“WHAT’S SEX GOT TO DO WITH IT? ASSESSING AND ADDRESSING SEX, GENDER, AND RELATIONSHIPS IN PSYCHOSOCIAL ONCOLOGY.”

**Workshop Chair/Coordinator:** Matthew Loscalzo, LCSW

**Workshop Facilitators:** Matthew Loscalzo, LCSW, Erin Kent, Ph.D., M.S., Donald L. Rosenstein, M.D., Ellen Polamero, LCSW, OSW-C, ACHP-SW, Courtney Bitz, LCSW, OSW-C, ACHP-SW, and Charles Kamen, Ph.D., M.P.H.  [VIEW BIOGRAPHIES HERE](#)

**Target Audience:** Clinical psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers, chaplains, nurses, oncologists, palliative care and hospice clinicians, medical students, psychology students, physicians in training (Psychiatry trainees/fellows; palliative care trainees/fellows, oncology trainees/fellows). This workshop would also be of interest to researchers of all disciplines who are interested in intervention development in psycho-oncology and palliative care.

**Workshop Objectives:**

This interactive, experiential workshop is based on an adult learning model and will provide professional training on the impact of sex, gender and sexual orientation on how couples cope with cancer and bereavement. Participants will:

1. Gain knowledge about recent empirically-based research, theories and couples interventions in a cancer setting.
2. Learn the most common grief reactions and bereavement challenges facing widowed fathers and the strengths and weaknesses of gender specific support groups.
3. Gain skills relevant to providing gender strengths based therapeutic services to patients and their partners together through a group intervention focused specifically on the impact of cancer on intimate relationships.
4. Gain knowledge about the impact of sexual orientation and gender identity on receipt of cancer care, the unique challenges faced by LGBTQ patients and their caregivers, and about same-sex couples coping with cancer.
5. Generate ideas about how to overcome barriers in designing and conducting studies, implementing clinical interventions, and program development through panel discussion with the experts.

**Workshop Description/Abstract:**

Everyone, everywhere, is impacted by sex and gender, patients/healthcare consumers are no exception to this rule. Yet until recently, the importance of sex, gender, and sexual orientation has been ignored or at best minimized in cancer research, clinical care, and education. A lack of astute appreciation for how sex and gender can impact patients and families can lead to missed therapeutic opportunities, stigma, and alienation.
The number and diversity of psychosocial interventions to support couples coping with cancer has increased over the past decade. Part 1 of the workshop, “State of the (Couple’s) Union” will highlight published studies on interventions from several disciplines aimed at supporting individuals with cancer and their partners with the goals of (1) describing the landscape of what’s known, (2) identifying gaps in what remains unknown, and (3) generating ideas to overcome barriers in designing and conducting studies to inform improvements in care and services for couples coping with cancer.

Two established and successful gender-based programs (Single Fathers Due to Cancer and Couples Coping with Cancer Together) will be presented in the next phase of the workshop. Part 2 of the workshop “Sole parenting while bereaved: lessons from widowed fathers”, will focus on widowed fathers, who have been almost completely neglected in the psycho-oncology literature. Clinical and research findings will be examined regarding about how men simultaneously grieve, parent children on their own, and move forward after losing their spouses to cancer. This interactive session will focus on skills related to the formation and facilitation of a support group designed specifically for men. The applicability of the Dual Process Model of Coping with Bereavement will be explored during small group discussions. Several unanswered questions will be posed to participants for discussion (e.g., what are the advantages and disadvantages of same-sex group psychotherapeutic work?; is it necessary, or even desirable, to match the genders of support group participants and facilitators?).

There are few if any couples-based group interventions that focus on the impact of cancer on relationships. Part 3 of the workshop will introduce participants to Couples’ Coping with Cancer Together Group (CCTG). CCTG utilizes a strengths-based, supportive counseling, and strategic theoretical framework. The goal of CCTG is to enhance a couple’s ability to openly communicate, emotionally support and problem-solve together, and to provide couples with skills necessary to start living the relationship they always wanted. Participants will gain a foundation in theoretical framework, and practice effective interventions utilizing real life data collected from CCTG participants.

