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**UT Southwestern support group's book reaches out
to husbands, partners of women battling cancer**

DALLAS – July 28, 2011 – When a loved one has cancer, it affects the entire family. For men, many of whom are less likely to take advantage of a support group, this can leave a void with devastating emotional consequences.

A UT Southwestern Medical Center men's support group is intent on filling that gap through its recently published book, *Stages*, which shares stories of members whose wives battled cancer.

"It's very difficult to put on paper. I just kept telling myself the benefit this will give others outweighs that," said Mark Mester, who tells his story in one chapter, along with chapters by co-authors Art Bourgeault, Bob Graham, Ralph Long and Scott Baker.

Open to any man whose wife or partner has cancer, the group meets twice a month at UT Southwestern's Harold C. Simmons Comprehensive Cancer Center. The purpose is to provide education and support, said Jack Hamilton, group facilitator.

"There's a wealth of knowledge of men in the group who have been traveling this journey for a while," Mr. Hamilton said. "It really is the model of what a support group looks like."

Five longtime group members decided to write the book as a resource for male caregivers and also to spread word about the group. Free copies are handed out to cancer center patients or family members. A gift from the Alan and Nancy Baer Foundation funded publication of 2,500 copies.

In the foreword, Dr. James K.V. Willson, director of the Simmons Cancer Center, notes that for every one of the 6 million women now battling cancer in the U.S., there are just as many or more family members affected.

"They are helping ill loved ones get through the practical challenges of day-to-day life as well as cope with the emotional hurdles of living, and sometimes dying, with cancer," wrote Dr. Willson. "In this book, you'll find the stories of five men who know firsthand what it's like to love and care for a cancer patient."

Each of the stories is different in its advice, experience and outcome. Three wives did not survive their cancers, while the other two patients are either in treatment or remission.

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“There’s a common thread in all of the stories, yet each person brought a different perspective to what happened to him,” said Mr. Baker, whose wife, Victoria, is doing well three years after a stem-cell transplant for leukemia treatment.

For Mr. Graham, who lost his first wife to brain cancer in 1989, going through the demanding process again without support would have been too much to handle. When his second wife was diagnosed with leukemia, went through treatment and later died of an infection, the group’s involvement provided empathy and shared experiences.

“These guys are incredible,” said Mr. Graham. “For people going through what we’ve gone through, if they don’t find a support group, they’re fighting a losing battle.”

Visiting that first group meeting was not easy for the authors, all of whom said their wives prodded them into attending. The men were glad they did, emphasizing that the group is not for therapy, but rather genuine support.

“If I reach out to these guys, they will follow through, and I find that a huge source of security and comfort you can’t get anywhere else,” said Mr. Long, whose wife, Linda, is now undergoing chemotherapy at the Simmons Cancer Center for metastatic breast cancer.

Visit www.utsouthwestern.org/cancer to learn more about UT Southwestern’s clinical services in cancer. For more information about the book or support group, contact Mr. Hamilton at 214-645-2742.

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