Increasing the Efficiency Within the Charitable Hair Donation Process

Improving the Information Gap in Involvement with Hair Donation Organizations in the General New Brunswick Area

Tag Words: Cancer, Chemotherapy, Radiation Therapy, Alopecia, hair loss, Locks of Love, Pantene Beautiful Lengths

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Summary

It is expected that the year 2010 will see 1.5 million new cases of cancer diagnosed by its end. A small, but significant ten thousand of those cases will be in children – ages twenty-one and under. Of the remaining new cancer patients, almost half will be female. Of the new women and children patients many will undergo chemotherapy and subsequently loss some or even all their hair. These new patients will join the two groups that we are focusing our attention on, the women and children battling cancer and in need of hair donations. We chose to host our own Locks for Love event to raise at least enough hair donations to create a wig for one child. As a secondary part of our project we aimed to educate local New Brunswick salons on different organizations involved in wig creation from hair donation. By educating the salons on the benefits and ease of entry to participate with certain organizations our intentions were to increase the amount of salons involved. Within the process of donating hair to organizations there exist inefficiencies due to unfamiliarity with guidelines provided by the organizations themselves. By increasing the number of local salons involved we aim to increase efficiency. Also, during the implementation of our project we realized that a means of monitoring registered salons would prove beneficial. We contacted both the University of Rutgers and the City of New Brunswick in hope that they would consider assisting us in this venture.

Video Link

Hair Donations for Cancer Patients: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8fan4zj21vI
The Issue: Donating Hair

Cancer
Two characteristics essentially define cancer. First, cells will undergo atypical, rapid cellular division and a general lack of differentiation into different cells. Normal cells will differentiate into specialized cells differing characteristics (i.e. muscle cells, red blood cells, etc.). However, cancer cells will lose the ability to differentiate and do not resemble the original cell it came from. This loss in differentiation enables cellular division to occur more rapidly in certain cases, contributing to the growth of cancer. Also assisting the increasing number of cancer cells and rapid division is the lack of adequate cellular apoptosis. Normal cell have a programmed cell death that occurs and have similar amounts of cells forming from division as those dying from apoptosis. Cancer cells either lose complete control of apoptosis or a prolonged cell life. Thus the amount of cancer cells forming is greater than those being destroyed.

Second, cells will attack nearby tissues and have the potential to metastases or spread to an area that is not neighboring the origin of cancer. The cancer cells will travel from the original site to a secondary site, usually through either the circulatory system (primarily blood vessels) or the lymphatic system. The farther the metastasis is from the original site, the more likely it travelled via the lymphatic system. Once arriving and establishing itself in a new site the cancer cells will proceed to grow and invade the new surrounding tissue.

There are many risk factors that contribute to cancer development, most noticeably consistent exposure to carcinogens. The longer the exposure to carcinogens correlates to the higher probability of acquiring cancer. This is one of the reasons an increased level of cancer is found in increasing age. Other assumptions are that the decrease in immunological response and alteration in hormonal levels that occurs with age may assist in developing cancer. Beyond age Environmental and Lifestyle factors are the two main determinants of the level of risk. The main factors of both are listed in the table below.

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<th>Environmental Factors</th>
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<td>Sexual Practices</td>
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<td>Dietary Habits</td>
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<td>Ultraviolet Radiation Exposure</td>
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Different factors promote differing kinds of cancer within the body. Tobacco, air pollution, and some occupational related carcinogens (asbestos) are contributed factors to lung cancer, the most common cancer in the United States. Over consumption of alcohol can cause esophageal cancer, as well as promote cirrhosis of the liver. Cirrhosis of the liver can in turn cause liver cancer. Ultraviolet radiation exposure, both from the sun and from tanning beds, causes damage to skin cells. Continuous damage increases the likelihood of skin cancers ranging from mild to very serious, such as melanoma.

Risk factors in diets include diets low in fiber, high in fat, and obesity in general. High fat and low fiber diets increase the probability of acquiring colorectal cancer, whilst obesity is
commonly associated with breast, prostate, and colorectal cancer. In the case of sexual practices
an increase in the number of partners can increase the chance of acquiring HPV (human
papilloma virus) which can cause cervical cancer. Finally lack of physical activity increases the
chance of cancer even if the individual is at a healthy weight. The lack of physical activity leads
to a lack of muscles. The lack of muscles generally is tied to a lack of protein readily available
in the body for use. Protein is stored in muscles and used in the production of antibodies, which
help destroy cancerous cells in the human body.

