

ber of specialists in diagnosing and treating brain tumor patients. In addition, as Babu points out, all of pathology specimens taken here are also sent to the main Cleveland Clinic in Ohio for “over-reads.”

“If there’s any sort of a question of what this is, it goes through specialized testing out there as well,” Babu says. “That, I think, is really reassuring,” both for the physician and the patient.

“People should have confidence that we won’t do things just because of our desire or ease or convenience,” she adds. “We will do what’s best for the patient. If you need a specialized study [or] trial that we don’t offer, we will help connect you.”

Doing what’s best for the patient includes “world-class care” from throughout the entire Cleveland Clinic system, whether that means surgery, radiation treatments, immunotherapies or a host of other options.

In other words, if you take the National Brain Tumor Society’s advice and “talk to everyone who can be a resource to you,” a visit to a neurosurgeon like Babu should probably be near the top of your list.

*Dr. Maya Babu is a neurosurgeon with Martin Health and Cleveland Clinic Tradition Hospital in Port St. Lucie at 10050 SW Innovation Way, Suite 102 in Port St. Lucie. The phone number is 772-288-5862. ■*



Jacki Nardone.

## GRIEF SUPPORT IS JUST A PHONE CALL AWAY AT TC HOSPICE

BY PATRICK McCALLISTER | Correspondent

SARS-CoV-2/COVID-19 has changed how the Treasure Coast, Florida, the nation and the world grieve. Traveling to funerals is impossible for many. Funerals that are going on are often restricted by medically necessary social-distancing protocols. And when loved ones die of COVID-19, some have a sense that individual mourning is selfish.

“You were stuck in your house, you couldn’t do anything,” said Jacki Nardone, director of grief support at Treasure Coast Hospice. “A lot of those deaths just happened and there was no outlet for it.”

“All deaths right now – even if it wasn’t a COVID death – are related to COVID. COVID has affected everything about how we process the death of our loved ones. You can’t process (the grief) as you normally would, because it’s a worldwide thing.”

The local hospice offers free grief support services to the community.

“Close to 30 years we’ve been here helping the community – anybody dealing with the anticipated or unexpected death of an individual,” Nardone said. “All they have to do is reach out to us and we’ll be available for them.”

To request grief counseling call hospice at 772-403-4530. Treasure Coast Hospice has seven grief counselors who do individual and group sessions. In most cases a person will have to give information and await a return call to be scheduled for appointments.

Those needing immediate mental-health help can and should also call New Horizons of the Treasure Coast and Okeechobee’s 24-hour mental-health crisis line, 772-468-3909. Those who fear they are an immediate threat to themselves or others should call 911 to request help.

Nardone said in some cases grief exists alongside and can exacerbate men-

tal-health issues, such as post-traumatic stress and addiction. Treasure Coast Hospice grief counselors handle that one condition and may make referrals for those needing additional services.

“We provided over 4,000 individual sessions to children and adults and families (last fiscal year),” Nardone said. “Then our groups, we offered 325 group sessions. That’s in addition to individuals. In addition, we also have special events and things for the communities.”

For example, hospice has hosted Tree of Life remembrances in Tradition in December. Those events are opened to all who have lost loved ones to join others in celebrating them.

In addition to offering grief support counseling and programs, the hospice has self-education resources at [www.treasurehealth.org/31/Grief-Support](http://www.treasurehealth.org/31/Grief-Support). Notice the “31” in the web address. There’s also an opportunity for those only partially ready to start talking about their grief at the website. “There’s a chat box to speak to a counselor,” Nardone said.

Treasure Coast Hospice has, like others, had to go to tech-based individual counseling and support groups. Nardone said the hospice’s grief-support isn’t getting as much increase in use as she’d prefer.

She explained that months or years from now, “we’re going to see a lot of that disenfranchised grief coming forward, because they couldn’t process at the time, because the world was in chaos.”

Nardone said those unready to get into grief support counseling should educate and monitor themselves for maladaptive behaviors, such as excessive alcohol, and intentionally do self-care.

“The main two things really important at this point are making sure eating and sleeping is done,” Nardone said.

Additionally, she said, it’s important for those whose grief has been interrupted to know they’re in big company right now. ■



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