

# Hope through Innovative Healing

NorthShore University HealthSystem's Integrative Medicine team provides compassionate care to a cancer survivor who advocates for others.

By Susan J. White

As a medical social worker whose career includes full-time work in an inpatient hospice program and a private practice counseling people through life transitions, Fran Abramson has spent a lifetime helping others cope with the struggles of end-of-life care and life transitions.

Her own healthy regimen of regular exercise, including weight lifting, has helped keep Abramson strong and capable in the midst of challenges, including caring for her 27-year-old daughter who has severe disabilities. In short, Abramson has taken good care of herself. More than 20 years ago, at age 40, she was diagnosed with breast cancer, which she fought with her typical inner strength. Following two mastectomies and chemotherapy, she put cancer behind her and remained fully engaged in her life of raising children, working full time and advocating for those who have disabilities.

About five years ago, Abramson started experiencing swelling in her arm and an odd weight gain. After years of good health, she was now faced with severe lymphedema—a build up of lymph fluids under the skin, which is not uncommon following breast cancer treatment. Abramson found herself on a long and painful odyssey searching for relief.

All of that changed when Abramson met with NorthShore University HealthSystem Integrative Medicine Medical Director Leslie Mendoza Temple, MD, who is on faculty at the University of Chicago Pritzker School of Medicine. Dr. Mendoza Temple recommended a consultation with acupuncturist

Patricia Piant. An absolutely “life-changing” course of action began with laser acupuncture, an alternative to traditional acupuncture with needles, which is not a viable option for patients with lymphedema.

While Abramson had long explored Integrative Medicine and was familiar with many practices and the evidence-based studies behind them, she never imagined the extraordinary impact laser acupuncture would

ate the University of Chicago Pritzker School of Medicine, recently joined the Consortium of Academic Health Centers in Integrative Medicine. Membership is granted only to highly esteemed academic health centers and programs involved in clinical services, research, medical education and policy advocacy.

Piant, who serves on a Consortium oncology subcommittee, relishes the opportunity



Fran Abramson (left) has found tremendous relief from the pain and challenges of lymphedema through laser acupuncture therapy with Patricia Piant, a licensed, board-certified acupuncturist and Chinese herbalist with NorthShore's Integrative Medicine program.

have on her own life. Her work with Piant “gave me hope for the first time in years,” Abramson said. “Within a few sessions there was a marked improvement in the swelling, and I lost 15 pounds.”

Piant was as thrilled as her patient and is now sharing this success story—repeated in a group of lymphedema patients she is treating—with colleagues across the country.

NorthShore's Integrative Medicine Program, in collaboration with teaching affili-

to share in research with colleagues from across the country and be a part of a powerful movement to improve patient care.

“What I appreciate most about Patricia is that she approaches her work with great passion and expertise,” Abramson said. “She has a real foundation in the clinical science and she engaged me as a partner.”

To make an appointment with an Integrative Medicine practitioner, please call (847) 492-5700 (Ext. 1221). [C](#)