



## Libby's H\*O\*P\*E\*

### **\*Helping\*Ovarian Cancer Survivors\*Persevere Through\*Education**

The Rock Band “N.E.D.”: Their Medical Skills Save Many; Their Music Could Save Thousands

Paul Cacciatore  
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When spoken by a doctor, the medical term “N.E.D.” – No Evidence of Disease – is music to the ears of an ovarian cancer survivor. A band of doctors, called “N.E.D.,” wants to be music to the ears of the general public when it comes to raising awareness about women’s cancers. ...During the day, this eclectic group of highly skilled physicians perform under the bright lights of the operating room while caring for women who are battling gynecological cancers. By night, these physicians turn into artists who play a mix of rock and alternative rock music to give a voice to the needs, struggles, and triumphs of their cancer patients. ... Victor Hugo, the French author of the classic novels *Les Misérables* and *Notre-Dame de Paris* (*The Hunchback of Notre Dame*), once said, “music expresses that which cannot be said and on which it is impossible to be silent.” The band N.E.D. believes in the same principle when it comes to the promotion of gynecologic cancer awareness and education through music. The N.E.D. band members will save many women’s lives throughout their medical careers; however, they could very well save thousands of lives through the educational cancer awareness message brought to light through their music.



Explanation of the N.E.D. Logo: Pink for Breast Cancer, Yellow is the Symbolic Color for Hope, Teal for Gynecologic Cancer; the Remaining Three Colors are Just Complimentary, But There Are Six Colors Total, One for Each Band Member.

**The members of N.E.D. are set forth below.**

On drums and percussion as well as guitar is Nimesh P. Nagarsheth, Assistant Professor, Division of Gynecologic Oncology, Mount Sinai Medical Center, New York, New York & Englewood Hospital and Medical Center, Englewood, New Jersey.

On lead guitar is William E. Winter, III, M.D., Northwest Cancer Specialists, Portland, Oregon.

On bass guitar, harmonica and vocals, William R. (Rusty) Robinson, M.D. FACS, FACOG. , Professor, Director of Clinical Research, Harrington Cancer Center, Texas Tech University Health Science Center, Amarillo, Texas.

On guitar and lead vocals, John F. Boggess, M.D., Associate Professor, Fellowship Program Director, Gynecology Oncology, Director, Robotic Assisted Medicine Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

On lead vocals and guitar, Joanie Hope, M.D., Fellow, Gynecologic Oncology, New York University Langone Medical Center, New York, New York.

On guitar, John T. Soper, M.D., The Hendricks Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Division of Gynecologic Oncology, Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

**The Backstory**

Most of the N.E.D. band members played in musical groups during their youth. Nimesh Nagarsheth's interest in music relates back to his college days. As a student at the University of Wisconsin, Nagarsheth focused on musical percussion study, but later, due to pragmatism, he refocused his concentration on medicine. "I saw many really talented peers who worked really hard and were not getting jobs as musicians." "Music has always been a passion of mine, ever since I was a child," said Nagarsheth. "But to be honest with you, I didn't really develop an interest in medicine until I went to college."

While in medical school in Oregon, John Boggess played in a band with other medical students in the 1980s to earn rent money, and he developed a small following. But, Boggess gave up musical pursuits to practice medicine. Joanie Hope said that she has been musical since she was a child: "When I was in medical school, I wrote lots of songs with medical themes, because medicine is, after all, about people and their troubles. When I was in residency, I didn't have time to do much with music, but now that I've found this band, I'm able to tap into my creative energy again." John Soper played in high school and college bands, and as an adult was a member of a local bluegrass group called Piney Mountain Boys, which split up in 1989.

Oddly enough, the creation of N.E.D. arose from an immediate need for entertainment at the 2008 annual meeting of the Society of Gynecologic Oncologists (SGO). In short order, the six gynecologic oncologists met and rehearsed in preparation for the gig. Notably, with the exception of John Soper and John Boggess, the band members never met, much less played together. They rehearsed one night, and performed the next. William Winter, a band member, said he and his colleagues were game to play for their peers, but noted that “[n]one of us are known for our music.” As stated in the vernacular by John Soper, the goal “was to not suck.” Despite the band’s hasty creation and short preparation time, the doctors who attended the SGO meeting loved the band’s music and rocked out on Led Zeppelin and Allman Brothers Band songs. The band played the 30 or so classic covers that they rehearsed, and when the large crowd of doctors asked for more, the band performed the same songs again. “People were sticking around,” Winter said. “We didn’t get booed off the stage. We actually got asked to do some encores. We played everything we know. We had to replay songs.” Marsha Wilson, communications director for the Gynecologic Cancer Foundation (GCF), said “Everybody went crazy. They were really good.”

