



When battling cancer, you want expertise on your side. At Hallmark Health, that's exactly what you're surrounded with.

HALLMARK HEALTH SYSTEM Has Cancer Surrounded

By Karen Ellery-Jones

THE HALLMARK HEALTH CANCER CENTER IS COMPRISED OF THE HEMATOLOGY AND ONCOLOGY CENTER AT 41 MONTVALE AVENUE IN STONEHAM AND THE CHEM CENTER FOR RADIATION ONCOLOGY, WHICH IS LOCATED DIRECTLY ACROSS THE STREET AT 48 MONTVALE AVENUE, ALLOWING PATIENTS EASY ACCESS TO BOTH.

WHEN HALLMARK HEALTH SYSTEM opened its new cancer center in 2007, it represented a continuation of a long tradition of providing comprehensive cancer care to area patients in a community-based setting. Now, Hallmark Health has added a new hematologist/oncologist, brought in the services of a palliative care specialist and has added more physicians to the surgical team — all while remaining focused on the personalized and advanced care that patients have grown to expect.

The Hallmark Health Cancer Center is comprised of the Hematology and Oncology Center at 41 Montvale Avenue in Stoneham and the CHEM Center for Radiation Oncology, which is located directly across the street at 48 Montvale Avenue, allowing patients easy access to both. All are a part of Hallmark Health System, which also includes Lawrence Memorial Hospital of Medford and Melrose-Wakefield Hospital.

Rebecca Eisenberg, M.D., the Medical Director, credits the entire staff not only for providing their medical expertise, but also for laying down the foundation for a compassionate, patient-focused approach to delivering individualized care.

"We have an amazing team of highly experienced clinicians who really get to know all of our patients from the moment they walk in the door," says Dr. Eisenberg, who is board certified in both medical oncology and internal medicine. "From the secretary who greets them to the practice and infusion nurses, everyone gets to know the patients, their families and their unique challenges."

The recent addition of Malgorzata McMasters, M.D., board certified in medical oncology, hematology and internal medicine, means that patients now have yet another specialist who brings the same commitment to individualized care.

"Because we are a community-based cancer center, we know our patients well," says Dr. McMasters, who trained at Lenox Hill Hospital in New York City and has a special interest in head and neck cancers. "The nurses are excellent and warm and have a great relationship

with our patients. We know their medical issues and their personal issues, and patients tell us they don't feel like a number. It's an individualized approach, and we aim to care for the whole family."

Joseph Pennacchio, M.D., has been with Hallmark Health's cancer program since it was located at Melrose-Wakefield Hospital. He has seen firsthand how it has grown from a hospital-based program to a freestanding comprehensive cancer center that offers the same high-quality treatment as the tertiary cancer centers of Boston in a setting that is close to home.

"We offer state-of-the-art treatment while caring for patients on a one-to-one basis," he says. "Patients who come through our center tell us that we go the extra step. It percolates down from the physicians to the nurses to the ancillary staff. Patients know we are looking out for their well-being. We really do care for them."

Dr. Pennacchio is also board certified in oncology and internal medicine and stresses that Hallmark Health's team tries to cover all aspects of each patient's cancer treatment.

"We now have a positron emission tomography (PET) scan, and it makes it easier for our patients because a fair number of them need scans before they start their treatment," says Dr. Pennacchio.

The CHEM Center has the latest radiation imaging technology, offering external beam radiation therapy, a 3-D conformal radiation therapy, intensity modulated radiation therapy, image guided radiation therapy, superficial radiotherapy (skin cancer treatment), PET/computed tomography (CT) and magnetic resonance imaging/CT image fusion treatment planning, two varian linear accelerators and a Philips Brilliance Big Bore Oncology CT Scanner.

The Hematology and Oncology Center offers the latest infusion therapy treatments. "We offer state-of-the-art infusion therapy," says Dr. Pennacchio. "We treat patients who have certain blood diseases locally now when we used to have to send into Boston."

Patients appreciate that they can receive this level of care close to home because they often have to spend a lot of time in infusion and treatment schedules that can sometimes be irregular.

"We work collaboratively with the tertiary care centers in Boston so that we can deliver this state-of-the-art care here, closer to home, and that's been helpful to patients who don't want to travel in and out of Boston for their treatment," Dr. Pennacchio says.

