



# Mind, Body, and Spirit

# *How robust integrative and complementary services can bring an entire cancer program together*

**W**ellStar Health System is the largest health system in Georgia, with 11 inpatient hospitals. It is a not-for-profit organization recognized nationally for its innovative care models, which are designed to improve quality and access to healthcare. Several years ago, WellStar made a strategic decision to centralize administration of WellStar Health System cancer services by creating a system-wide Cancer Network. The goal of this initiative was to ensure that all cancer services provided throughout the network are provided in a consistent, high-reliability manner. At that time, oncology-related programs and services at the network's largest facility, WellStar Kennestone Hospital, were spread across the campus in different locations, and supportive care services were not always easy to access. As the cancer program grew, cancer network leaders recognized the need for change, and a new goal was created: to provide an environment focused on the needs of the whole patient—mind, body, and spirit.

## **In the Beginning**

The vision for expanding the cancer program's scope and consolidating its services for patient convenience was first explored in 2011 during the planning stages for construction of an additional inpatient tower. This vision became a reality in late 2013 when the new Blue Tower and bridge opened. The oncology inpatient unit was moved to the first floor of this tower and a bridge connected inpatient and outpatient cancer care areas on

---

During the planning stages for the outpatient cancer center, it was quickly recognized that the space should be designed to be patient friendly, and cancer network leaders sought to find best practices in the industry.

---

the second floor. The bridge allowed staff, such as patient navigators, to get from outpatient areas to the inpatient unit to see a patient in a very short walk. Additionally, the bridge made it easier to transport inpatients needing radiation therapy.

During the planning stages for the outpatient cancer center, it was quickly recognized that the space should be designed to be patient friendly, and cancer network leaders sought to find best practices in the industry. To that end, project leaders consulted with Planetree, a global leader in advancing person-centered care to provide an organizational assessment report with recommendations. After reviewing literature and making site visits to cancer centers with similar vision, the clinical director, operations director, and clinical educator completed the Planetree Coordinator Ori-



Left upper: Illuminations by Borelli's, a medical hair loss boutique. Right upper: The Dana and David and Parks Resource Center where volunteers assist patients and caregivers with online and print resources. Right lower: Welcome Center with fireplace and comfortable seating, a place to wait or rest between appointments. Left lower: Manning Wellness Kitchen where patients and caregivers can participate in cooking demonstrations and nutritional education.



entation and began to incorporate many Planetree concepts during the active planning phase over the next 2 years, including the following:

- Dignity and choice
- The importance of social support
- Patient education and access
- A healing environment
- Nutritional and nurturing aspects of food
- An arts program
- Spirituality
- Human touch
- Integrative therapies
- Healthy communities.

Cancer Network leaders selected an architectural firm, CDH Partners, whose goal is “to engage, inspire, and enhance the human experience by creating designs that connect a building’s purpose, function, and context to those who use it” to work closely with the cancer program’s Patient Family Advisory Board, as well as with clinical, medical, facilities, and administrative staff. This process resulted in a new design for space, equipment and furniture, clinical appointments, programs, and services, creating an environment for comprehensive and seamless care.

The physical space for the outpatient cancer care services, which consisted of two older buildings, was redesigned inside and out. The planning team worked very closely with the architects to ensure that the new space would be built around the patient wellness and to meet the vision of world-class cancer care.

After years of planning and more than \$11 million in renovations, the new cancer center finally opened in late 2015. To see all of the development and planning come together was extremely rewarding to all those directly involved on the project. Today WellStar Cancer Center at Kennestone Hospital is recognized as a “hub for healing,” with new integrative medicine services and robust support services that improve the overall patient care experience.

### Our New Cancer Center At-a-Glance

WellStar Cancer Center is composed of two connected medical office buildings. One wing of the Cancer Center houses the outpatient infusion center, a medical imaging suite, a medical oncology private practice, and the STAT (Specialty Teams and Treatments) clinic.

The state-of-the-art outpatient infusion center occupies 6,600 square feet. There are six treatment bays with four semi-private patient areas and one nurse assigned to each bay. There patients receive chemotherapy, biotherapy/targeted agents, blood transfusions, or other infusions by professional nursing staff. In this department, 100 percent of eligible nurses have earned OCN credentials.

Based on research and feedback from patients, Cancer Network leaders wanted to make sure that this space offered a variety of amenities that allowed patients to control their environment. Each patient has an automatic reclining chair, a personal television with headset option, adjustable lighting, and storage space for personal belongings. Guest seating for one friend or family member





Cancer Center volunteers, patient and family advisory board (PFAB) and staff during the open house for community and team members.

staying with the person receiving treatment was a must-have.