While it is important to detect cancer as early as possible, the signs and symptoms of cancer in
the early stages can be attributed to a variety of other more common ailments. The American
Cancer Society has developed the pneumonic CAUTION to remember the seven signs of cancer.

- Change in bowel or bladder habits
- A sore that doesn’t heal
- Unusual bleeding or discharge
- Thickening of lump in breast or elsewhere
- Indigestion or difficulty swallowing
- Obvious change in a wart or mole
- Nagging cough or hoarseness

It is important to note that these seven warning signs do not necessarily mean that someone has
cancer. In many cases these signs are symptoms of some other milder condition. Regardless, it
is important investigate these symptoms to ensure that cancer is not present.

American Cancer Society.  www.cancer.org

Wilkins


Treatments and Side Effects
The most popular treatments for cancer include chemotherapy and radiation. Despite the fact that
chemotherapy can refer to the use of any drug, generally it used to describe drugs used to treat
cancer. The origins of chemotherapy were unintentional, dating back to a military operation in
World War II. Mustard gas, a chemical warfare agent, was accidentally administered to a group
of people. When examined, it was found that the white blood cell count had dramatically
decreased in this group. This event marked the onset of using chemical agents to treat and
possibly cure cancer.

In order to understand how chemotherapy works, one must understand the basic life cycle of a
cell. Cell replication occurs in a series of 5 steps, known as the cell life cycle (See diagram and
description below)
The Cell Cycle

- **G0 phase (resting stage):** The cell has not yet started to divide. Cells spend much of their lives in this phase. Depending on the type of cell, G0 can last from a few hours to a few years. When the cell gets a signal to reproduce, it moves into the G1 phase.

- **G1 phase:** During this phase, the cell starts making more proteins and growing larger, so the new cells will be of normal size. This phase lasts about 18 to 30 hours.

- **S phase:** In the S phase, the chromosomes containing the genetic code (DNA) are copied so that both of the new cells formed will have matching strands of DNA. S phase lasts about 18 to 20 hours.

- **G2 phase:** In the G2 phase, the cell checks the DNA and gets ready to start splitting into 2 cells. This phase lasts from 2 to 10 hours.

- **M phase (mitosis):** In this phase, which lasts only 30 to 60 minutes, the cell actually splits into 2 new cells.

Normal cells know how to stop reproducing or dividing when they come into contact with other cells. Tumor or cancerous cells, on the other hand, are missing this “stop” mechanism, resulting in the repeated and rapid division of cells. The RNA and DNA of a cell instruct it on how to divide. Chemotherapy works by destroying this RNA or DNA, targeting the cell cycle.

Chemotherapy drugs are classified as either cell-cycle nonspecific or cell-cycle specific. Cell-cycle nonspecific drugs are able to kill cells at any stage of their life cycle. Cell-cycle specific drugs are able to kill cells at a specific stage other than the resting stage. When multiple doses of cell-cycle specific drugs are given, this targets a maximum number of cells in specific phases and provides effective treatment. Likewise, cell-cycle nonspecific drugs are most effective when given in multiple doses, with a specific time lapse in between each dose. A cell usually undergoes several divisions before it dies. Therefore, it is crucial that chemotherapy be administered repeatedly to continue to decrease the amount of cancer cells. When chemotherapy drugs are given, they cannot distinguish the difference between cancerous and normal cells, and attack them both. The resulting attack on normal healthy cells causes side effects. The ultimate goal of chemotherapy is to strike a balance between destroying cancerous cells, but sparing the normal ones.

Chemotherapy can be given in numerous ways: orally, intravenously, as an injection or needle, directly into a body cavity, and intrarterially. Doctors usually combine both specific and
nonspecific drugs into a regimen in which the drugs can complement each other and work together to provide more effective treatment. Chemotherapy is considered systemic, as it travels throughout the body, unlike local cancer treatments that only target a specific area. It is also divided into various therapies. An adjuvant therapy is therapy given after surgery to decrease the possibility of the cancer returning. Neo-adjuvant therapy is given before surgery to decrease the size of the tumor, thus increasing the success rate of the surgery. Concurrent therapy is when 2 or more cancer therapies are given together, such as chemo and radiation.

