when we feel safe. ■



We are thrilled to welcome **Jen Nolan, BS, MS, ONC, TAP**, as a Nutrition Advisor for Riordan Clinic. A pioneer in integrative oncology nutrition, Jen is the owner and lead oncology nutrition consultant at Remission Nutrition — where she has built her practice around one core belief: that food, lifestyle, and the terrain of the body matter profoundly in every cancer journey.

Her approach is whole-person to the core, supporting clients across the full spectrum of health — from active cancer journeys to prevention and long-term vitality. Jen supports not just what's on the plate, but the emotional and energetic landscape of healing as well. A sought-after speaker, podcast guest, and mentor to practitioners in the field of metabolic and integrative oncology nutrition, Jen brings both clinical depth and genuine heart to every conversation.

Jen is also helping develop the Thrivership Program — a groundbreaking survivorship course by Riordan Clinic, designed to guide cancer survivors through exactly what Dr. West describes in this issue: the journey from surviving to thriving. Rooted in nutrition, mindset, and deep support for the body and spirit, the Thrivership Program meets survivors in the “now what?” moment and walks with them toward what's next.

“What you eat is not separate from your cancer journey — it's woven into every part of it. Food has the power to shift the internal terrain of your body, support your immune system, and create an environment where healing can happen. In every phase of a cancer journey, food can be one of the most powerful forms of medicine available.”

— **JEN NOLAN, BS, MS, ONC, TAP,**  
**OWNER, REMISSION NUTRITION**



## SPRING RAINBOW SLAW

**Serves 6**

Grain-free, gluten-free, anti-inflammatory

### Ingredients

*Use organic ingredients please*

- 3 medium carrots, peeled and grated
- 2 cups purple cabbage, grated or finely shredded
- 2 cups Brussels sprouts, grated
- 6 medium radishes, grated
- 1 medium raw beet, peeled and grated
- ½ cup fresh flat-leaf parsley, roughly chopped
- ¼ cup fresh mint leaves, roughly chopped
- ⅓ cup raw pumpkin seeds (pepitas), toasted
- 2 lemons, juiced
- 2 tbsp apple cider vinegar
- 4 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- ¾ tsp fine sea salt
- ½ tsp black pepper

### Instructions

- ▶ Grate carrots, cabbage, Brussels sprouts, radishes, and beet. Place in a large mixing bowl.
- ▶ In a dry skillet over low-medium heat, toast pumpkin seeds 3–4 minutes until fragrant and lightly golden. Set aside to cool.
- ▶ Whisk together lemon juice, apple cider vinegar, olive oil, salt, and pepper. Taste and adjust — it should be bright and tangy.
- ▶ Pour dressing over vegetables and toss well. Add parsley and mint and toss again. Let sit at least 10 minutes.
- ▶ Top with toasted pumpkin seeds just before serving.

**Notes:** This slaw keeps beautifully in the fridge for 2–3 days — the flavors get even better. Add pumpkin seeds right before serving to keep the crunch. Every color in this bowl represents a different family of phytonutrients — compounds that support immune function, reduce inflammation, and help the body do its best healing work. Eating the rainbow isn't just pretty — it's purposeful.



## Jenny Bradley

***Certified Holistic Cancer Coach & Certified Culinary Nutrition Expert***

Jenny Bradley has been thriving through cancer since her diagnosis in 2017. She is passionate about guiding fellow cancer patients into more peace and less overwhelm during the cancer journey through her 1-on-1 coaching and online courses. She is a Certified Holistic Cancer Coach, a Certified Culinary Nutrition Expert, and a Licensed Pastor who's been featured as a guest on many podcasts and projects. Jenny especially loves helping fellow breast cancer thrivers understand integrative options and how to be prepared for and recover from breast cancer surgeries. She also enjoys serving as an Ambassador for the Annie Appleseed Project where she helps lead educational initiatives about integrative cancer care. Jenny lives in the middle of the USA with her husband, Mike, and their cute little dog named Poppy.

**Learn more about Jenny at:**  
[shrinkthemutantschool.com](http://shrinkthemutantschool.com)  
**Instagram:** @shrinkthemutant

# HOW I CHOSE INTEGRATIVE CARE FOR MY CANCER JOURNEY

WRITTEN BY Jenny Bradley, MA, CHCC, CNE

**With my chest still burning from the biopsy a few days prior, the phone ringing stopped me in my tracks. I had been waiting for the official news... one way or another. I stood at the patio door looking for hope in the grey winter sky as the doctor read the results to me.**

"It IS a carcinoma as I suspected. It's been sent out for further pathology testing. We'll contact you again when we have further information that will inform the treatment recommendations."

A few remarks between us, we ended the call, and my whole world abruptly changed.

My brain zipped around its memory bank. Trying to recall anything I had learned about cancer care, I suddenly remembered years earlier I had seen an "anticancer" docu-series on PBS. The presentation by Dr. David Servan-Schreiber, MD, PhD, was about a variety of ways we could support our healing beyond the standard of care.

Aha! Signal number one that there was something I could do!

Next, my mind sparked with the recall of "there's something about vitamin C and cancer." That's about all I could remember. So, I set out to search the phrase "vitamin C + cancer" online, and right there in front of me was a vast set of evidence-based information about integrative cancer therapies from Riordan Clinic.

Without even knowing the detailed pathology of the cancer diagnosis, I started calling Riordan. It was a few days before Christmas. While a cheery holiday spirit was all around, I was instantly focused on finding support for this new life-changing diagnosis.

