



The Breast Cancer School for Patients

Improving outcomes with video education

BY JOHN WILLIAMS, MD

Women newly diagnosed with breast cancer must make rapid treatment decisions. “Do I benefit from a breast MRI? Should I have BRCA genetic testing or a genomic assay?” Online resources for patients do provide information; unfortunately, this information is scattered, unorganized, and presented as outdated text and stock images. These websites are hard to navigate and largely ineffective at helping patients obtain better quality cancer care.

Over the years, family and friends have called me for advice about their breast care. After a quick conversation, these individuals were empowered to ask their own doctors exactly what was needed. Patients simply receive better care when they understand and know the questions to ask about complex topics such as breast cancer.

Most healthcare facilities provide information online and offer handouts to patients at their facilities. I suggest that cancer programs, professional organizations, and physicians should pivot toward “teaching” patients how to obtain quality, cutting-edge care in their own communities. Specifically, our profession should engage patients with sophisticated video-based patient education. That is why I created the Breast Cancer School for Patients (breastcancercourse.org). This type of innovative patient educational platform can address some of these missing links in our efforts to provide better quality breast cancer care in the United States.

Video is Now Essential

Online platforms such as healthcare websites or Facebook get four times the engagement with video posts than with text alone. More importantly, the retention of “video” health content far exceeds written content. In this manner, medical information can be *translated* for patients. Physicians do this when they talk to their patients. The difficulty comes with developing a comfort level speaking in front of a camera. Once I overcame that awkwardness and created a video studio, it became an easy, low-cost way to create educational content.

The Breast Cancer School for Patients’ innovative two- to ten-minute video “lessons” about important breast cancer topics give patients the tools they need to engage their breast cancer specialists. Patients can now watch a video and print out lesson notes and specific questions to ask their doctors about 50 cancer-related topics. If patients or caregivers want more detail, each topic has links to evidence-based websites to learn more. At the Breast Cancer School for Patients, women or family members can learn as little or as much as they want about any aspect of their unique breast cancer situation.

Organization is Everything

We have designed separate video courses on every stage of treatment to focus on the crucial decisions that patients will have to make. As patients move from biopsy to surgery, chemotherapy to radiation, or


hormone therapy to survivorship, we teach patients and caregivers key concepts to make sure that they are getting high-quality cancer care in their own community.

Cutting-edge tests and treatments are often overlooked when explaining breast cancer treatment. We created a course, “Cutting-Edge Advances,” with video lessons and content about BRCA genetic testing, genomic assays, and NAPBC breast centers, to name a few. Recently, we’ve added a video about the TAILORx clinical trial results, which help identify more women who can avoid chemotherapy.

Analytics are Important

It is essential to define success by both the quality of the content and the analytics of the online platform. When we launched our website, breastcancercourse.org, traffic was slow. Our YouTube videos turned out to be much more popular, with 150,000 views and an average watch time of more than five minutes per view over the first 8 weeks. The analytics told us that our individual videos would ultimately be the driver of traffic to our larger, comprehensive website. Facebook and social media will become ever more important to succeed in patient advocacy outreach. Video content is now the “standard of care.” Cancer programs and healthcare facilities must stay abreast of these platforms to successfully engage the public to walk through their doors for their own cancer care.

Treatment methods are always advancing, and research is constantly uncovering

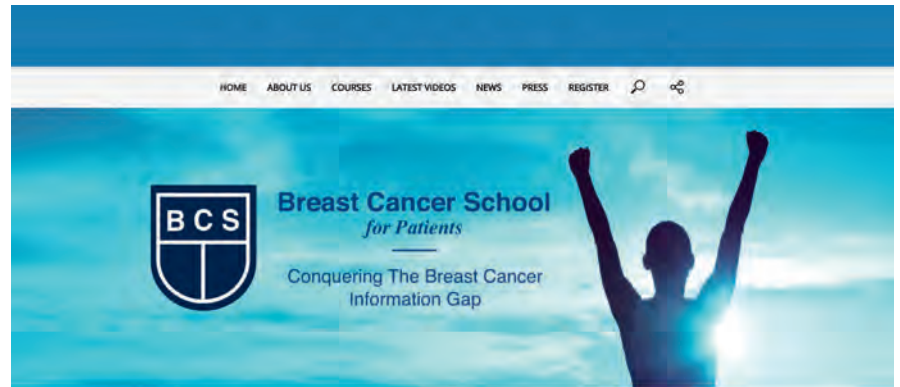
new information. It is difficult enough for healthcare systems and physicians to keep up. In my opinion, it is also our duty, as leaders in cancer care, to find innovative solutions to educate patients on receiving high-quality cancer care in their own communities through online patient education. We encourage other organizations and institutions to do the same. 