There are several categories of chemotherapy drugs. These include: alkylating agents, antimetabolites, anthracyclines, topoisomerase inhibitors, mitotic inhibitors, corticosteroids, and miscellaneous drugs. Alkylating agents work by causing direct damage to the DNA, preventing cell reproduction. They are cell-cycle nonspecific. Examples include nitrogen mustards (mechlorethamine, chlorambucil, Cytoxan®), nitrosureas (streptozocin, carmustine), alkyl sulfonates, (busulfan) triazines, (dacarbazine (DTIC), and temozolomide (Temodar®) and ethylenimines (hiotepa and altretamine). Antimetabolites are drugs that interfere with normal metabolic function, thus preventing RNA and DNA growth. They are cell-cycle specific, and cause damage during the S phase of cell growth. Examples include 5-fluorouracil (5-FU), capecitabine (Xeloda®), 6-mercaptopurine (6-MP), methotrexate, gemcitabine (Gemzar®), cytarabine (Ara-C®), fludarabine, and pemetrexed (Alimta®). Anthracyclines are anti-tumor antibiotics that interfere with enzymes involved in DNA replication. They are cell-cycle nonspecific. Examples of anthracyclines include daunorubicin, doxorubicin (Adriamycin®), epirubicin, and idarubicin. Topoisomerase inhibitors are a class of drugs that interfere with enzymes known as topoisomerases, which assist in separating DNA strands so that they can be replicated. Examples of topoisomerase I inhibitors include topotecan and irinotecan (CPT-11). Examples of topoisomerase II inhibitors include etoposide (VP-16) and teniposide. Mitoxantrone also inhibits topoisomerase II. Mitotic inhibitors are often plant derived, and can prevent mitosis from occurring or enzymes from producing proteins needed for cell reproduction. Examples of mitotic inhibitors include: Taxanes: paclitaxel (Taxol®) and docetaxel (Taxotere®), Epothilones: ixabepilone (Ixempra®), and Vinca alkaloids: vinblastine (Velban®), vincristine (Oncovin®), and vinorelbine (Navelbine®). Corticosteroids are hormone like drugs used to slow cancer cell growth and/or kill cancerous cells. Examples include prednisone, methylprednisolone (Solumedrol®) and dexamethasone (Decadron®). Some chemotherapy drugs fall under the miscellaneous category, as they act in different ways from the other drugs. Examples include L-asparaginase, which is an enzyme, and the proteosome inhibitor bortezomib (Velcade®).

Another treatment used for cancer is radiation. Radiation therapy involves using high energy X-rays to damage the DNA of the cells, thus killing the cancer cells. Radiation, like chemotherapy, also damages normal cells. Normal cells, however, are reproducing much slower than cancer cells, and can eventually recover from radiation damage. Radiation is usually administered in small doses, 5 days a week for a six to seven week period. Radiation is considered a local therapy, as it treats a specific area of the body. There are two main types of radiation—external and internal. External radiation therapy occurs when a beam of radiation is directed from outside the body. Internal radiation therapy involves placing the source of radiation inside the body, as close as possible to the cancer cells.

A major side effect of both chemotherapy and radiation is hair loss. Hair loss occurs because
both these treatments target fast-growing cancerous, as well as normal cells. Hair follicles grow at an extremely fast rate, and thus are targeted by the cancer therapies. The destruction of the hair follicles leads to hair loss. Hair loss can be gradual or sudden, depending on the specific drugs used and how they are administered. Certain drugs do not cause hair loss. The drugs that do are Adriamycin (doxorubicin), Carboplatin, Cisplatin, Cytoxan (cyclophosphamide), Dactinomycin, Etoposide, Hexamethameline (HMM, altretamine), Ifosfamide, Taxol, and Vincristine. Hair loss usually begins 2 weeks after treatment for cancer. Hair loss is usually temporary, but it takes about 3-5 months for a significant re-growth of hair to occur. Although scarves, hats, and turbans can be a method to conceal hair loss, a more popular option is to purchase a wig. Nowadays, human-hair wigs are available to the patient. The hair is matched to the patient’s own color, texture, and style, making it as close to natural hair as possible.