It was going to be difficult to get a consultation during the holiday season, but within 19 days of that initial "it's cancer" call, I was sitting across from my first doctor at Riordan Clinic.

Before I could even get in to see the conventional oncologist, I had my first round of extensive testing and a plan moving forward with my licensed Naturopath at Riordan. I was serious about starting integrative care. I started high-dose IV Vitamin C that very same day after a quick blood test proved it was safe for my body.

During that new patient consult, my husband and I had 90 minutes of deeply personalized discussion with my doctor in Dome 5. One of our top priorities in taking an integrative approach to cancer was to have "checks and balances." We had the standard of care to give us the appropriate monitoring and surgeries. We had naturopathic care to support me through all of it and give me a good quality of life. ▶



In my particular case, conventional care only recommended one particular drug and major surgery, to which the initial surgeon said she “wouldn’t do for at least six months.” With my family’s medical history, that one drug got ruled out after serious evaluation. All of that gave me a considerable need to intensely dive into an anticancer lifestyle and naturopathic support. That first round of testing at Riordan revealed I had a significant hormone imbalance, metabolic dysfunction, and a sluggish liver. My body’s terrain could not keep up with proper immune function.

If my body was going to heal, I would need to address all of these critical issues...something my conventional physicians were not interested in as they solely focused on their one specialty.

I’m so grateful my Naturopathic doctor at Riordan never told me to avoid conventional care. I’m also thankful she said in our very first conversation, “We are here to treat the whole Jenny, not just a spot.”

All these years later, that comment has stayed with me and stayed true to all my practitioners at Riordan Clinic.

While my care team at Riordan has changed through the years, all of my providers have played an important role in supporting the “whole Jenny and not just a spot.” Through the variety of helpful recommendations and referrals they have given, I’ve more than thrived through my cancer journey.

Now with years of “no evidence of disease,” I continue my wellness care through the guidance of my Naturopathic Oncologist at Riordan Clinic in Wichita, Kansas. We monitor and assess lab work, real-life factors, and my environmental needs to support my body overall. It’s all a part of an evidence-based, hopeful anticancer strategy.

The hope I needed on that gray winter day back in 2017 came all throughout the years, and with the compassionate care of my team at Riordan. ■



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# 50TH ANNIVERSARY GALA RECAP

On April 25, 2026, more than 190 staff, current and former co-learners, members of the Board of Directors, the Riordan and Garvey families, and community supporters gathered to celebrate Riordan Clinic's 50th Anniversary. The evening honored three generations of Riordan Clinic, reflecting the clinic's long-standing commitment to education, research, and personalized care. We also celebrated Dr. Ron's 75th birthday, recognizing his leadership and the impact he has had on the clinic and the community over the years. More than \$910,000 was raised to support the future of Riordan Clinic.

*Thank you to everyone who joined us in celebrating this milestone.*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

**The evening was made possible by the many hands, hearts, and partnerships that continue to support the work of Riordan Clinic. We are deeply grateful to each of you.**

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### Our Volunteers

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### Geode Display

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### Gala Documentary Participants

Ann  
Comica  
Connie  
Denise (not shown)  
Jen (not shown)  
Jenny  
Kelli Ann  
Marilyn  
Riley & Nathan

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Mark Arts  
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Peck Music Productions  
Sabrina Renee Photography  
Traces of Flavor  
William Flynn Jazz  
Xclusive Events

## PICTURED ON RIGHT

1. Jen Nolan, Dr. Kirsten West, Dr. Stacy Dunn, James Stinson
2. Back row - Geoff Bock, John Hunninghake, Talia Hunninghake  
Front Row - Marcus Hunninghake, Daniel Hunninghake, Sarah Bock, Mary Jo Hunninghake, Dr. Ron Hunninghake, Kirk Zauderer, Anne Zauderer.
3. John Hunninghake, Sarah Bock, Daniel Hunninghake, and Anne Zauderer
4. Neil Riordan and Dr. Drew Rose
5. Boards and Blessings
6. Ann Garvey, Nina Andro, Mona Wilson, and Debra Fraser
7. Riordan Clinic Team (those in attendance)
8. Dr. Michelle Niesley and Dr. Ron Hunninghake



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RIORDAN CLINIC  
DOCUMENTARY



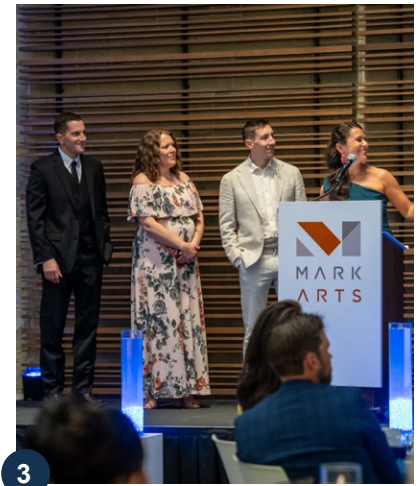
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OF THE GALA



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Riordan Clinic is a not-for-profit 501(c)(3), integrative health center with locations in **Wichita and Overland Park, Kansas**. The clinic was co-founded by Olive Garvey and Hugh D. Riordan. We intersect lifestyle and nutrition to help you find the underlying causes of your illness. Since our inception in 1975, the mission has been clear and unwavering to **"...stimulate an epidemic of health."**

**To become a patient at Riordan Clinic, call 1-800-447-7276**

Please send any comments or suggestions to [newseditor@riordanclinic.org](mailto:newseditor@riordanclinic.org)  
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