In part 4 of the workshop, we will focus on the impact of sexual orientation and gender identity on receipt of cancer care, the unique challenges faced by LGBTQ patients and their caregivers, and the distinct needs of same-sex couples coping with cancer. We will focus on methods for improving cancer care delivery, and psychosocial oncology care delivery specifically, to be responsive to the needs of LGBTQ patients and their caregivers. Participants will have the opportunity to practice an assessment of sexual orientation and gender identity, learn how to collect an LGBTQ responsive sexual history, and address gender issues in working with same-sex couples.

Finally, we will end with an opportunity to generate ideas for moving the field of gender-specific oncology research and practice forward through a panel discussion with workshop facilitators.
Presenters:

**Professor Matthew Loscalzo, LCSW** is the Liliane Elkins Professor in Supportive Care Programs in the Department of Supportive Care Medicine and Professor in Department of Population Sciences. He is also the Executive Director of the Department of Supportive Care Medicine and the Administrative Director of the Sheri & Les Biller Patient and Family Resource Center at the City of Hope-National Medical Center, Duarte California, USA. Professor Loscalzo has over 38 years’ experience in caring for cancer patients and their families. He is recognized internationally as a pioneer in the clinical, educational, and research domains of psychosocial aspects of cancer. Professor Loscalzo was the President of the American Psychosocial Oncology Society and the Association of Oncology Social Workers. He is highly recognized and sought after for his strategic mentorship of leaders across disciplines. Professor Loscalzo has focused pain and palliative care, the implementation of problem-based screening programs, gender-based medicine and problem-solving therapies. Along with James Zabora, ScD, they created the first prospective universal clinical biopsychosocial screening program in the United States. Professor Loscalzo has held leadership positions at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, the Johns Hopkins Oncology Center, the Rebecca and John Moores Cancer Center at the University of California at San Diego and is now in his 10 year at City of Hope-National Medical Center. He has created a number of highly integrated interdisciplinary biopsychosocial programs based on a unique staff leadership model. He has been a consultant to multiple major cancer organizations on how to build supportive care programs, implement new processes, enhance staff engagement and has developed a unique staff leadership model. In 2010, he received the Outstanding Education and Training Award Recipient from the American Psychosocial Oncology Society. In October 2014, Professor Loscalzo was recognized for a lifetime achievement award in clinical care with the Noemi Fisman Award for Lifetime Clinical Excellence from the International Psychosocial Oncology Society. In August 2015, he received the Jimmie Holland Life Time Leadership Award from the American Psychosocial Oncology Society. In 2016 Professor Loscalzo received the Harold Benjamin Innovation Award, Cancer Support Community and in August of 2017, he was the recipient of the Arthur M. Sutherland Lifetime Achievement in the Field of Psycho-Oncology, International Psycho-Oncology Society. He is the PI on two 5 year NIH R25E training grants (teaching health care professionals how to build supportive care programs and biopsychosocial screening programs) and a site PI for a new third R25E to teach advanced cognitive behavioral skills. He is also on the editorial boards or a reviewer for a number of professional journals and has over 75 publications. His clinical interests are gender-based medicine, strengths-based approaches to psychotherapies, problem-based distress screening and the creation of supportive care programs.