Chemotherapy: The Basics – Oncolink Cancer Resources
http://www.oncolink.org/treatment/article.cfm?c=2&s=9&id=319

Hair Loss/Alopecia. – Oncolink Cancer Resources
http://www.oncolink.org/treatment/article.cfm?c=2&s=13&id=59

Chemotherapy Principles: An In-depth Discussion of the Techniques and its Role in Treatment.
http://www.cancer.org/Treatment/TreatmentsandSideEffects/TreatmentTypes/Chemotherapy/ChemotherapyPrinciplesAnIn-depthDiscussionoftheTechniquesanditsRoleinTreatment/index

Psychological Impact of Hair Loss
Hair constitutes an integral part of a person’s self and identity. It is commonly used as an agent for recognition and physical attractiveness. Hair loss, no matter what the cause, has been shown to have negative influences on an individual’s self-esteem and self-worth. A study of male and female patients with alopecia revealed that the prevalence of personality disorders proved to be much higher for them than prevalence of such diagnoses in the general population. Hair loss affects social and emotional domains of an individual’s life; most people who suffer from hair loss find social situations stressful and will underestimate their self-worth. Personality disorders are disproportionately more than in the general population. Increased feelings of stigmatization and an increased lack of self-confidence are also common among hair loss patients. Children are severely psychologically affected due to hair loss. They lose a sense of normalcy due to an untimely loss of hair. They are picked on and teased by their classmates or are embarrassed by the amount of attention drawn to them due to their hair loss. Most children resort to avoiding social situations and normal childhood activities. This leads to a degrading sense of self-esteem.

Having cancer puts an increased psychological stress on the individual. The situation only worsens having to cope with hair loss as a side-effect of chemotherapy. Hair loss due to chemotherapy brings into public a part of an individual’s private life. Stressful situations like these force individuals to turn to different coping strategies. Some individuals’ behavioral conduct will be very positive and constructive (‘flexible coping’). Some patients can very successfully divert their thoughts from the negative impacts of hair loss. Most patients resort to maladaptive behaviors where they turn ‘negative emotional’ or ‘hair focusing’. They brood about their hair loss, withdraw themselves from social situations and focus their anger towards others.
Some others are characterized by giving up, anxiety, self-accusation and venting. Negative emotional coping is extremely common among hair loss patients. Hair loss has a significant psychological impact on a patient and can seriously impair their social functions and self-esteem. Remedial therapies are common among cancer patients who experience hair loss. Another common and practical solution is by using wigs. There are many non-profit organizations that work for this specific cause and help alleviate the pains of hair loss.


**Organizations**

Numerous non-profit organizations exist in order to provide the easiest solution for alopecia. Some of their primary focuses are cancer patients, children, women and alopecia patients in general. These organizations depend on volunteers and hair donors who are willing to cut their hair. Multiple hair donations are required in order to make a single wig. Hair lengths and requirement for each organization vary, but their primary goal is the same – to help patients cope with untimely hair loss. Two of the major organizations that excel in doing this are listed below.

1) **Locks of Love**

Locks of Love is a public non-profit organization that works to provide hairpieces for financially disadvantaged children in the United States and Canada. Their target age is less than 21. They cater to provide hairpieces for children suffering from hair loss due to any diagnosis. Most of their recipients suffer from alopecia, severe burns, radiation treatment from cancer or other skin disorders. Their mission is to “return a sense of self, confidence and normalcy to children suffering from hair loss by utilizing donated ponytails to provide the highest quality hair prosthetics to financially disadvantaged children.”

The hairpieces that the organization makes are custom-made for each child. Each hairpiece is made from six to ten ponytails. Hair prosthetics are very expensive (ranging from $3000 to $6000), but most children receive theirs free or charge or on a sliding scale, based on their financial need. A minimum of 10 inches in required for a donor to donate hair for this purpose. The hair can be colored or permed but not bleached or highlighted.

Hair can be cut at a salon or by self. Hair donations are sealed in a plastic bag and are mailed to the organizations headquarters in Florida. The organization provides a receipt of acknowledgment and will mail back a certificate. Events to collect hair can be held in the organizations name. Prior notice and approval of the event is required by filing out a form. Salons can also participate in the Locks of Love charity program.

