

XiMED At Home provides free non-medical support services to oncology patients

BY KRISTINA HOUCK

Suffering from head and neck cancer, John Wyckoff has trouble eating. Now using a feeding tube, his wife had trouble preparing meals he could eat.

"We had hit a bad spot where John was not really able to eat much of anything and I was in a panic about how to get him fed properly and then get our daughter and myself fed," said Ramona Ferreira, Mitchell's wife. "Out of the blue, I had a message and the message said, 'We're from XiMED At Home, and we wondered if you needed any help.'"

The staff at Wyckoff's doctor's office had recommended XiMED At Home contact the family. From companionship to meal preparation, the company provides non-medical support services for post-operative, acute and terminally ill patients of physicians inside and outside XiMED Medical Group.

"We are there to do whatever we can do to help the family live comfortably at home," said Ellen Brown, executive director of XiMED At Home, which launched in May.

XiMED At Home paired the family with caregiver Jeff Mitchell, who previously served as a chef in the U.S. Navy. Mitchell prepares meals for Wyckoff and his family, sends medication reminders, and provides companionship and transportation.

"We like to go into the home and help with anything the patient needs to improve," Mitchell said.

"It was wonderful to get home from work and to not have to worry about rushing to get to the grocery store or even think about having to plan a meal. All I had to do was put it in the oven," Ferreira said. "It was a perfect match. I didn't have to worry. I knew Jeff was coming."

Wyckoff and his family receive support at no cost through XiMED At Home's oncology program, which is sponsored by the XiMED Foundation, a nonprofit organization committed to improving the delivery of quality health-care to patients through clinical practice, education, research and technology.

Made possible by a private donation to the foundation, the oncology program launched Jan. 6 — Mitchell's first day with Wyckoff and his family.



With the support of the XiMED Foundation, XiMED At Home provides free non-medical support services to oncology patients. Pictured: Caregiver Jeff Mitchell, John Wyckoff, Ramona Ferreira and XiMED At Home Operations Sue Harris. Photo/Kristina Houck

There are currently eight oncology patients receiving free support through the program, said Sue Harris, operations of XiMED At Home.

"It's been so well received by everyone," Harris said. "The people who have needed the care have just been thrilled."

"The services for our patients are free," said nurse practitioner Susan Klein. "That's huge because there are very few resources available at no cost to patients, and there's a hole in the system for this short-term need that patients and families have during the time in which they're receiving treatment."

Mitchell used to work with Wyckoff and his family Monday through Friday. With Wyckoff's health improving, he is now only needed one day per week.

Thankful for the support, Wyckoff encourages others to give to the foundation so XiMED At Home can expand its oncology program.

"When you're sick, you're not thinking straight. You need someone who is thinking straight around to point you in the right way to do the right things at the right times," said Wyckoff, who was diagnosed with squamous cell carcinoma in August. "It is really, really helpful."

For more information about the XiMED Foundation or to donate, visit www.ximedfoundation.org. Donations made to the foundation can be specifically directed to XiMED At Home for the non-medical support of oncology patients and their families at home.

"There is a whole group of people out there that would find it financially difficult to obtain such services," said Dr. Pushpendu Banerjee, a XiMED physician and board member. "So far, it's been the physicians who have been contributing and keeping this program alive. We are hoping that the community will help so that it becomes a self-sustaining program."

For more information about the XiMED Foundation or to donate, visit www.ximedfoundation.org.