**Erin Kent, Ph.D., M.S.** is a Technical Specialist for ICF, Inc., and Scientific Advisor for the Outcomes Research Branch (ORB) in the Healthcare Delivery Research Program at the National Cancer Institute. For five years prior to this role, she served as an Epidemiologist and Program Director in ORB, and previously, Dr. Kent was a Cancer Prevention Fellow in the Office of Cancer Survivorship. Dr. Kent has led a program of research in informal cancer
caregiving, including the establishment of funding opportunities to develop interventions for cancer caregivers, a Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) concept to develop digital platforms to connect cancer caregivers to care delivery teams, and efforts to expand observational research and further characterize caregiver burden. Dr. Kent’s other main research interests are in patient-reported outcome and patient experience measurement and surveillance. Dr. Kent serves as scientific lead for the SEER-Medicare Health Outcomes Survey (SEER-MHOS) linked database on patient-reported outcomes and as senior advisor for the SEER-Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (SEER-CAHPS) survey- and claims-linked database on patient experiences with care. Dr. Kent received her PhD from the School of Social Ecology, University of California-Irvine. Her dissertation was focused on health outcomes among adolescent and young adult cancer survivors.

Donald L. Rosenstein, MD is Professor of Psychiatry and Medicine at the University of North Carolina where he is Director of the Comprehensive Cancer Support Program and Vice-Chair of the Division of Hospital Psychiatry. Dr. Rosenstein earned his undergraduate degree in psychology from Wesleyan University, his medical degree from Northwestern University School of Medicine, and completed his residency training in psychiatry at Yale University. He is the former Clinical Director of the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) and Past-President of both the Academy of Consultation Liaison Psychiatry and the American Psychosocial Oncology Society (APOS).

Ellen Polamero, MSW, LCSW is a program specialist in the Couples Coping with Cancer Together program at City of Hope National Medical Center. She has worked specifically with couples facing cancer together and the impact of cancer on intimate relationships for the past 3 years, focusing both on the development and implementation of standardized psychoeducational interventions, as well as on short term couples counseling interventions that specifically address the unique challenges couples face in the midst of a cancer diagnosis. Prior to this role, Ellen worked with hematological cancer patients, particularly those undergoing stem cell transplant. She has developed and facilitated several psychoeducational groups and classes for patients and caregivers at City of Hope and has presented nationally on patient and caregiver specific issues at The American Psychosocial Oncology Society, Association of Oncology Social Work, and multiple StupidCancer events. She has also authored several articles regarding communication and self-care for patients and partners.

Courtney Bitz, LCSW, OSW-C, ACHP-SW: Courtney’s current appointment is Director of Clinical Social Work, at City of Hope, Duarte, California. Bitz has been in the field of psycho-oncology for over 17 years and has extensive experience working with couples who are facing a cancer diagnosis. Bitz spearheaded the development of the Couples Coping with Cancer Together Program which provides strength-based education and support to patients diagnosed with cancer and their partners. To our knowledge this is the only program of its kind in the country. Bitz has published in Oxford University Press, Psycho-Oncology, and Journal of Supportive Care in Cancer. She has
presented her work at international and national professional conferences including, the 19th World Congress of Psych-Oncology (IPOS), The American Psychosocial Oncology Society and The Association of Oncology Social Workers.

Charles Kamen, PhD, MPH, is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Surgery, Division of Cancer Control, at the University of Rochester. By training he is a clinical psychologist with a background in behavioral medicine, health disparities, and dyadic interventions. His program of research specifically focuses on 1) cancer-related health disparities affecting sexual and gender minority (SGM; e.g., lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, LGBT) cancer survivors, and 2) behavioral interventions to address these disparities. He has been awarded a K07 career development award from NCI focused explicitly on SGM cancer-related health disparities. He has also contributed to the development of a range of behavioral interventions with the goal of improving the health and well-being of cancer patients, survivors, and their caregivers. As Chair of Health Equity Research for the University of Rochester Cancer Center NCI Community Oncology Research Program (URCC NCORP) Research Base, Dr. Kamen reviews health equity focused protocols and develops, promotes, and oversees research that incorporates minority/underserved populations. In addition, as Director of the Community Outreach and Engagement Program at the Wilmot Cancer Institute at the University of Rochester, he works to support community-engaged cancer research and involve minority and underserved community members as equal partners in the research process.