

Lublins fight back

Avon couple raises money for cancer research at UConn Health Center

by Ted Glanzer
Staff Writer

The statistic is so staggering, and sobering, it's almost impossible to believe.

According to the U.S. Department of Defense, 411,000 Americans were killed during World War II, a devastating cost of joining the effort to defeat global powers on two fronts from the end of 1941 to 1945.

Yet during 2014 alone, 625,000 Americans died of some form of cancer.

It's something that Avon resident Richard Lublin finds appalling.

"Cancer is killing more people in one year than we lost in three years of war," he said.

He cites another statistic to drive home the point.

"One in 2.5 families in the United States will get cancer," Lublin said. "Once you hear cancer out of your doctor's mouth, whole lives are destroyed."

Lublin and his wife, Jane are included in those statistics; both have been diagnosed with – and survived – cancer.

Since the Lublins were diagnosed, however, they decided to fight back, raising as much money as they possibly could to battle the disease in its myriad forms.

Since they began their efforts, the Lublins have raised more than \$12 million for the Carole and Ray Neag Comprehensive Care Center at the University of Connecticut Health Center in Farmington.

Because of their efforts, the Lublins have received UConn's highest award, the Medal of Honor, in 2014.

Most recently, they had the cancer center waiting room named for them at the new UConn Health Outpatient Pavilion.

Such recognitions aren't done lightly. The Lublins have been tireless in their efforts to vanquish cancer, including hosting the White Coat Gala at UConn, which has a charity auction and draws 1,200 people annually. Richard Lublin also co-sponsors UConn's cancer charity golf tournament.

"It's just beating the drum," he said. "It's a very important cause. It hits home for a lot of people. People who say, 'I've had an uncle or a son who got it.' There's a tremendous amount of cancer around, but there isn't a lot of professional focus on it."

Lublin has a difficult time understanding how HIV, which previously meant a death sentence for people who were diagnosed with it, can be managed, yet cancer still remains a difficult disease to bring under control.

"We wiped out AIDS; you take 11 pills a day and you go on with your life," he said. "We wiped out polio. We wiped out small pox. But we're not doing much for cancer."

Richard Lublin said he doesn't mean to minimize those other diseases, so much as bringing cancer into the forefront.

"When the AIDS epidemic hit, Hollywood went nuts and a tremendous amount of money got raised," Lublin said. "The pharmaceutical industry and medical profession went nuts. They succeeded. AIDS is not a death sentence. Why isn't the U.S. throwing more money at cancer?"

He is an ideal advocate for those looking to eradicate cancer.

A graduate of Duke University and Cornell Law School, Lublin practiced law for 30 years as a litigator before transitioning into acting. He's appeared in numerous popular television shows, including "Chicago



Courtesy photo

Jane and Richard Lublins – both of whom have been diagnosed with and battled back from cancer – are recognized for raising more than \$12 million for the Carole and Ray Neag Comprehensive Care Center at the University of Connecticut Health Center.

Hope," "Ally McBeal," "Law and Order" and "Rescue Me." He also had a role in the critically acclaimed Sidney Lumet film "Before the Devil Knows You're Dead."

In short, as a well-educated retired lawyer and actor, Lublin is not a shy man and he's also not afraid to share his opinion or ask for your money if it means eradicating a horrific disease that he's seen strike children younger than 5.

"I don't have the answer, but I'm doing my part," Lublin said. "I'm obsessed. I'm doing what I can."

Part of that obsession is driven not only by his own battle with cancer, the details of which he declined to share, but also with his wife Jane's incredibly difficult journey with cancer.

"My wife had a horrific battle that has been going on for seven years," he said, adding that she has had more treatment than anyone in the history of UConn Health Center. "It was one of the worst cases. ... Now she's relatively healthy and we've been able to knock it into remission."

Medical professionals are glad to have the Lublins in their corner.

"We are deeply grateful to Richard and Jane Lublin for their friendship and philanthropy," UConn President Susan Herbst said in a statement.

"Through their remarkable generosity, the Lublins have helped UConn Health make important strides forward in cancer research, patient care, and the construction of a new home for the Carole and Ray Neag Comprehensive Cancer Center. The Lublins have made an important difference in the lives of so many patients and their loved ones."

While Lublin is grateful for the thanks and the recognition – having rooms named for you and receiving medals are nice – he said the biggest reward "is I still have my wife."

The couple's message may be far reaching.