After receiving positive feedback for its performance at the 2008 SGO Annual Meeting, N.E.D. went on to perform at the First National Gynecologic Cancer Symposium and played at Arlington National Cemetery in front of the memorial to military women who died in the line of duty. After several more successful gigs, the seeds were planted for a band that would be devoted entirely to raising gynecologic cancer awareness and funding for disease screening, clinical trials, and patient education.

### **The Band’s Mission of Gynecologic Cancer Awareness & Education**

“Do you ever see the words gynecologic oncology in print?” asked John Boggess. Boggess’ comment carries the underlying message that gynecological cancers are often overlooked, and reveals the overarching charitable mission of N.E.D. In a world where “me first” mentality is commonplace, and rock stars drive ultra-luxury sports cars, run with entourages, and make a habit of attending rehab, these multifaceted doctors simply want to raise the general public’s awareness about women’s cancers. “We think that people need to understand about these diseases and the women who have them,” said John Boggess. “So anything that we can do outside of the surgery we do every day in the operating room and in the clinic, we find to be an incredible privilege.”

In 2008, several band members were asked about the future potential of N.E.D. as a vehicle for cancer awareness. At that time, Joanie Hope stated that she wanted a future for the band that would “speak to people” through music. “I want people to listen to us at home so that our music and lyrics reflect what they are feeling if they have cancer, or someone they love does,” said Hope. Nimesh Nagarsheth responded, “I’d like us to make a CD. We could sell them at concerts as a fundraising tool, and we could put educational inserts about women’s cancer inside the case. Joanie [Hope] and I, as the ‘New York division of N.E.D.,’ have already written ten original songs, some with lyrics about cancer ...”

Each original song written by the band was inspired by the doctors' work with women's cancers. Joanie Hope wrote a song entitled, "Rhythm Heals," which is intended to inspire her patients. "It encompasses what we're all about," said Hope. "There are many ways to heal beyond what we do as doctors. My patients teach me that all the time." Nimesh Nagarsheth wrote the song "Third-Person Reality" to address a doctor's struggle to help patients dealing with cancer diagnoses. "It's tempting to remove yourself from the situation and be like a third person," said Nagarsheth, "but we have to overcome that because our patients need us." The hard-rocking track "False Pretenses," written by William Winter and sung by John Boggess, urges genuine communication when time is short due to a patient's dire diagnosis.

### **Motéma Music & The Gynecologic Cancer Foundation Take Interest**



N.E.D. Group Picture

Meet The Band: (Bottom Row) John Boggess; (Center Row, left to right) Nimesh Nagarsheth, Joanie Hope, William Winter, William (Rusty) Robinson; (Top Row) John Soper. (Photo Source: N.E.D. Facebook Page)

The 2008 comments made by Joanie Hope and Nimesh Nagarsheth in regard to N.E.D.'s future were indeed prophetic. Shortly thereafter, the band landed a record deal with Motéma Music, a New York record label that features world music and jazz musicians. Motéma artist K.J. Denhart is currently working with the band as a performance and songwriting coach. Mario McNulty, who has worked with David Bowie, Linkin' Park and other classic rock bands, will produce the band's first album.

N.E.D.'s first album is set for release in November 2009 during Gynecologic Cancer Month. Although the band wants to appeal to cancer patients and their families, William Winter said that they also want to reach others who may not be aware of the other types of cancers that afflict women. Winter's hope is to "market it to

anyone and everyone . . . and have them understand what goes on with women's cancers, and the pain behind these things and what women feel and what cancer patients feel and go through."

N.E.D. also receives support from the GCF. GCF believes that N.E.D.'s efforts are consistent with its charitable and educational mission. In fact, the band will be featured as part of a GCF national campaign, the Gynecologic Cancer Awareness Movement, which is scheduled to kick off in November 2009 in Washington D.C. Although the band has received support from GCF, additional monies are needed to fund the band's CD recording and post-production costs. GCF is accepting donations and soliciting funds to support the production of the band's first CD. Any future proceeds from the sale of the CD and live performances will be donated to the Gynecologic Cancer Foundation (GCF) whose mission is to educate the public about gynecologic cancers and support promising research. You can help by making a donation to the GCF (marked with a designation for "N.E.D.") through one of the methods provided below.

In addition to landing the Motéma record contract, N.E.D. has been invited to appear on "The Bonnie Hunt Show," and is in discussions with CBS and ABC with respect to potential appearances on "The Early Show" and "Good Morning America," respectively. Also, the band hopes to obtain an audience with Oprah Winfrey.

