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Jennifer Pfister, manager of Sheridan Memorial Hospital's Welch Cancer Center, will be one of three Welch Center employees on a team to help treat cancer patients in the comfort of their own homes. The idea stemmed from the experience of Sheridan resident Eric Dygon, who took a sharp turn for the worse before his recent death and couldn't travel to the hospital for further treatment.

## Providing compassionate care

- Welch Cancer Center implementing new home visit program

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Since its establishment in 1993, the Welch Cancer Center has been "providing individualized, professional care in a compassionate atmosphere," as its motto reads.

Now the center has implemented a new program to augment this level of care with the introduction of home visits to patients unable to come to the center.

This new program was inspired by the Feb. 23 death of Eric Dygon of Sheridan. Dygon, 38, died of head and neck cancer in the comforting surroundings of his own home thanks to the dedication and coordination of

his family and the Welch Cancer Center staff.

"Because we knew the inevitable outcome, our No. 1 goal was just to make Eric as comfortable as possible," explained his younger brother, Nathan Dygon of Sheridan. "It worked miracles — he was in peace at the end, more than he would've been at a hospital."

Dygon was diagnosed with cancer three years ago, said his brother, and remained optimistic until the end.

"He never once complained ... he was the type of person who refused to take narcotic pain meds because he felt it clouded his mind. He said he wanted to enjoy the time he had left with his family," stated Nathan

Dygon.

Eric Dygon leaves three daughters, ages 10, 12, and 17.

Dygon "went downhill super fast" in early January, according to his brother, who added: "He was too sick to go anywhere; he'd lost a lot of weight and was too cold and weak to really move. The doctors and staff from the Cancer Center went to see him so he could be more comfortable in his last days."

Tailored after these visits with Dygon, the new program will not replace hospice care, according to Jennifer Pfister, the department manager at Welch Cancer Center.

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“Eric was somebody who was not yet on hospice, but he quickly got to the point where he couldn’t come in,” she explained.

Dr. John Stamato, the center’s head radiation oncologist, assembled a team composed of Pfister and several other staff members to visit Dygon at his home in his final days.

“It was a great visit,” said Pfister. “It allowed us to talk to Eric about moving forward with treatment in his own home setting. We helped him with his decisions at the end instead of just making a phone call.”

“This took such incredible dedication,” said Nathan Dygon. “They really went above and

beyond. It made Eric and [our family] feel a little better.”

Because of the success of the home treatment with Dygon, Pfister said the center is moving forward with the program in his honor.

Nathan Dygon said his brother would be pleased about the new program. “He had a very big heart — he would do anything to help other people.”

Indeed, Eric Dygon has unwittingly contributed to the enhancement of Sheridan cancer patients’ quality of life. As of Feb. 23, Welch Cancer Center patients unable to leave their homes have the option of home visits.

“We are always thinking about what our patients’ needs are,” Pfister said.