

The Jordan-Rieger Fund for Pancreatic Cancer Research at the Purdue Cancer Center

Like many families, cancer strikes us and our loved ones, often with tragic results. The Jordan and Rieger families have both lost loved ones to pancreatic cancer. They have lived through hard times, like others, and are dedicated to finding a cure for this dreadful disease.

Joyce Fox Jordan – daughter, wife, mother – was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer after seven months of being treated for other conditions. Her family searched for the best treatments, best hospitals and best doctors and enrolled her in a clinical trial that looked promising. She responded to the drug and the tumor stopped growing, and even showed signs of decreasing. The family was overjoyed. However, before rejoicing too much, doctors discovered that her cancer metastasized into the liver and that required immediate treatment, chemotherapy, and the discontinuing of her experimental treatment. The setbacks began. The liver tumor did respond to treatment, but the pancreatic tumor began to grow again. At that time, the clinical trial drugs were not approved in combination with other drugs, thus, the treatment of the pancreatic cancer was lost. It has since been determined that she contributed to the FDA approval of a new chemotherapeutic treatment for pancreatic cancer. Joyce fought for 23 months, but passed away at the age of 61. She is survived by her husband of nearly 40 years, Charles, and 3 children: David, Pamela Yoder and Jennifer Pickett (all Purdue graduates). She also left behind 3 grandchildren, but was never to know an additional 5 grandchildren.

The Rieger family also experienced a similar journey to the one the Jordan family lived through fifteen years earlier. Robert Rieger, a beloved husband, father, and grandfather, was a 30 year testicular cancer survivor. This time he was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. After 6 months of treatment for stomach pains the doctors performed exploratory surgery and his pancreatic cancer diagnosis was determined. Mr. Rieger's tumor was inoperable; therefore, there were few treatments available. He started chemotherapy right away and responded well. He gained weight and the tumor size and cancer markers decreased. However, after 7 months his tumor had spread throughout the abdominal cavity. Robert died after 10 months of treatment at the age of 66. His wife of 43 years, Carolyn, and their 4 children, Robin Walsh, Christine Whipple, Robert Jr. and Elizabeth and 9 grandchildren survive him.

These stories demonstrate that not only is pancreatic cancer difficult to diagnose, but no cure has yet been discovered. We are all committed to raising money and awareness for advances in detection, diagnosis, treatment and the cure of this deadly disease. This is why the Jordan-Rieger Fund for Pancreatic Cancer Research has been established at the Purdue Cancer Center. Please join us to find the cure.