Visits from therapy dogs, a complimentary tea cart staffed by volunteers, and headphones for calming or meditative music are also offered to promote comfort during each visit. Community organizations regularly donate snacks and handmade hats, scarves, and lap blankets. These items are delivered in decorative gift bags and often include an inspirational message to let patients know they are not on this cancer journey alone.

The imaging center is conveniently located near departments where cancer patients have other appointments, minimizing wayfinding issues associated with entering the main hospital for registration and diagnostic radiology appointments. Walk-ins are accepted for X-rays; positron emission tomography-computed tomography, nuclear medicine imaging, and computed tomography exams are by appointment.

Because not all advances in medicine involve the latest drugs or technology, for WellStar Cancer Center, advancing medicine

meant enhancing access to care and providing an innovative multidisciplinary approach. The STAT Clinic, across the hall from the imaging suite, is where an entire team of dedicated specialists can see patients in one place during one appointment. For patients (and families of patients) diagnosed with or suspected of having thoracic or prostate cancer, the thoracic STAT Clinic means less waiting and worrying. Patients have access to thoracic surgeons, pulmonologists, medical oncologists, radiation oncologists, nurse navigators, clinical psychologists, social workers, chaplains, and registered dietitians. The prostate STAT Clinic offers patients consults with a urologist, radiation oncologist, and nurse navigator to determine the best course of care based on their individual presentation. Currently, throughout WellStar, we have thoracic, prostate, and breast STAT clinics that meet regularly. Depending on the volume of the particular tumor site, STAT clinics are offered as frequently as twice per week. When a patient is referred to one of the STAT Clinics, the nurse navigator coordinates all tests and

appointments. Based on available test results and information from referring physicians, the nurse navigator and lead physician will decide whether the patient is to see one or several disciplines of physicians as indicated.

Furthering our dedication to multidisciplinary care, Northwest Georgia Oncology Centers, a private-practice, medical oncology practice of 20 physicians, has its largest office and infusion center located on the second level of the WellStar Cancer Center. The Cancer Center also provides meeting spaces, including the Northwest Georgia Oncology Centers' conference center space located at entry level. These spaces provide a forum for clinical and ancillary staff to meet and discuss patient cases during tumor conferences and the space is also used by clinical and administrative staff to set, monitor, and track progress of cancer program goals. The meeting rooms are equipped with technology that facilitates local presentations, as well as remote access to physicians and staff off-site.

---

While planning for supportive services in the new cancer center, Cancer Network leaders and Cancer Center staff looked at adding programs and services that had evidence to be beneficial to cancer patients.

---

A Welcome Center and Garden of Courage separate the two wings of the WellStar Cancer Center. The gas fireplace is a focal point for the Welcome Center and complements the environment created by the dedicated volunteers at the entryway, who extend a warm welcome to each person entering the building. The Cancer Center's guest relations representative attends new volunteer orientation to recruit specifically for the Cancer Center. The volunteers who select the Cancer Center as their location for service during volunteer orientation complete WellStar Volunteer Training for Kennestone Hospital and then receive orientation specific to the Cancer Center. Those volunteering in the Resource Center also complete American Cancer Society Volunteer Training so they are knowledgeable about WellStar, community, and American Cancer Society resources and programs. As recommended by the Patient and Family Advisory Board, none of the waiting areas have televisions. Instead, digital signage promotes programs and services offered at the Cancer Center.

During the Cancer Center renovation, the hospital system's foundation, the WellStar Foundation, was able to obtain generous donors who provided support for the outdoor Garden of Courage. Foundation funding for the Cancer Center's outdoor courtyard allowed for more than 700 new plants and trees, paint, refurbishment of existing gazebos, new lighting, donor signage, and,

most important, a new polished brass bell. On the last day of treatment, patients ring the bell as their family, staff, and visitors celebrate this milestone.

### Integrative and Complementary Therapies

While planning for supportive services in the new cancer center, Cancer Network leaders and Cancer Center staff looked at adding programs and services that had evidence to be beneficial to cancer patients. According to the National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health Clinical Digest,<sup>1</sup> a monthly newsletter of the National Institutes of Health, several integrative and complementary therapies can help cancer patients with side effects of their treatment. Below is a list of common mind/body interventions and what the evidence suggests:

- **Acupuncture.** Evidence suggests that acupuncture can help cancer patients with chemotherapy-induced nausea and vomiting.
- **Massage therapy.** A limited number of studies suggest that massage therapy may help to relieve cancer-related symptoms (pain, nausea, anxiety, and even depression). However, the National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health indicates that research is still lacking on the benefits of massage for oncology patients.
- **Mindfulness stress reduction.** Studies suggest that guided meditation can help patients with stress and anxiety and may promote better sleep for cancer patients.
- **Yoga.** Though there are not many studies on the benefits of yoga for cancer patients, early evidence suggests that yoga may alleviate anxiety, depression, and emotional distress and lower stress levels in people with cancer. Yoga has also shown to be effective at alleviating fatigue in breast cancer patients and survivors.