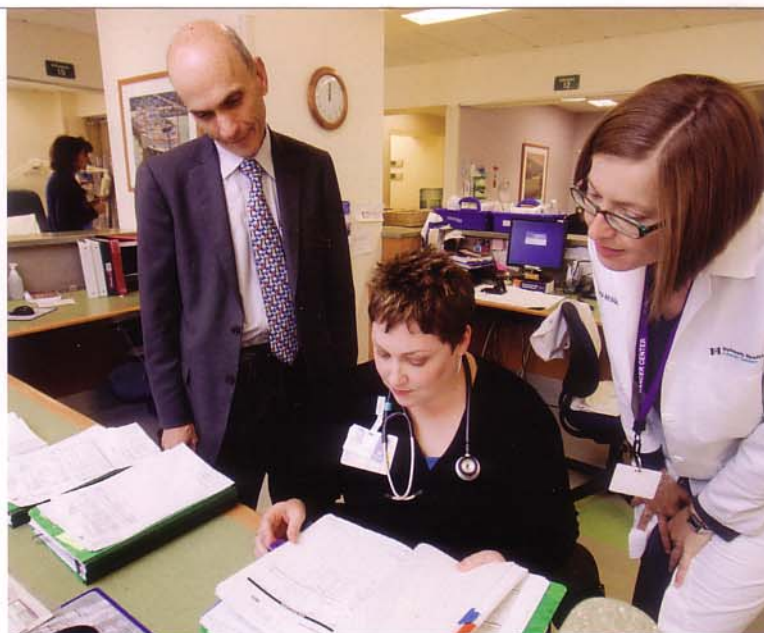
Occasionally, a patient may have to be referred to a Boston hospital for experimental treatment or clinical trials, but Dr. Eisenberg says that Hallmark Health's team keeps an eye on emerging therapies with the hope of being able to someday offer them locally.

"New therapies are coming out all the time, and we keep up to date with the latest therapies," she says. "For example, we do more testing of tumors so we can target the cancer therapy."

As part of a comprehensive cancer program, Hallmark Health also offers genetic counseling to patients who may be at high risk for certain types of cancer.

"All of our physicians are trained to do genetic counseling," says Dr. Eisenberg. "We have a social worker and a nurse practitioner, who helps with the genetic testing, and we are very fortunate to have the nurse practitioner who meets with each patient and discusses the pros and cons of a genetic test."

The full-time social worker also offers support for patients who



The Hematology and Oncology Center is led by (L-R): Joseph Pennacchio, M.D.; Rebecca Eisenberg, M.D., the Medical Director; and Malgorzata McMasters, M.D.

may have transportation, insurance or social concerns associated with a cancer diagnosis.

"Our social worker offers individual counseling and runs support groups on an ongoing basis," says Dr. Eisenberg.

Patients also have the benefit of an on-site nutritionist. "This nutritional support is great for our patients because maintaining weight and nutrition can be a challenge during treatment," says Dr. Eisenberg. "Having someone who is in the center regularly and can be with them while they are getting treatment is helpful."

In order to accommodate patients' concerns, Hallmark Health also has a nurse hotline to deal with any concerns or problems a patient may have.

"This is a great service and a unique use of resources. If a patient calls in, they can talk directly with a nurse who handles the issue right away," says Dr. Eisenberg.

All of these elements add up to a level of cancer care that rivals that provided by the tertiary care centers in Boston, except that it is delivered in a local community setting.

"You can get exactly the same state-of-the-art, aggressive and curative therapy in our community as you can in Boston," says Dr. Eisenberg. "Patients who are going through treatment will tell you it is life changing and intensive. The easier and more convenient you can make it for the patient, with all the support they need in their own community, the better it is for them."

The Hematology and Oncology Center has been honored by highly distinguished organizations such as the American College of Surgeons (ACOS), which recognized the center for high-quality programs. It received approval with commendations following a site visit where ACOS examined cancer registry data, attended a tumor board meeting, toured the center and reviewed more than 50 patient records. The approval allows the Hematology and Oncology Center to continue its designation as a "Community Hospital Comprehensive Cancer Program."

For more information or to schedule a patient, please call the Hematology and Oncology Center at (781) 224-5810 or the CHEM Center for Radiation Oncology at (781) 279-0655, or visit www.hallmarkhealth.org.