

# Respiratory Therapy | Care Team Story

**Patient:** Linda Sloan

**Diagnosis:** Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)

**Referred to:** Respiratory Therapy at Santa Clara Valley Medical Center

**Care Team:** Dr. John Wehner, MD  
Medical Director,  
Respiratory Care

Sandra Wong  
Respiratory Care  
Practitioner Specialist

## Respiratory Care Team Helps Patients Breathe Easier

When Linda Sloan was in her 20s, she learned she had a disease that caused problems with her lungs. For many years, her lung disease (diagnosed as bronchiectasis) remained stable, and she saw a doctor only once or twice a year.

However, in the past six years she has been having more problems. Now she sees the respiratory care team at Santa Clara Valley Medical Center (SCVMC) every two or three months.

She has been pleased with the care she's received and says, "I like the pulmonary and respiratory doctors. They are very knowledgeable and always nice. They listen to me and never seem to be in a rush."

One of those doctors is Dr. John Wehner. He is the medical director of respiratory care and has been attending to patients at the medical center since 1994.

"We don't turn people away, even if they are late for an appointment," says Dr. Wehner. "We understand some people might have to take several busses to get here, so we may be behind schedule, but we give patients our full attention when they are in the examining room."

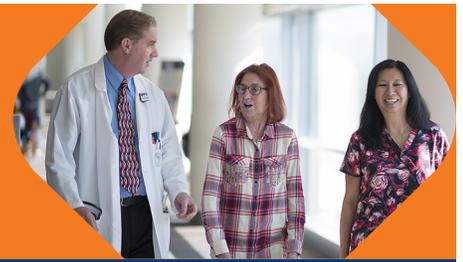
Along with being happy with her care, Linda also appreciates that SCVMC offers opportunities to learn more about her disease and provides her with a place to meet others who have similar illnesses. She gets information and gains a social network at monthly meetings of the Better Breathers Club, a support group affiliated with the American Lung Association. It is the only such club in Santa Clara County and was started by Sandra Wong, a SCVMC respiratory care practitioner.

Club meetings are free to the community and held the second Monday of every month from 11:45 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. The meetings begin with an educational presentation on topics relevant to lung disease. Recent topics have included personal safety and information about respiratory medicine.



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Sandra Wong, Respiratory Care Practitioner Specialist



Following the presentation, there is an open discussion where attendees can talk about anything they choose related to their lung and breathing issues.

Linda enjoys the social interaction of the meetings and knowing that she is not alone with her respiratory issues. The support group gives her a better understanding of her disease and helps her cope with her situation.

“We provide these monthly meetings to educate our patients and to help keep them out of the hospital,” says Wong. “We make sure they understand their care, we talk about issues that might affect their breathing, such as the flu, allergy season, the heat, and the cold. We work to increase the quality of life for patients and to help them manage their care.”

In addition to caring for people with lung disease, the respiratory care team, along with other health care workers at Santa Clara Valley Medical Center, teach people about how to prevent lung and respiratory problems and offer the following tips to stay healthy:

- Get vaccines, including the flu vaccine
- Get treated by a health care professional before you are very ill and have to be hospitalized
- Do not smoke
- Wash your hands

The care team also advises people to seek health care if any of the following symptoms occur:

- Shortness of breath
- Chronic coughing
- Difficulty doing exercise, including walking or participation in light sports
- Any abnormal phlegm

For more information, visit our website, [www.scvmc.org](http://www.scvmc.org). Please read about our **Stop Smoking Program**, to help you stay healthy and breathe better.

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