

# RIDING THAT EXTRA MILE ... AND THEN SOME

## NEW JERSEY PHARMACIST DAVID BORRONE GOES ALL IN FOR CANCER PATIENTS

Pharmacist David Borrone, is willing to go that extra mile for his patients, and then give them the shirt off his back, figuratively and literally.

The oral oncology specialist pharmacist, based at AlantiCare Cancer Care Institute in New Jersey, helped establish the company's first Medically Integrated Pharmacy (MIP).

He's also an avid bicyclist and rides the annual American Cancer Society (ACS) Bike-A-Thon: Bridge to the Beach from Philadelphia to Atlantic City, New Jersey. His jersey is covered with more than a 100 ribbons bearing the names of patients of the cancer center who are survivors, battling or have succumbed to cancer.

"The ACS ride is 70 miles, but they also have a century or 100-mile ride which I have done five times, said Borrone, BSPHarm, RPh. "It generally takes me six or seven hours, including restroom and food stops."

Borrone rides as a member of the AlantiCare Starfish Cycling Team, a group of employees, as well as their friends and family, who have been riding at the event since 2012.

He rode this year with brother-in-law Jerry Mezzina, whose parents are both cancer survivors, in memory of his own father, who died of lung cancer in 2014.

### PERSONAL MOTIVATION

Borrone said his commitment to his patients in both the ride and his career come from his own experience as a caregiver to his wife, Laura, a 17-year survivor of Hodgkin lymphoma.

"We were fortunate enough to find



**ABOVE:** Oral oncology specialty pharmacist David Borrone helps AlantiCare Oncology Director Marcia McCulley, an 11-year cancer survivor, pin her ribbon on to the jersey he will wear in the 2024 American Cancer Society Bike-A-Thon: Bridge to the Beach.

**RIGHT:** Borrone hits the road, his jersey covered with ribbons bearing the names of those battling cancer, cancer survivors and and "in memoriams" at the 2024 race.

an oncologist who took real good care of her, as well the nurses who managed the infusions in the doctor's office," he said. "It was an eye-opener. The lessons I learned from that experience are what I carry over to my life and my practice."

Borrone said he got the ribbon idea after participating in his first ACS



CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

## EXTRA MILE

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

Bike-A-Thon. “I saw people with ribbons or a photograph of their loved ones pinned on the back of their jersey,” he said, and decided to take it to the next level.

“Every year AlantiCare hosts a survivors’ week,” he explained. “I asked our oncology director if it was OK to set up a table collecting names of our patients on ribbons to put on my jersey. That year, I think we collected 30 or 40 ribbons and it’s grown every year since then. This year, I had 157 names.”

Borrone is quick to point out that his ribbon rides are not fundraisers; he’s already raised money on his own to participate in the ACS ride. Rather, it’s simply an opportunity for loved ones to recognize those who are battling and cancer as well as those patients who have passed on.

The concept was a bit hard to explain the first year, but not any longer, he noted.

“Every year, when we set up table, I have the previous year’s jersey hanging near it,” Borrone said. “Now, people see it and come over and talk to me about it. Then they ask if they can put the name of their mom, who is battling breast cancer, on it. Or the name of their dad, who died from cancer, on it. A lot of the names aren’t even AlantiCare patients. There the names of relatives of the people who come here for treatment.”

Most participants take a picture of the jersey with their loved one’s ribbon pinned out it. Borrone also posts a picture of each year’s much-decorated jersey on Facebook.

### A FORMER RUNNER

In his earlier days, Borrone was an ardent runner, but eventually had to give it up when his knees gave out. He switched to swimming for a while, but found “it was pretty boring looking at the bottom of a pool for an hour.”

He took up bicycling after a friend invited him to join him for a 60-mile charity ride.



**ABOVE:** Borrone (left) and brother-in-law Jerry Mezzina pose at the finish line of the 2025 American Cancer Society Bike-A-Thon: Bridge to the Beach just outside of Atlantic City.

**RIGHT:** Borrone’s 2025 AtlantiCare Starfish Cycling Team jersey, bearing the theme “Real Men Wear Pink” to raise awareness and raise funds for breast cancer, featured 157 ribbons, each bearing the name of either someone battling or who survived cancer, or who died from the disease.

“Neither of us had ever done anything like it before, so we spent about a month and half riding and training together, and then completed it,” Borrone said. “I really liked it. We rode on typical 10-speed bikes, which are clunky and heavy, but we did it. It spurred me to buy my own road bike and continue training.”

Borrone then started signing up for all types of charity races. One of his favorites was the ACS Philadelphia to Atlantic City ride, which he has now adopted as his annual ribbon ride.



CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

## EXTRA MILE

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

To stay in shape for ride, Borrone takes the bike out four or five times a week — weekdays on his hometown of Brigantine Island, New Jersey, weekends on the coastal highway down to Atlantic City, occasionally all the way down to Cape May.

“There’s never much traffic, so it’s a nice, peaceful journey,” he said.

## BORRONE’S PROFESSIONAL JOURNEY

Borrone’s professional career has been quite a journey as well.

His first job in high school was as a delivery boy at his hometown pharmacy in Lyndhurst, New Jersey. After initially entering college to study engineering, he switched to pharmacy, graduating in 1989 with a degree from the Rutgers University College of Pharmacy.

Borrone began his career in retail pharmacy, ran his own store for 10 years, then joined CVS. He joined AtlantiCare, headquartered in Egg Harbor Township in the Garden State, in 2009.

“I managed the Atlantic City pharmacy in a building which included nine clinics,” Borrone said. “Our pharmacy supported high-risk prenatal care to gerontology and everything in between, including pediatrics, infectious disease, diabetes and so on.”