Vice President Joe Biden, whose son died of cancer in May 2015, announced last October that he was launching a "moonshot" to hasten a

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–Richard Lublin

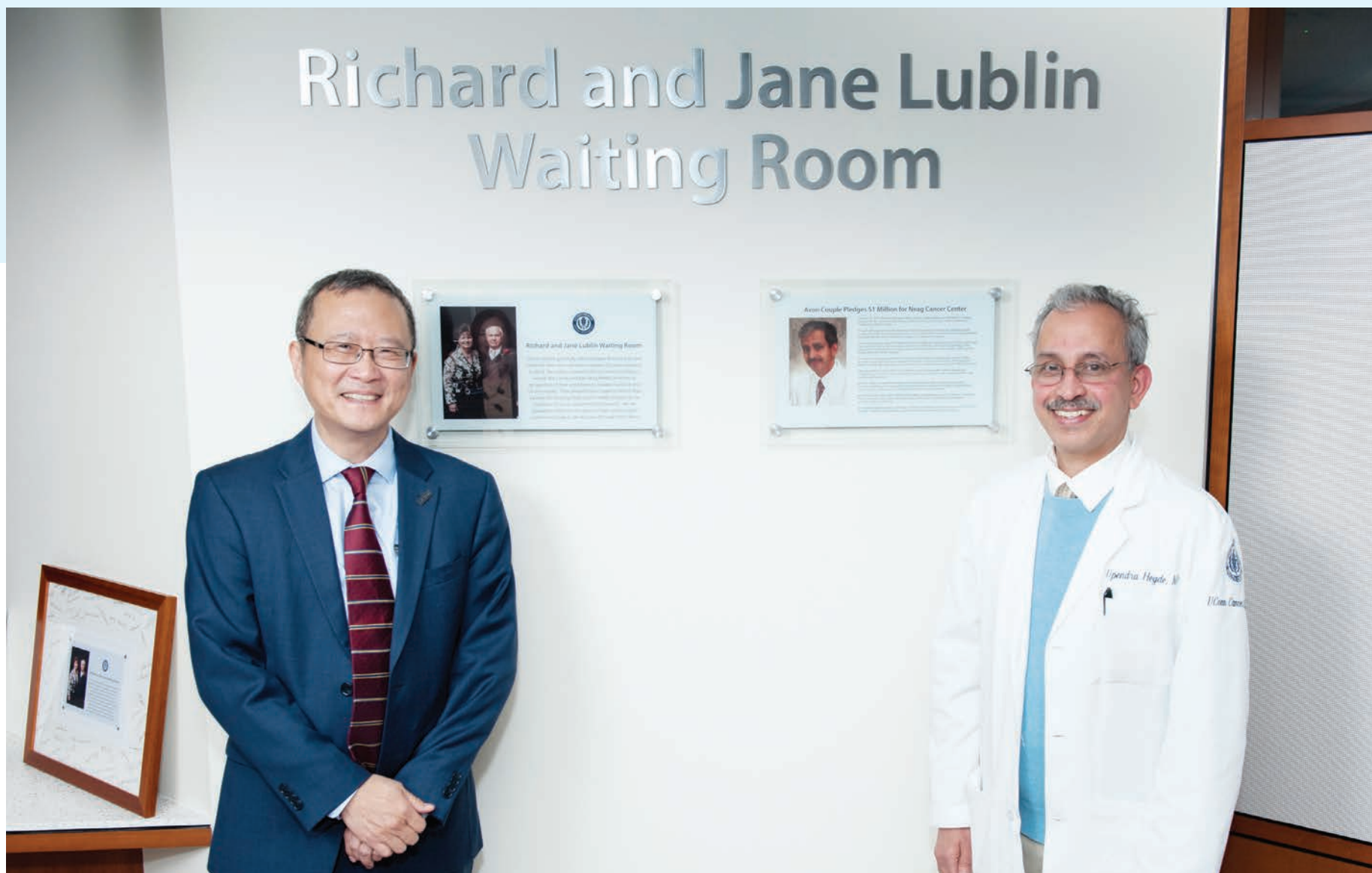


Photo by Defining Studios

Dr. Bruce Liang, dean of the University of Connecticut School of Medicine, and Dr. Upendra Hegde, associate professor and chief medical oncologist for the melanoma and cutaneous oncology program, attend the dedication ceremony for the Richard and Jane Lublin Waiting Room.

cure for cancer.

Biden said that political barriers in the medical world are retarding progress on eliminating the disease.

Lublin cites another issue.

"Cancer is not one disease – it's 100 different diseases," he said. "People react to medications differ-

ently. We're made up of trillions of cells. It just takes one to multiply and not stop."

While that makes finding a cure

more difficult, the Lublins won't give up.

"We go on one day at a time," he said. "I'm hoping to make a small dent in it. I'm going to keep doing it." **VL**

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