

spotlight

Wentworth-Douglass Hospital, Seacoast Cancer Center, Dover, New Hampshire



Seacoast Cancer Center at Wentworth-Douglass Hospital is located inland from the Atlantic Ocean and Great Bay of New Hampshire in Dover, N.H., and its full-service satellite sits closer to the coast in the beautiful and historic seaside city of Portsmouth, N.H. The cancer center's strategic location, scope, quality of services, and personalized care have gained a regional reputation stretching along the seaboard from Maine, through New Hampshire, and into northeastern Massachusetts. With Massachusetts General Hospital's acquisition of Wentworth-Douglass Hospital in 2017, both organizations work closely together to coordinate services, bringing expert oncology care to Seacoast's community and easing patient access to specialty care and research in Boston. Due to further successful mergers of Mass General Brigham Healthcare System, Massachusetts General Hospital, and Wentworth-Douglass Hospital,

the health system is emerging as a progressive academic leader, and its strategies are moving quickly to positively impact cancer care in Massachusetts and New Hampshire.

As a comprehensive community cancer center, Seacoast offers a full suite of services, including medical and radiation oncology, infusion, palliative care, navigation, lab, pharmacy, and supportive care services (e.g., nutrition, social work, and integrative therapies). It also offers specialty clinics like gynecologic oncology, genetic counseling, and multidisciplinary breast care. Both Seacoast sites have their own marquee and dedicated entrance with nearby parking and drop-offs, as new facilities are designed with patients, families, and staff in mind. "We've always focused on making sure we have everything under one roof, including the many support services patients with cancer need," says Susan Gallagher, RN, BSN, JD,

assistant vice president of Cancer Services at Seacoast Cancer Center at Wentworth-Douglass Hospital. "That's very important to us and our patients."

Seacoast's commitment to high-quality care and best practices is demonstrated by its achievements and awards. Wentworth-Douglass is a Magnet-designated hospital, and Seacoast has been accredited by the Commission on Cancer since 1986, earning it the Outstanding Achievement Award that proudly recognizes its excellence. The cancer center is also accredited by the American College of Radiology for oncology practice, evidencing its compliance with the specialty's highest standards. Primarily based on these accreditations and other national standards, cancer center leadership designed a robust and unique oncology-focused quality program that is overseen by a coordinator within its cancer registry. Through an active and well-attended cancer committee and quality subcommittees, selected measures are monitored, quality goals are established, and various studies are identified to continuously drive improvements and better outcomes.

A Robust Service Line

All cancer center staff—with the exception of its radiation oncologists, who are employed by Radiation Oncology Associates, P.A.—are employed by Wentworth-Douglass Hospital. Radiation oncology is staffed by 6 board-certified radiation oncologists, who work closely with Seacoast's 3 medical physicists, 3 dosimetrists, 15 radiation therapists, and 7 radiation oncology nurses, to provide an average of 80 treatments per day. On-site



computed tomography simulations and treatment planning with all modalities are offered, including EBRT, IMRT, and SRS, as well as HDR that is only available at Seacoast's main location in Dover. Radiation oncology staff use the latest technology, including a Varian Edge and TrueBeam in Dover and a Varian TrueBeam in Portsmouth, to treat all cancer types.

Seacoast employs 6 board-certified medical oncologists and a team of 5 advanced practice providers, with 2 new clinicians set to arrive this summer. Medical oncologists, along with their support and clinical teams, see patients in Dover and Portsmouth. Its main campus houses a 28-bay infusion suite staffed by up to 20 oncology-certified nurses, and its satellite clinic is expanding to include 10 rooms and chairs to accommodate its growing volume. Infusion bays are separated by glass walls and doors that proved to be critical during the COVID-19 pandemic, as patients were able to safely continue their treatment without having to move or change their infusion routines. Both infusion suites include a dedicated pharmacy where three full-time oncology pharmacists and several pharmacy technicians split their time, mixing patients' treatments on-site. A wide variety of treatment options are available, including chemotherapy and immunotherapy, and Dover's hospital-based campus allows for easy access to patients receiving inpatient oncology care.

Patients who need surgery as part of their care plan are referred to Wentworth-Douglas Hospital's general surgeons, who perform operations within the hospital and who have access to Massachusetts General Hospital for more complex cases.

Because Seacoast staff see more than 200 new patients a month, many cases are presented at weekly multidisciplinary conferences (e.g., general, breast, lung) that include representatives from surgery, pathology, radiology, radiation and medical oncology, genetics, clinical research, palliative care, navigation, and social work. Supported by donors, both Seacoast locations have state-of-the-art technology conference centers that support in-person

and remote tumor boards that can include other cancer centers and Massachusetts General Hospital specialists. "It's as if we are all in the same room, looking at images and pathology slides, and talking with each other," says Arul Mahadevan, MD, Seacoast's medical director of radiation oncology.


Patient Navigation is Key

At the heart of the cancer center is its Oncology Nurse Navigation program that is staffed by an elite group of oncology nurses, each with expertise in a different type of cancer. Seacoast nurse navigators provide the first touchpoint to patients as they meet with all who are newly diagnosed to answer questions, ease fears and anxiety, and ensure that all appointments are in line with their treatment plans. Nurse navigators are viewed as the point person for every patient and family who hears the word "cancer."

Survivorship Begins at Diagnosis

Another focus of Seacoast's high-quality care is survivorship and wellness. "We consider survivorship to begin the moment one is diagnosed, and our support and wellness services are available to all as an essential part of their care," explains Michael Meserve, MBA, RTT, director of survivorship and wellness at Seacoast Cancer Center at Wentworth-Douglas Hospital. The survivorship program works in collaboration with other departments and teams, from rehabilitation services and integrative therapies to social work, nutrition services, and the Patient and Family Learning Center. Funded through the hospital's foundation and donors, cancer center leadership plan to grow their survivorship services to meet patients' needs as they achieve better outcomes and more people are living with cancer. "Once patients are in our cancer center, they're really part of our entire wellness and support program," says Meserve.



Seacoast leadership see growth and expansion in the cancer center's future, because it is part of Massachusetts General Hospital and Mass General Brigham Healthcare System, and have set their sights on being the regional hub for oncology on the seacoast. "We've been around a long time—about 40 years—and we've been growing and thriving ever since. We've never stood still, and we won't stop," says Barbara Civiello, MD, Seacoast's medical director of medical oncology. "One thing for sure is that we plan to always keep our community feel and continue to provide personal attention to all of our patients. That's who we are." 

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