The second wing of the Cancer Center offers programs and services that extend the "mind, body, and spirit" concept of care. The team of professionals connecting patients to these services work in the Center for Survivorship and Support, also located in the second wing of the Cancer Center. A team of nurse navigators, social workers, clinical psychologists, and dietitians understand that people living with cancer have needs that include both medical care and other physical and emotional challenges. With these supportive care resources now located in one physical space, the team can work much more effectively to coordinate patient care.

The Center for Survivorship and Support offers individual and group sessions, including but not limited to support groups, preoperative classes, individual appointments, and mindfulness-based stress reduction sessions. Also located in the Center for Survivorship and Support are screening programs, such as L-Dex for lymphedema, which provide patients ongoing support through survivorship and enhance their ability to get preventative care.

Although patients often asked what they can do to be healthier, the Cancer Center did not offer options for exercise prior to the renovation. To meet this patient need, the Cancer Center opened a Wellness Studio, which serves as a multipurpose room. Here



fitness instructors trained to work with cancer patients lead classes in tai chi, stretching, yoga, and low-impact resistance training classes several times each week. Stress-relieving activities include painting, jewelry making, and cookie decorating. This multipurpose room is also used for departmental meetings, Cancer Committee meetings, and disease site-specific subcommittee meetings, with Skype access for other facilities to participate. In addition, the Wellness Studio is where patient support groups and the Patient and Family Advisory Board meet and where staff attend classes for learning to administer chemotherapy and/or preparing for the oncology certified nurse exam.

Another key component of the renovation was the addition of a Resource Center, an interactive space for patients and their families and friends. Here kiosks—in partnership with the American Cancer Society—provide immediate and easy access to clinical information and community resources. Shelves of resources and brochure displays help patients and the general public learn more about prevention, screening, diagnosis, treatment, and life after cancer.

Across from the Resource Center are the Manning Wellness Kitchen and Calm Water Café. The Manning family recognized that time around the kitchen table is important to healing, and their commitment to sharing this practice was realized with a fully equipped demonstration kitchen and dining area, where patients and the general public can participate in cooking demonstrations. These demonstrations emphasize healthy and appealing meal selections for those with cancer, as well as anyone seeking options for improving their health through diet. On a recommendation by the Patient and Family Advisory Board, cooking demonstrations are carefully vetted, because some food odors are offensive to patients receiving cancer treatment. For that same reason, industrial fans in the demo kitchen keep food aromas to a minimum, and the Calm Water Café offers a “grab-and-go” menu made with fresh and natural ingredients. Patients, visitors, and staff can mingle while sipping on a healthy smoothie, and physicians can catch a bite between patients. Located just a few steps away from the healing garden, if the weather is nice, a meal can be enjoyed outside.

A short walk across the hall, patients, staff, and visitors are welcome to enter the Gray Chapel named in honor of Rick Gray, MD. Gray practiced medical oncology with Northwest Georgia Oncology Centers from 1987 to 2014 before succumbing to cancer himself in 2015 and was known for his caring and compassionate demeanor and dedication to his faith. In addition to a weekly nondenominational healing service, prayer cards are available for anyone to request prayers for their own concerns or on behalf of another. All are invited to use this space to reflect in an undisturbed, serene setting.

Upstairs are the offices of the board-certified genetic counselors. The Center for Genetics is one of the busiest genetics programs in the Southeast. Through a one-on-one risk evaluation with patients and their family members, these



Right upper: Foyer connecting patients with the Wellness Studio, The Center for Genetics, and the Healing Arts Lobby. Right middle: The Gray Chapel which provides staff, patients and families a place for prayer and meditation. Right lower: The Garden of Courage, a beautiful outdoor space with polished brass bell that celebrates patient's strides against cancer.



Another takeaway is that patients are the best source for knowing what is valuable to them—as human beings as well as patients.