2) **Pantene Beautiful Lengths**

Pantene Beautiful Lengths is a charity campaign that focuses on collecting hair from donors and making wigs from it. The charity focuses on making hairpieces of women and to try to bring normalcy into their lives. About six to eight ponytails are required for each wig. The wigs are distributed for free through selected American Cancer Society wig banks across the United States.
A minimum of 8 inches of hair is required per ponytail donation. Hair may be colored with semi-permanent dyes, but cannot be bleached or permanently colored. Hair cuts are usually made by the person itself and sent in to their Texas location. There is no knowledge of participating salons for this campaign. Volunteers for this campaign are individuals themselves who make the cut and send their hair in. Receipt of acknowledgment will be provided. There are no clear instructions as to how to organize an event for this campaign or to send multiple hair-donations in.

Website: Locks of Love- HYPERLINK "http://www.locksoflove.org/"
http://www.locksoflove.org/


Cost and Benefits of Salon Involvement
The costs associated with becoming a participating salon with a not-for-profit hair donating organization are typically quite small. Both Pantene Beautiful Length and Locks for Love require that an individual or salon simply fund the costs of shipping the hair to their organization. Other non-monetary costs include the time associated with being involved, i.e. filling out forms, sending donations, and event planning and execution. Although participating salons are not required to hold events, making that an optional cost. Also, some individuals who choose to have their hair cut will elect to send the hair themselves. This again will alleviate some potential minor costs coupled with involvement.

The benefits of involvement do not involve any direct monetary gains, but potentially can lead to indirect gain. Participating with a charitable organization creates a positive perception of any business, leading to a stronger desire for the consumer to shop at that establishment. By becoming involved with a charitable organization a hair salon can distinguish itself further from its competition. By differentiating itself from other salons, the salon involved in charitable donations can gain a competitive edge in business via its positive image.

An additional benefit is the impact that becoming involved in charity has on the individual(s). Both the owner’s and employees potentially will feel as if they are a part of larger community. This feeling will assist in satisfying what Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs terms need of belongingness. In doing this it will improve the social welfare of the individuals involved, which in turn can create happier and more productive work forces.

Creating a Competitive Advantage.

Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs.
http://honolulu.hawaii.edu/intranet/committees/FacDevCom/guidebk/teachtip/maslow.htm
The Service Project: Survey & Locks of Love Event

New Brunswick Area Involvement
To determine salon involvement in the greater New Brunswick area we decided that a survey (see Appendix A for survey) would be the best option to obtain optimal information. To our dismay of the seventeen salons surveyed none were presently involved with a charitable hair donation organization. Further questioning revealed that approximately four out of five salons surveyed had strongly considered becoming involved with a hair donation organization in the past.

When asked about which not-for-profit hair donation organizations the salons had heard about, every salon was knowledgeable about Locks for Love and around three out of four had heard of Pantene Beautiful Lengths. None of the salons had heard of Wigs 4 Kids or could confirm other charitable organizations with similar goals. When asked about the goals of Locks of Love and Pantene Beautiful Lengths the majority correctly identified that Locks of Love was a children’s organization, while Pantene Beautiful Lengths focus was providing women with wigs.

The overwhelming majority of salons stated that either they “did not understand what was expected them” or that they “had difficulty finding out how to become involved”. These responses illustrate an information gap between the salons and the hair donation organizations. This information gap has contributed to the underrepresentation of hair salons involved with hair donation organizations.

Community Project
From the beginning our group’s ultimate goal was to hold a Locks of Love event at a local New Brunswick salon in an attempt to raise at least enough hairpieces to create a wig for a child suffering with cancer. Though we initially met resistance due to resource and schedule conflicts, we persisted and fortunately contacted the salon Geetaz. The salon owner here said she had previously been interested in becoming a registered Locks of Love salon and agreed to assist us in holding our event. Working together, both the salon owner and our group informed potential customers that we would be donating hair to Locks for Love and that anyone who did donate would receive a 20% discount on their haircut. This offer remained valid from mid October to late November. Our group also personally arranged appointments for November 19th as an event day for Locks of Love. Overall the event was a success as we collected nine hair donations, three more than needed to create a wig. Additionally, during the process of our project and involvement with Geetaz, the salon owner agreed to become a registered salon for Locks of Love in the future. This response lead us to expand our initial idea of only holding an event to raise donations and awareness to raising awareness in general to the salon community.