In 2021, AtlantiCare posted a job opening for an oral oncology specialty pharmacist. Borrone jumped at the opportunity to move into oncology pharmacy and try something different.

“When I applied for the position, I had four or five patients taking oral oncolytics in the pharmacy,” he recalled. “When we first got those prescriptions, as a typical retail pharmacist, I didn’t know much about them ... and how to best counsel these patients. So I did my research and started my own OCE (oral chemotherapy education) sheets, so to speak.”

Based on this experience, Borrone thought he had a pretty good handle on the subject.



Borrone (right) and Mezzina pose near a memorial sign for Borrone’s father, David Borrone Sr., near mile marker 35 of the 2025 American Cancer Society Bike-A-Thon: Bridge to the Beach.

“When I went to my interview, I met with the medical director and she asked, ‘Are you familiar with the oral oncology medicines?’” he recalled. “I said, ‘Yes, I am.’ But it turned out my knowledge of five or six was nothing compared to the 80 or 90 that were then out on the market.”

After getting the job (Borrone joked that it was based on his customer service and patient management skills), he began an intense study of oral oncology to get himself up to speed.

## CREATING A JOB THAT DIDN’T EXIST

Another challenge that Borrone faced was that he was not filling an existing position, he was creating the position from scratch. AtlantiCare’s two oncology clinics had no internal clinical pharmacist when he started. Most specialty medications, such as oral oncolytics, were filled out-of-house.

“When I was first hired, this position

didn’t exist and there was no way to capture the of the oral oncology medications that our patients were taking,” he said. “I began utilizing the resources at the AtlantiCare HealthPlex Pharmacy to start filling the oral oncolytics that were being prescribed.”

Borrone began shadowing doctors to see how they managed patients to come up with a strategy. He collaborated with nurses. He created more OCE sheets. He looked for more ways to help patients. And though he hadn’t yet heard the term, Borrone was instinctively creating a Medically Integrated Pharmacy (MIP).

Still, there was something missing. In his neck of the woods, there were few healthcare professionals in his niche with whom to share ideas. All that changed when he first encountered NCODA in 2023.

“I hadn’t heard of MIP until I met (future NCODA COO) Stephen Ziter at

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

## EXTRA MILE

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

the Asembia 2023 Specialty Pharmacy Summit in Las Vegas,” Borrone recalled. “When I saw the NCODA table there, anything that wasn’t nailed down I took home with me.”

Borrone scoured the material, signed up to become an NCODA member and began going to the NCODA website on a regular basis, using it as a measuring stick to compare what he was doing and what other people were doing.

“Obviously NCODA’s OCE sheets were a lot more comprehensive than mine, so I was able to incorporate some of their ideas into mine,” he said. “I also had developed welcome kits that I was using for patients that I was happy to see NCODA’s Treatment Support Kits. I ordered a couple and then picked them apart to see what was in there and made enhancements to the kits we were giving.”

I still continue to order them because some of those kits offer unique resources such as dosing calendars, tips for managing adverse reactions and spark ideas in how we can enhance our kits.”

### A FAN OF NCODA’S RESOURCES

Borrone said he is also a fan of NCODA’s Intravenous Education (IVE) sheets.

“The longer I’ve been here, the more comfortable the providers and infusion nurses have become with me,” he said. “Even though I’m an oral oncolytics specialist, I’m called over to speak to the patients in the infusion chair about adverse reactions, their management and access to medications that they are having trouble getting.”

Yet NCODA’s best benefit is networking, he said.

“Probably the most valuable NCODA resource, the one that’s made the biggest difference in our program, are the NCODA International Spring Forums and Fall Summits,” Borrone said.

“I left my first NCODA Fall Summit with a notebook full of ideas, business cards and contacts for NCODA and other



This shadow box at Borrone’s office displays a jersey he rode on his ACS ride, some of the patches earned for completing the Century Ride (100 miles), various rider ID tags and pictures of two signs he sponsored along the route, one for his father and one for his sister, Mary Beth.

pharmacists and healthcare personnel who were doing similar things to what we were doing.”

And Borrone and AlantiCare have been doing a lot of things since 2023, including:

- ▲ Utilizing the in-house pharmacy;
- ▲ Initiating a financial assistance program to help patients quickly and seamlessly obtain grants and access to manufacturer patient assistance programs;
- ▲ Providing palliative care products to needy patients under AtlantiCare’s 340B Drug Pricing Program; and
- ▲ Solving the largest barrier to quality patient care: Speeding up turnaround time.

When he first started the position, Borrone said the average turnaround time was two to three weeks. Since there was no internal pharmacy, most patients were required to use a specialty pharmacy.

“That’s really where the scripts went down a rabbit hole,” Borrone said. “There was no communication, no updates. Patients would come back for appointments the following month and they still hadn’t even received the medication.”

“So, I started doing the Prior Authorizations (PAs) for the doctors as soon as I got back to the office from meeting with the patient. I was able to get credentialing to sign into the PA line as a representative of the doctor so most of those PAs were same-day approvals.”

Under the new MIP, the change in daily turnaround time has been profound.

“I had three patients today,” Borrone noted. “All three of those PAs were approved. Two of them required grants and both of those were approved. The medications are going out today. This morning, the oncologist team completed their chemo discussion with the patient. I met with them today to educate them on the medication they would be taking. Those meds will go out by UPS today to be with the patients sometime tomorrow.”

Not bad for a pharmacy team that consists solely of Borrone and one oral oncology specialty pharmacy technician, Kristen Shockey.

Not bad for a man willing to go the extra mile. And then give you the shirt off his back.