Left upper: Healing Arts Lobby for retail services: Illuminations' hair loss boutique, Buckhead Acupuncture and Lacey's post-mastectomy care center. Left lower: Cancer Support Services team at annual survivorship celebration. L to R: Leena Nehru, MSW; Susan Willard, RN Navigator; Jennifer Kilkus, PhD; Michelle Guibault, RN Navigator; Nancy Page, RN Navigator; Sara Owens, RN Navigator; Lisa Sherman, RN Navigator; Paula Garcias, Registration; Glinda Bellamy, RN Navigator; Barbara Wilson, RN Director; Rachel White, RD.

counselors determine the need for testing by looking at specific patient and family factors. If testing is performed, genetic counselors will incorporate results into the patient's medical management and assist the patient, family, and medical team in making future treatment decisions.

A myriad of professionals devoted to improving symptoms and side effects of cancer lease space in the Cancer Center area. For example, patients seeking nonpharmacologic interventions for symptom management can be treated by acupuncturists who apply principles of Chinese medicine. The acupuncturist is an independent practitioner who is licensed and works with patients by referral from a physician or by self-referral. The cancer program medical director provided guidance in choosing the right holistic practitioners for the cancer center to ensure that their philosophies and therapies were not in opposition to traditional medicine. A certified breast prosthesis fitter provides postmastectomy care. Women are fitted for bras, breast prostheses, swimwear, and other garments in a private setting with personal attention from this specialist. Illuminations, a salon and boutique, offers a variety of solutions to one of the most distressing side effects of cancer treatment—hair loss—including wigs, hats, scarves, and turbans. Patients who are interested in cryotherapy (Cold Caps) to prevent hair loss have the option of bringing the necessary supplies in and enlisting family and friends to assist with the process. A staff member with firsthand experience using cryotherapy for hair loss is available for advice and to assist patients in determining whether this option is right for them.

### Key Takeaways

Being diagnosed with cancer is often referred to as a life-threatening or, at best, a life-changing event. Patients walking into the WellStar Cancer Center at Kenestone Hospital often describe the experience as a mind-changing event. Patients frequently say that the staff and services available in the Cancer Center have decreased their stress levels because they feel the support of staff and appreciate access to all of the mind, body, and spirit services offered to help them manage the many challenges of cancer.

When Cancer Network leaders considered the Cancer Center pre- and post-renovation, a few key takeaways stood out. First, when support services are conveniently available, patients are more likely to be aware of services and use them. Secondly, if the physical environment is inviting and soothing, it can influence the way a patient feels and go a long way in promoting health and well-being.

Another takeaway is that patients are the best source for knowing what is valuable to them—as human beings as well as patients. Without the involvement and input of the Patient and Family Advisory Board, we would not have been as successful in building a space that meets both staff needs and the needs of patients and their families.

Working in concert with the Patient and Family Advisory Board, the Cancer Center achieved true integration of mind, body, and spirit.

Finally, in retrospect, Cancer Network leaders were astonished to realize that though a great clinical cancer program existed prerenovation, the tenets of treating the “whole” patient were not actually being met. By bringing these vital programs and services together in a space convenient to patients, ensuring that patients and families are made aware of them, and then streamlining access to these programs and services has made the Cancer Center exponentially more successful. If done right, a well-planned Cancer Center can truly take a cancer program to the next level.



*Barbara J. Wilson is director of Oncology Professional Practice; Sara Owens is breast nurse navigator; and Chad Schaeffer, MS, FACHE, is vice president, Oncology Service Line, WellStar Cancer Network, Marietta, Ga.*

### Reference

1. National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health. Complementary and integrative approaches for cancer symptoms and treatment side effects: what the science says. *NCCIH Clinical Digest*. May 2015. Available online at: [nccih.nih.gov/health/providers/digest/cancer](http://nccih.nih.gov/health/providers/digest/cancer). Last accessed January 31, 2018.

### About the WellStar Kennestone Hospital Cancer Program

WellStar Kennestone Hospital is a 633-bed community hospital located in Marietta, Ga. Kennestone is part of the WellStar North Cancer Network, which includes Kennestone and five other hospitals: WellStar Cobb Hospital, WellStar Douglas Hospital, WellStar Paulding Hospital, WellStar North Fulton Hospital, and WellStar Windy Hill Hospital. The program is accredited as a Cancer Network by the Commission on Cancer. The breast program is also accredited by the National Accreditation Program for Breast Centers. Together, the North Network sees about 4,500 new analytic cancer cases annually. There are tumor-specific subcommittees for breast, lung, gastrointestinal, genitourinary, gynecologic, neuro, and melanoma. These subcommittees are physician-led teams and, along with allied healthcare professionals, are focused on improving quality and safety in their respective areas of cancer care.