John Williams, MD, FACS, is a breast surgeon and founding physician of the Novant Health UVA Breast Center, Haymarket, Va. He is the creator of the Breast Cancer School for Patients, which can be found at breastcancercourse.org.

The Breast Cancer School for Patients

This not-for-profit video platform is the first “school” for patients in healthcare. The disparity of quality breast cancer care can be improved by a bottom-up approach through educating patients to become “experts” in their own breast cancer diagnosis.

- **Video courses:** Information is presented in the sequence of care encountered by patients. Courses about breast imaging, surgery, oncology, and radiation are the most important.
- **Sophisticated platform:** Healthcare content must be presented in an engaging fashion with images, video, and quality content. Be prepared to improve platforms in the future.
- **Host all videos on YouTube:** It is essential that any video content be public and searchable. This drives traffic and search engine rankings.

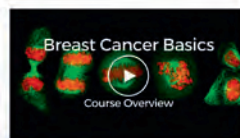


Dr. John P. Williams
Medical Director
Breast Cancer Surgeon

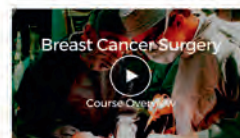
Discover How to Get the Best Breast Cancer Care!

Breast cancer is complicated. As a breast surgeon and medical director of the Novant Health UVA Breast Center, I know that patients get better care when they're well-informed and personally involved in their own treatment decisions. Learn how to take the next best step for yourself.

Through our free video lessons, written content, and useful links to the best resources available, The Breast Cancer School for Patients will teach you and your family everything you need to know about understanding breast cancer.



BREAST CANCER BASICS
18 VIDEOS



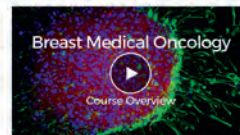
BREAST CANCER SURGERY
24 VIDEOS



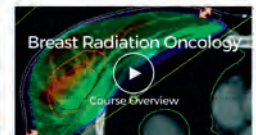
BREAST IMAGING & BIOPSY
7 VIDEOS



CUTTING EDGE ADVANCES
15 VIDEOS



MEDICAL ONCOLOGY
15 VIDEOS

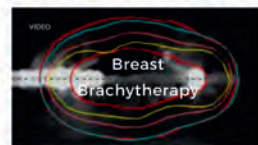


RADIATION ONCOLOGY
7 VIDEOS

How to use this website:

Watch our “Video Lessons” that are of interest to you. Print out our “Doctors Questions” within these lessons to engage your breast specialists. Use our links to the best websites to learn even more on any topic. Your time is important to us. When you follow our innovative educational model (here), you will stay focused and avoid getting lost on the internet.

POPULAR LESSONS



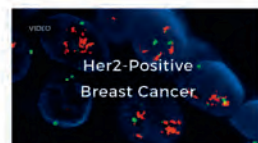
BRACHYTHERAPY RADIATION

We teach you about short-course breast brachytherapy radiation for women who undergo a lumpectomy for early stage breast cancer. Accelerated partial breast radiation is...



INTRAOPERATIVE RADIATION

We teach you about intraoperative radiation therapy (IORT) for early stage breast cancer. This one-time dose of accelerated partial breast radiation is an option in some...



HER2-POSITIVE CANCER

We teach you why HER2-Positive breast cancers are more threatening and educate you about new therapies such as targeted immunotherapy and neoadjuvant chemotherapy.