

spotlight

Kootenai Clinic Cancer Services Coeur d'Alene, Idaho



Kootenai Clinic Cancer Services is a community hospital-based comprehensive cancer care program. Developed in 1987, this American College of Surgeons Commission on Cancer-accredited program serves five northern counties in Idaho and Western Montana. Additionally, Kootenai's Outpatient Imaging Center is accredited through the American College of Radiology as a Breast Imaging Center of Excellence.

Kootenai provides cancer services in three locations throughout its catchment area. The largest facility is located in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, on the Kootenai Health hospital campus. The two-story structure encompasses a 22-station infusion center (18 chairs and 4 beds) all equipped with lounge heat/massage chairs and TV/DVD players, medical oncology clinic space, and radiation oncology services. The building recently upgraded its lobby areas, clinic space, and infusion areas with new flooring, lighting, art work, and furniture.

A second location in Post Falls, Idaho, about 10 miles from the hospital campus, is the newest facility. "Our location out in Post Falls is a beautiful, new building with a lot of windows and great south-facing mountain views from the infusion room. It's a very comforting facility," said Kimberly Christen, RN, BSN, OCN, Clinical Operations Supervisor. Built in fall 2009, Kootenai Clinic Cancer Services in Post Falls also provides the same scope of comprehensive cancer care as the Coeur d'Alene location:

- Medical oncology

- Radiation oncology (in partnership with Cancer Care Northwest/Inner Pacific Alliance for Cancer Care)
- Infusion services
- Laboratory
- Pharmacy (with designated oncology pharmacy staff)
- Social worker and financial advocate
- Dietitian services
- Navigation services.

Partnering with Cancer Care Northwest and Providence Sacred Heart under the InnerPacific Alliance for Cancer Care umbrella, the radiation oncology department offers state-of-the-art technologies, such as linear accelerator-based treatments, Gamma Knife, stereotactic radiosurgery, MammaSite treatment for breast cancer patients, and brachytherapy for GYN and prostate cancer patients.

The third Kootenai Clinic Cancer Services site in Sandpoint (about 50 miles from the main hospital) operates similar to a satellite location and is adjacent to an affiliated hospital, Bonner General Hospital. Sandpoint is open three days a week and offers all the same on-site services as its sister locations, with the exception of radiation oncology.

Reaching Rural Patients

As a member of the Mayo Clinic Care Network, Kootenai Clinic Cancer Services oncologists have access to the knowledge and expertise of the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. This membership enables e-consultations for patients unable to travel, allowing them to receive second opinions without leaving home. Kootenai providers

can send images, pathology slides, etc., to Mayo with the consult typically routed to an expert in that particular disease state. "We get a response back from them usually within a week. It's great because the patients don't need to leave home to get the expert opinion from a tertiary care center," said Kevin Mulvey, MD, medical director of Kootenai Clinic Cancer Services.

Services like these e-consultations are especially useful to a rural patient population. "The five northern counties are spread quite far and are very rural with a high number of small communities. Providing gas cards for patients who have daily radiation has been the key to getting some of the lower income, rural folks in for daily radiation," said Teresa Johnston, RN, BSN, OCN, regional manager, Cancer Services.

Kootenai Health has an independent Kootenai Health Foundation program that contributes annually to the Cancer Patient Support Fund. Funds are filtered into the Foundation via community fundraising, donations, and philanthropy. The program, which serves uninsured and underinsured patients, covers needs such as co-pay assistance, gas, groceries, and other living expenses. Kootenai also partners with the American Cancer Society's Road to Recovery for volunteer transportation services.

Kootenai brings clinical trials to their patient community via their membership in a cooperative research group. The Montana Cancer Consortium (MCC) enables access to a multitude of clinical trials through the National Community Oncology Research Program (NCORP). Comprised of 12 community oncology practices throughout Montana,



northern Idaho, and northern Wyoming, MCC maintains a robust clinical trials program through an aggressive screening process, with each new diagnosis reviewed by the research team, consisting of a research RN and a clinical research associate. To date, Kootenai Clinic Cancer Services has an accrual rate of 6 percent, the highest within the group.

Evolving Supportive Care

Kootenai Clinic Cancer Services currently employs three clinical nurse navigators, all OCNs with extensive oncology experience. The navigation program was first launched in 2011 initially with a thoracic focus and then expanded in 2012 to add a breast navigator. A third general navigator was added in fall 2014 “as we recognized the value and believed all patients should benefit from navigation,” said Johnston. Navigators begin developing relationships with patients at the time of referral and serve as the primary point of contact to ensure a timely journey from treatment start to finish.

Survivorship services were recently developed in 2015 with a collaborative approach under the guidance of Kootenai’s Cancer Committee. The navigators work with the physicians to develop the care plan and treatment summary. Once the summary is complete, the patient is instructed to complete a quality-of-life assessment to assist in creating the framework for the survivorship visit with an advanced practice provider. This visit may include referrals to social work, dietitian services, or other community resources.

A social worker and financial advocate work on-site in each Kootenai Clinic Cancer

Services location. The dietitian coordinates with the nursing team in responding to nutritional screening consults. At the cancer clinic in Coeur d’Alene, oncology patients can also access rehabilitation services, such as a lymphedema specialist, and support groups, such as a breast cancer support group and general cancer support group. Inpatient palliative care services are available through the hospital.

Kootenai Clinic Cancer Services works to expand comprehensive care into the community via a robust outreach program under the direction of outreach coordinator Tolli Willhite. Successful past community events include:

- Spot Checks—a skin cancer screening program held at all three sites, in partnership with local dermatology clinics.
- Eat to Beat Colon Cancer—a public forum to educate on screening, early detection, prevention, and treatment.
- Pamper Me Pink—a breast cancer awareness event to educate the public regarding mammography, early detection, and treatment options.


Process Improvement

In 2011 Kootenai Clinic Cancer Services launched a thoracic working group, including an interdisciplinary thoracic-focused cancer conference held twice monthly to discuss the management of new cases. Attendees include navigation, thoracic surgeons, pulmonologists, radiation oncologists, medical oncologists, radiology, and pathology.

A twice monthly breast cancer working group was then developed in 2012. All new

breast cases are reviewed by the working group, which includes navigation, general surgery, radiation oncologists, medical oncologists, reconstructive surgeons, radiology, pathology, a genetics coordinator, and a clinical research RN.

“The development of these site-specific work groups has drastically reduced our diagnosis to treatment delays,” said Johnston. Since launching the thoracic group, diagnosis to treatment time was reduced by about 29 percent for this disease site.

Diagnosis to treatment time for breast patients has also been reduced by about 30 percent. These improvements were greatly impacted by the Kootenai Outpatient Imaging team who alert the navigator of all positive findings. The imaging team routinely performs same-day ultrasounds on abnormal mammograms. Kootenai Clinic Cancer Services is currently looking to develop another multidisciplinary work group for head and neck cancers. 

Select Support Services

- Navigation
- Dietitian
- Financial advocate
- Social work
- Genetic counseling
- Lymphedema specialist

New analytic cases in 2014: 1,073
Percent of patients accrued to clinical trials in 2014: 6%