### **Their Medical Skills Save Many; Their Music Could Save Thousands**

The importance of N.E.D. and its mission to raise women's cancer awareness is best understood through the eyes of a gynecologic cancer patient. Samantha Hill, one of Nimesh Nagarsheth's patients, was diagnosed with ovarian cancer at a young age. Samantha says that when she learned that her doctor played in a rock band, she was not surprised. Hill emphasized that it is her greatest hope that N.E.D.'s message gets across to the general public. "You're 35 years old and you hear that you have cancer, and you're in shock," she recalls. "I felt that he [Nagarsheth] could relate and I think music is a very important tool. And I think that specifically, ovarian cancer, there's not much awareness and it's really a silent killer."

Victor Hugo, the French author of the classic novels *Les Misérables* and *Notre-Dame de Paris* (*The Hunchback of Notre Dame*), once said, "music expresses that which cannot be said and on which it is impossible to be silent." The band N.E.D. believes in the same principle when it comes to promotion of gynecologic cancer awareness and education through music. The N.E.D. band members will save many women's lives throughout their medical careers; however, they could very well save thousands of lives through the educational cancer awareness message brought to light through their music.

### **About Gynecologic Cancers & Gynecologic Oncologists**

Gynecologic cancers originate in the female reproductive organs, including the cervix, ovaries, uterus, fallopian tubes, vagina and vulva. Every woman is at risk for

developing a gynecologic cancer. It is estimated that there were approximately 78,000 new cases diagnosed, and approximately 28,000 deaths, from gynecologic cancers in the United States during 2008.

Gynecologic oncologists are physicians committed to the comprehensive treatment of women with cancer. After completing four years of medical school and four years of residency in obstetrics and gynecology, these physicians pursue an additional three to four years of training in gynecologic oncology through a rigorous fellowship program overseen by the American Board of Obstetrics and Gynecology. Gynecologic oncologists are not only trained to be skilled surgeons capable of performing wide-ranging cancer operations, but they are also trained in prescribing the appropriate chemotherapy for those conditions and/or radiation therapy when indicated. Frequently, gynecologic oncologists are involved in research studies and clinical trials that are aimed at finding more effective and less toxic treatments to further advance the field and improve cure rates. Studies on outcomes from gynecologic cancers, especially ovarian cancer, demonstrate that women treated by a gynecologic oncologist have a better likelihood of prolonged survival compared to care rendered by non-specialists. Due to their extensive training and expertise, gynecologic oncologists often serve as the “team captain” who coordinates all aspects of a woman’s cancer care and recovery. Gynecologic oncologists understand the impact of cancer and its treatments on all aspects of women’s lives, including future childbearing, sexuality, physical and emotional well-being, and the impact cancer can have on the patient’s whole family. But, there are only about 1,000 board-certified gynecologic oncologists in the United States. Women may need to ask their primary care provider for referral to a gynecologic oncologist if a gynecologic cancer is suspected because not all physicians are aware of the practice scope of modern gynecologic oncologists. Women can find a gynecologic oncologist by going online to [www.wcn.org](http://www.wcn.org) and clicking on the find a doctor button. This simple step may be the first stride forward to long-term survivorship and cure. It’s important to start gynecologic cancer care with the right team and a winning game plan.

### **About the Gynecologic Cancer Foundation**

The Gynecologic Cancer Foundation (GCF) is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization whose mission is to ensure public awareness of gynecologic cancer prevention, early diagnosis and proper treatment. In addition, GCF supports research and training related to gynecologic cancers. GCF advances this mission by increasing public and private funds that aid in the development and implementation of programs to meet these goals. For more information about GCF, its educational materials or research grants, please visit [www.thegcf.org](http://www.thegcf.org) or contact GCF Headquarters by phone at 312-578-1439 or by e-mail at [info@thegcf.org](mailto:info@thegcf.org). For additional information on gynecologic cancers or a referral to a gynecologic oncologist or a related specialist, please call the toll-free GCF Information Hotline at 800-444-4441. For more information about women’s cancers, visit GCF’s Women’s Cancer Network Web site: [www.wcn.org](http://www.wcn.org). Log on for a confidential risk assessment to learn about your risk for developing gynecologic and breast cancers. Comprehensive information about each gynecologic cancer and breast cancer is available on the site. The site also provides the opportunity to locate a nearby

gynecologic oncologist, a step women are urged to take if they suspect or have been diagnosed with a gynecologic cancer.

\* \* \* \*

**Online Contribution (Through the Network for Good):**

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**By Mail:**

Mail your tax deductible contribution to:

The Gynecologic Cancer Foundation

230 W. Monroe, Suite 2528

Chicago, Il. 60606-4703

**By Telephone:**

Call GCF at 312-578-1439 and donate with a credit card

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**Primary Sources:**

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