



Beth Israel

Continuum Health Partners, Inc.

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**Fashion Icon Donna Karan Teams Up With Beth Israel Medical Center
To Create “Optimal Healing Environment” in Cancer Care**

New York, NY (June 9, 2009) World renowned designer Donna Karan was moved to take action as a result of her experiences during her late husband Stephan Weiss’s battle with cancer.

“Much was missing from Stephan’s care,” explained Ms. Karan. “He needed the knowledge of traditional western medicine. But he also needed healing that can only be accessed from the heart and through the spirit. Out of my frustrations with the treatment at even the best medical facilities, a commitment was born. I am determined to do what I can to create a new model for wellness and patient care, and to address the needs of patients’ loved ones and the staff who are on the journey with them.”

Through her Urban Zen Foundation, she has teamed up with the Department of Integrative Medicine and the Division of Medical Oncology at Beth Israel Medical Center (BIMC) to create a unique pilot program that will enhance the care of hospitalized cancer patients. Ms. Karan has committed to supporting a major initiative and pilot study at Beth Israel that includes:

- the introduction of yoga therapists on the floor to deliver bedside care
- a full-time staff member to help cancer patients access all levels of care
- training of nursing staff in holistic practices to encourage optimal healing
- an extensive research program, and
- physical renovations of Beth Israel’s inpatient cancer unit

The Urban Zen Integrative Therapy Program at Beth Israel is under the leadership of Woodson Merrell, MD, Chairman of the Department of Integrative Medicine and The M. Anthony Fisher Director of Integrative Medicine at the Continuum Center for Health and Healing, a program of Beth Israel. “This is an incredible opportunity for the hospital to gain recognition as a center of excellence for integrative cancer care,” Dr. Merrell said, “and to serve as the host site for a model which is sure to become widespread as more

and more people begin to appreciate holistic healing modalities. We are fortunate to work with Donna on this vision of improved patient care.”

The \$850,000 grant from the Urban Zen Foundation allows Beth Israel to transform its Medical Oncology Inpatient Unit (9 Dazian) into an “Optimal Healing Environment” for cancer patients, families and caregivers. The components that will enhance the care provided on the unit are:

- **Yoga Therapy** – Yoga therapists trained by masters Rodney Yee and Colleen Saidman Yee will offer bedside yoga and relaxation guidance for patients and families, utilizing integrative tools such as restorative postures, meditation and breath awareness. Yoga therapists also will work directly with staff to educate them about yoga practices. They will pay specific attention to five key areas of discomfort: pain, anxiety, nausea, insomnia and constipation (PANIC). This initiative will be overseen by newly hired yoga therapy coordinator Shana Kuhn-Siegel. The Urban Zen Foundation will use what they learn from their experience at Beth Israel as a basis for a curriculum for a yoga instructor credentialing/certification program they hope to take nationwide.
- **Cancer Patient Navigator** – The Cancer Patient Navigator at Beth Israel will help guide patients through their various care modalities from the moment they step onto the inpatient unit. Educated in both cancer care and integrative therapies, the Cancer Patient Navigator will help patients and families navigate the often complicated maze of cancer care to ensure their optimal use of all of the unique services offered on the unit.
- **Holistic Nurse Training** – Under the supervision of mind-body specialist Aurora Ocampo, RN, MA, CS, who runs the Healing Touch and the Preparing for Surgery Holistic Care Programs at Beth Israel, all registered nurses and patient care associates on the inpatient Cancer Unit will be trained in holistic care techniques, including relaxation breath work, guided imagery and aromatherapy. In addition, staff will be encouraged to use the modalities for “self-care”, recognizing that the stresses they often experience as health providers can adversely affect the care they provide.
- **Research on the Impact of an Optimal Healing Environment** – The improvements planned for the Inpatient Cancer Unit are part of a research protocol that has been approved by the Beth Israel Internal Review Board (IRB), the hospital’s regulatory arm for all research conducted at the hospital. Under the supervision of Benjamin Kligler, MD, Director of Research at the Continuum Center for Health and Healing, researchers will measure patient, family and staff satisfaction improvement, clinical outcomes, medication usage, length of stay and cost savings. Baseline data has been ongoing since March, 2008 and comparison data will be gathered once all program components have been implemented. Target enrollment is 86 patients for both the baseline data and the intervention phase. This research will help determine the clinical cost-effectiveness of the

intervention, which will have critical impact on its replication value at other institutions.

- **Physical Renovations** – Physical renovations of the Cancer Inpatient Unit will include the creation of a special healing space for yoga, meditation and prayer, all in collaboration with Donna Karan, architect David Fratianne, and feng-shui master Alex Stark. Cosmetic changes also will be made to the reception areas, the nursing lounge, the conference room and the pantry – all spaces in which patients and staff come in contact. Environmentally sensitive materials, including bamboo walls, cork flooring, grass cloth ceilings and natural counter surface materials, will provide for a warm, soothing ambiance.

With more than 1.5 million Americans diagnosed with cancer annually, there are many people and families who could benefit from an approach that involves treating the whole patient and their loved ones -- and not just the disease.

“The Beth Israel cancer program, which is part of our larger hospital network of cancer services, is committed to the highest standards of patient care and the application of all effective therapies – including complementary and alternative therapies – to help treat and heal patients,” says Louis B. Harrison, MD, Clinical Director of the Continuum Cancer Centers of New York and Chairman of the Charles and Bernice Blitman Department of Radiation Oncology at Beth Israel and the Department of Radiation Oncology at St. Luke’s-Roosevelt. “We’re delighted to be partnering with Donna Karan, the Urban Zen Foundation and the Continuum Center for Health and Healing on this groundbreaking pilot project. We are confident that it will enhance our world-class programs in cancer care.”

“Our goal is to treat the whole patient through techniques of eastern healing, yoga and meditation that is combined with the very best in western medicine,” concluded Ms. Karan. “My colleagues and I at the The Urban Zen Foundation are proud to work with Beth Israel’s exceptional staff, and with Rodney and Colleen Yee, to create a new model of care that we are confident can be replicated nationally and even internationally.”

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If you are interested in speaking with Donna Karan, Dr. Merrell, Dr. Kligler, Dr. Harrison or any of the other people who are involved in this project, please contact Elizabeth Dowling in the public affairs office at: 212-523-4047.