We decided that we could not only survey salons about there knowledge, involvement, and interest in hair donation charities, but use that time as an opportunity to help educate salon owners in areas of confusion. We discussed the how’s and why’s of participating in a hair donation charity. From there we mentioned how the benefits of involvement would significantly override the costs. Also we clarified questions regarding requirements of the two main organizations we focused on (Locks of Love and Pantene Beautiful Lengths) and how to find out more information about the process of becoming involved. To our delight these discussions
produced a renewed interest for some salon owners in becoming involved. One salon even mentioned an interest in getting a group to try and donate to Pantene Beautiful Lengths in the future.

Through both our survey and interaction with various local salon owners we realized a means of reducing the information gap between customers, salon owners, and the hair donation charities, a website. Since Locks of Love does not maintain a list of registered salons and Pantene Beautiful Lengths does not have registered salons, a lack of information is currently present. Salons routinely involved with hair donation charities could easily assist individuals in the process and help them meet the requirements to donate. Also, our survey revealed that the majority of local salons would be encouraged to become involved if registered and/or participating salons were monitored and keep records of. Therefore, we have proposed that either Rutgers University or The City of New Brunswick use their websites to add an additional page providing this information. The webpage would not only benefit a confused salon owner or salon seeking individual, but improve the donation process.

Currently we are seeking a response from both Rutgers University and The City of New Brunswick regarding the webpage idea. Our hair collection process is wrapping up with some success. We have one salon registered with Locks of Love and a verbal commitment from one other salon that they would encourage donations to Pantene Beautiful Lengths. All that is left is to hope that our surveying and answering questions will reinvigorate involvement and help those in need.

**Appendices**

Salon Involvement Survey

1. How many years has your salon been in business?

2a. Are you or have you ever been involved with a not-for-profit hair donation organization (ex. Locks for Love, Pantene Beautiful Lengths, Wigs 4 Kids) and if so what organization?

2b. (If Yes to 2a) How long have you been with (above organization)?

3a. Which of the following not-for-profit hair donation organizations have you heard of?

   Locks for Love _____

   Pantene Beautiful Lengths _____

   Wigs 4 Kids _____

   Other (Specify) _____
3b. (If said yes to one or more of 3a) Can you describe the goal of that/those organizations?

   Locks for Love –
   Pantene Beautiful Lengths –
   Wigs 4 Kids –
   Other –

4a. (If No to 2a) Have you ever considered being involved with a not-for-profit hair organization?
   Yes ______
   No ______

4b. (If yes to 4a) Which of the following reasons best describes why you decided not to become involved with that organization?
   A. Did not understand what was expected of you
   B. Had difficulty finding out how to become involved
   C. Felt it would be too time consuming
   D. Felt uncomfortable becoming involved
   E. Other

5. If the City of New Brunswick and/or Rutgers University monitored and keep records of salons that participated with organizations like Pantene Beautiful Lengths and Locks for Love would this encourage future involvement from you with such organizations?

(Rency Mathew, Ankita Saripella, Jonathan Faig)

**Editorials**

Hair donations can help change an individual’s life

Hair loss is no stranger to us. Numerous remedies for hair loss have plagued advertisements on T.V. and other media. Hair loss or alopecia occurs normally as a result of aging. However, cancer patients, as a result of chemotherapy, experience untimely and severe hair loss during the treatment. Children who undergo chemotherapy experience this untimely hair loss. They are subjected to embarrassment and teasing by their classmates. In such cases, they tend to withdraw from social situations and tend to develop low self-esteem. Organizations and charities have stepped up to help people suffering from alopecia, no matter what the diagnosis. Some focus on kids, some on women, but the primary goal of all organizations is the same – to restore a sense of
normalcy to the people affected by untimely hair loss by making wigs for those suffering with alopecia. The easiest way to help out a little kid or someone suffering from alopecia is by donating your hair. 6 to 8 hair pieces are required for making one hair prosthetic! Donated hair pieces can be anywhere from 8 to 10 inches. You can make a kind cut and mail the hair to an organization that participates in making wigs. You can also let your friends know about donating hair or organizing events for this cause. Next time you make a haircut, instead of throwing the hair away in the waste, mail it in to an organization that makes wigs and know that you helped bring a smile on an individual’s face.

