

# Breast Multidisciplinary Clinic: Meeting Women's Medical and Emotional Needs

The new Breast Multidisciplinary Clinic at The University of Arizona Cancer Center at Dignity Health St. Joseph's Hospital and Medical Center (Cancer Center) offers a comprehensive and coordinated approach to breast cancer care—one that provides significant medical and emotional benefits for patients facing this difficult disease, the most common type of cancer among women.

The Breast Multidisciplinary Clinic opened in early 2017 with the goal of bringing together all the specialties needed by a person diagnosed with breast cancer, to include medical oncology, radiation oncology, breast surgery, pathology, genetic counseling, social services, nutrition, physical therapy, pharmacy, and financial counseling.

“The more needs a patient has—whether medically or psychosocially—the more beneficial a multidisciplinary clinic is,” says Albert Wendt, MD, medical oncologist at the Cancer Center.

The first step in a patient's treatment at the Cancer Center is a multidisciplinary tumor board meeting where breast cancer specialists review the patient's images, medical history, and psychosocial situation. Collectively, a preliminary medical treatment plan is created. “It's extremely beneficial to have all of the doctors in the same room when developing the initial course of treatment,” says Lora Hebert, MD, breast surgeon at the Cancer Center.

Developing a multidisciplinary treatment plan before any treatment begins allows for more therapy options, says Dr. Wendt. For example, some patients benefit from receiving chemotherapy before surgery to shrink a tumor, “some women's requirement for a mastectomy can be reduced to a much less radical breast preservation lumpectomy,” Dr. Wendt says. “Giving chemotherapy upfront also gives them a little more time to think about their options.”

A patient's visit to the Cancer Center is coordinated through a nurse navigator whom schedules meetings with some, or all, of the specialists during this two- to three-hour appointment. When a patient arrives at the Cancer Center breast clinic, he or she is greeted and escorted to a comfortable room where each doctor and specialist visit, one at a time, to discuss treatment recommendations, answer questions, and get the patient's input. “Patients get a lot of their concerns addressed in one appointment, and I think that brings a great deal of relief,” says Linda Schafer, breast cancer practice manager.

Patients also contribute to the development of their final treatment plan. They are encouraged to share important personal, physical, emotional and social-family, needs, which can influence their course of care. “We know if a patient has a good understanding of the care to come, they experience a sense of some control with less stress and apprehension, which results in better outcomes,” says Dr. Hebert.

In addition to the Breast Multidisciplinary Clinic, the Cancer Center offers a Thoracic Multidisciplinary Clinic and is working on providing additional multidisciplinary clinics for other disease sites. These clinics take the collective value of integrative cancer care to the next level.

## BREAST CANCER SERVICES

- Breast surgery
- Chemotherapy
- Clinical trials
- Diagnostic radiology (PET, mammography, biopsies)
- Financial counseling
- Genetic counseling
- Lymphedema therapy
- Multidisciplinary clinic
- Nutrition counseling
- Pharmacy
- Physical therapy
- Radiation therapy
- Social services
- Tumor genomic analysis

# Multidisciplinary Tumor Board

Our tumor board allows a multidisciplinary team of doctors who are experts in different specialties to review and discuss the medical condition, treatment options, and individual needs of our patients. Physician participants may include medical, hematology, surgical, and radiation oncologists, radiologists, pathologists, pharmacists, and supportive care services, such as social workers, dietitians, and genetic counselors.

Patient cases presented at a tumor board may be reviewed for many reasons, including:

- New diagnosis.
- Recurrent disease.
- Treatment recommendations.
- Difficult management issues.
- Discussion of National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCC) treatment guidelines.
- Cases of cancer occurring in unusual sites or with unusual presentations.
- Clinical trial opportunities.
- Other disease(s) affecting patient management.

We currently host disease-site-specific tumor boards for the following: breast, gastroenterology, genitourinary, gynecological, hepatobiliary, head and neck, lung, melanoma, and hematologic cancers.

Being reviewed by a tumor board is of great benefit to all patients even if their cancer appears to be early stage. The treatment of all cancers is increasingly complex, and having the expertise of all doctors who will eventually be involved in the care of a patient is greatly beneficial for the best patient outcome. For instance, some breast cancers are best treated with chemotherapy before surgery, so having the input of a medical oncologist and breast surgeon at the outset is an advantage for the patient. Similarly, many prostate cancers can now be treated with radiation alone, instead of surgery; patients who see a surgeon first may not know there are other such options.



## CANCER CENTER TUMOR BOARD

CASE VOLUME 8.2015 – 12.2017

SITE	CASES**
Abdominal*	550
Breast	172
Head and Neck	77
Hepatobiliary/Pancreatic	137
Cutaneous (Skin)	23
Thoracic	963
TOTAL	1,922

\*Abdominal includes genitourinary and gastrointestinal cases.  
 \*\*Number of cases is a combination of patients treated at the Cancer Center and St. Joseph's Hospital and Medical Center.



Kindness is caring.