

# Comprehensive Quality Care for Patients with Small Cell Lung Cancer

## Effective Practice: Patient Navigation and Community Partnerships

Insights from AdventHealth Cancer Institute Waterman, Tavares, FL



“Navigation is key. Capturing patients up front, helping them figure out their next step is critical. Then getting patients to the right specialist at the right time whether through the lung nodule clinic or connecting them to our multidisciplinary cancer care team—navigation is the glue that holds the process together. Plus, the clinical outcomes that can be addressed are substantial.”

— Leslie K. Maxwell, MBA, Director,  
AdventHealth Cancer Institute Waterman

### Identify Needs

AdventHealth Waterman serves parts of central Florida where communities are disproportionately impacted by later stage lung cancer compared to the rest of the state. To identify lung cancers at earlier stages, AdventHealth Waterman began its lung cancer screening program in 2017. As the program grew, the team noticed there was a need to improve follow-through for people of high-risk who were screened, but did not receive further work-up or resolution. In response, AdventHealth Waterman hired an oncology nurse to serve as the lung navigator to help support follow-up to screening.

In August 2022, AdventHealth Waterman established a lung nodule clinic to further streamline the diagnosis of lung cancer after a positive screen and reduce delays in the assessment of incidental nodules. As a result, the lung navigator’s role expanded to support the lung nodule clinic and connection to the cancer treatment team.

### Navigate Patients

AdventHealth Waterman has defined a stepwise process for how the lung navigator supports patients across the continuum:



#### STEP 1

Ensure individuals qualify for screening



#### STEP 2

Support scheduling and keep track of day-of appointments



#### STEP 3

Organize scans (whether from screening program or incidental finding). Scans are reviewed and triaged by the lung nodule clinic providers within one week to determine if case is acute, or if additional testing or follow-up is needed



#### STEP 4

Based on triage, contact primary care providers or patients directly (if no primary care provider) to support scheduling of appointments



#### STEP 5

Educate and support patients in returning for a follow-up visit



#### STEP 6

Support scheduling of oncology or radiation appointments if there is a lung cancer diagnosis



#### STEP 7

Connect patients with social worker to address social and emotional needs

Medical oncologist, Ahmed Al-Hazzouri, MD, reiterates the effectiveness of the lung nodule clinic sharing, “Small cell lung cancer is very bulky, it is very symptomatic, it is rapid moving. Dr. Ryan Schroeder, pulmonologist and the leader of our lung nodule clinic, gave me a call last Friday about a patient who is very symptomatic and has a very large mass in the chest. Because of the communication and navigation, the patient was seen this Monday and the first dose of chemotherapy was given the same day.

This approach is ideal for triaging patients and making sure a patient gets what they need in a timely fashion. In addition to rapid diagnosis and treatment for lung nodules, the program has seen 26 percent growth in its low dose CT Screenings with 335 screenings in 2022, compared to 266 in 2021.” To support access to screening, the team also worked with the diagnostic imaging department to reduce the out-of-pocket cost for people who do not have insurance. The team was able to cut the out-of-pocket cost in half from \$300 to \$150.

## Connect with the Community

The team recognizes the importance of community partnerships to help make an impact on lung cancer incidence and mortality in the communities served. Examples of this include:

- Building trust and reducing access barriers to lung cancer screening through outreach and partnerships with small African American churches and connecting with community members where they work and live. Developing these partnerships is critical to decreasing disparities in lung cancer incidence among African Americans in the communities AdventHealth Waterman serves.
- Supporting cessation through creative and evidence-based programs, including:
  - Participating in the **Great American Smoke Out**.
  - Giving away turkeys to inspire quitting “cold turkey.”
  - Participating in the Commission on Cancer’s **Just ASK** program to assess smoking status.

- Connecting community members with resources such as the local health department’s smoking cessation program and **Quitline**.
- Ensuring timely referrals by educating primary care providers within AdventHealth’s network about available smoking cessation services, screening, and the lung nodule clinic and reinforcing the benefits of these services for patients.

## Next Steps

AdventHealth Waterman has a strong, skilled multidisciplinary team committed to caring for patients impacted by small cell lung cancer.

Moving forward the team would like to:

- Increase the growth of the lung cancer screening program and lung nodule clinic.
- Begin to see a trend in the downstaging of lung cancers in their community.
- Expand community partnerships to support patients across the lung cancer continuum.
- Continue to offer clinical trials for patients with small cell lung cancer.
- See national progress in both systemic and localized approaches to the treatment of small cell lung cancer.



Association of Community Cancer Centers

A publication from the ACCC education program, “Comprehensive Quality Care for Patients with Small Cell Lung Cancer.” Learn more at [acc-cancer.org/comprehensive-sclc-care](https://acc-cancer.org/comprehensive-sclc-care).

The Association of Community Cancer Centers (ACCC) provides education and advocacy for the cancer care community. For more information, visit [acc-cancer.org](https://acc-cancer.org).

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