Signed,

Rency Mathew

Inefficiency in hair donations

Though the rate of cancer has been declining since the early 2000s, it has been predicted that 2010 will end with roughly 1.5 million new cases of cancer in the United States. That’s an additional 1.5 million individuals whose lives now encompass the physical and emotional anguish that comes with cancer. Of these new cancer patients many will undergo chemotherapy either alone or in combination with radiation therapy and/or surgery. A common side effect associated with chemotherapy and perhaps one of the most physically obvious signs of cancer is hair loss. The hair loss is not restricted to the face and scalp but is most noticeable there, especially in women and children. Enter hair donation charities.

Hair donation charities began over twenty five years ago. With the mission of providing hair to those stricken with cancer and other medical ailments that promoted hair loss, the hair donation charities also provided emotional comfort. The psychological impact of losing hair can be overwhelming to a patient with cancer, as it generally lowers self-esteem and creates feelings of being ostracized. Locks of Love and Pantene Beautiful Lengths (not-for-profit hair donation organizations) are two organizations that assist in nullifying these negative feelings by creating wigs for those in need. The former creates wigs for children suffering from cancer and alopecia, while the latter focuses on creating wigs for women cancer patients. With noble intentions these organizations improve the lives of many, but do so inefficiently.

For starters, neither organization maintains a list of participating salons on their websites. Instead Locks of Love mail out decals to registered salons and rely on the salon themselves to advertise as a Locks of Love salon. These practices make it quite easy for fraudulent salons to exist. Salons can claim to be a member of Locks for Love by simply recreating the decal that member stores acquire. Then all the salon needs to do is provide a free blunt cut for ‘donated hair’ of ten inches more in length and an assurance that Locks of Love will receive their donation.

On the other hand Pantene Beautiful Lengths does not even have salons associated with its cause. Thus the reliance is entirely on the individual for their donation. The issue here is familiarity. Some people who are donating will not be accustomed to the requirements for an acceptable hair donation and thus will unfortunately have their hair thrown away. This often occurs as was the case when football player R.W. McQuarters donated his dreadlocks to Locks for Love, only to find out that Locks for Love does not accept dreadlocks and threw the hair
away. While reading guidelines sounds incredibly simple, many people overlook information beyond the required length of hair. This results in wasted hair.

With the recognition of these information gaps two classmates and I, along with the assistance of Dr. Julie Fagan, are seeking to improve the efficiency in the hair donation process. The goal is to increase the salon involvement in New Brunswick, New Jersey. As it stands there are no participating salons for any hair donating organizations in New Brunswick. Salons stand as an important intermediate in this process. Not only will salons encourage involvement, but they can also guide donors as to what is an acceptable donation for a particular organization. This ultimately will lead to less wasted hair and more results.

Donate to restore a Smile

Cancer is the 2nd most common cause of death in the United States. Approximately 1 million cases of cancer are expected to found in 2010, out of which half are estimated to be deadly. Although new advances have emerged to treat cancer, the side effects have remained the same. An especially distressing side effect of cancer is hair loss, or alopecia. Hair loss occurs with most cancer therapies, especially chemotherapy and radiation. These therapies target rapidly dividing cancerous cells, but also normal, healthy cells. Hair follicles are one of the most rapidly growing cells in the body and thus get destroyed, leading to hair loss. Hair loss is not only emotionally painful, but can lead to public embarrassment and shame.

Fortunately, organizations exist that create human hair wigs specifically for patients suffering from cancer. Wigs can be matched to a patient’s own hair color, texture, and style—offering a truly personalized solution to hair loss. Our goal is to create a partnership between a local New Brunswick salon and a national organization that creates wigs for people suffering from cancer. We plan to collect enough hair (six eight inch ponytails) to make at least one hairpiece for an individual stricken with hair loss. Our mission is to promote awareness of hair donation to individuals with cancer, and increase the number of partnerships between salons and national organizations that provide wigs for cancer patients, such as Locks of Love.

Ankita Saripella