



Hunterdon  
Regional  
Cancer Center

HUNTERDON MEDICAL CENTER  
Fox Chase Cancer Center Partner

**2007**  
Cancer Program  
Annual Report

## **Message from the Cancer Committee Chairman and the Director of HRCC**

*Brian Quinn, MD*

*Barbara Tofani, RN, MSN*

At Hunterdon Health System, it is our philosophy to do our best to keep our community cancer free, but if someone does need cancer care, we are committed to providing the most current treatment options available in a caring and compassionate environment close to home.

Hunterdon Regional Cancer Center, a partner of Fox Chase Cancer Center, features comprehensive medical and radiation oncology services, early detection and screening programs, nutritional support, genetic counseling, psychosocial support, clinical research and education and support programs. Our cancer program is accredited by the American College of Surgeons Commission on Cancer (ACOS), a consortium of professional organizations that monitor quality cancer care, and was a recipient of the ACOS Outstanding Achievement Award. This prestigious honor is awarded to cancer programs that demonstrate excellence in providing quality care to cancer patients.

The treatment of cancer is complex and requires an interdisciplinary team approach to achieve optimal success. Hunterdon Health System prides itself on the skill of its oncology staff and the coordinated, compassionate, high-quality care they provide.

Hunterdon Regional Cancer Center's medical oncologists lead the interdisciplinary team. All three medical oncologists are board certified. They specialize in the use of medicines such as chemotherapy and biological therapies. These drugs, administered by certified nurse specialists, are used to cure cancer, to prevent cancer from relapsing or recurring and to relieve symptoms caused by the disease.

In radiation oncology, the comprehensive team approach to patient care involves the extraordinary talents of board certified radiation oncologists, oncology certified nurses, a licensed clinical social worker, a dietitian, a medical dosimetrist, a medical physicist, radiation therapists and professionally trained administrative support staff. In both medical and radiation oncology, great care has been taken to provide a soothing environment that is conducive to healing the body, mind and spirit.

The entire cancer center team meets weekly to discuss new therapies and treatment. This commitment to providing the most current treatment options available combined with our strong research program, gives our patients access to cutting edge care that was once available only in large cancer centers. We are proud to say that eighteen percent of our patients are enrolled in clinical research studies, far surpassing the two percent requirement for community cancer centers.

The Hunterdon Regional Breast Care Program offers coordinated interdisciplinary care using a dedicated nurse navigator called a Breast Care Coordinator. The Breast Care Coordinator works with the patients and physicians to ensure patients receive well-organized, time-sensitive, clinically appropriate care.

The Family Risk Assessment Program at Hunterdon Regional Cancer Center provides education, counseling and genetic testing to people who may have a predisposition to cancer; it is considered a model program for community cancer centers by Fox Chase Cancer Center. Risk assessment helps identify individuals and families who may need more than standard screening for earliest cancer detection.

In addition, Hunterdon Regional Cancer Center is a lead agency for the New Jersey Cancer Education and Early Detection (NJCEED) Program, a grant that provides free breast, cervical, colon and prostate screenings to individuals who cannot afford adequate health care insurance. The CEED program's purpose is to make screening services and educational programs available to those individuals who are either underinsured or uninsured.

The Community Education and Outreach program offers a variety of services free of charge to the residents of Hunterdon and surrounding counties. Educational programs on specific cancer topics and cancer prevention/risk reduction are provided in both formal and informal formats, and are offered in English and Spanish. Presentations are done in the classroom setting, at municipal and corporate health fairs, and at community organization meetings. Annual screening programs are provided on-site at Hunterdon Regional Cancer Center to promote the awareness and early detection of various cancers such as skin, oral/head/neck, and prostate.

Psychosocial counselors assist patients with normalizing and managing emotions while finding a sense of control. Hunterdon Regional Cancer Center offers an array of Mind/Body Services that recognize the emotional, spiritual and physical components of our patients. We offer services that complement radiation and chemotherapy such as counseling, guided visualization, Reiki, meditation, relaxation/breath techniques, yoga and referrals for acupuncture and massage.

Partners in Healing, a volunteer support group exclusive to Hunterdon Health System, is an integral part of the Cancer Center team. These special volunteers, who are all cancer survivors, work with patients and their families to help them cope with their, or their loved one's, diagnosis and treatment. Partners in Healing volunteers bring a dimension of caring and support to our patients that can only be added by someone who has been there.

There is an ancient African proverb that says, "It takes a village to raise a child." At Hunterdon Health System, that same principle applies as we live our philosophy of cancer care each day—to offer an entire team of dedicated, highly skilled, compassionate professionals to provide the best in cancer care services to our patients and our community.

## The Year in Review

Hunterdon Health System staff offer an abundance of education and support programs each month. Some of the more noteworthy events and achievements in cancer prevention, detection, treatment and survivorship from the past year include:

### January

- Hunterdon Health System committed itself fully to becoming a smoke-free environment.
- The Hunterdon Medical Center Palliative Care Team was formed; Hunterdon Medical Center is one of only seventeen hospitals in the state to have a palliative care team.

### February

- Our annual Fit for Cancer event brought together more than 50 individuals with one common goal: to raise money in honor, memory or recognition of people with cancer; the event raised almost \$40,000 for Hunterdon Regional Cancer Center.

### March

- Urologist James Choi, MD joined the staff of Hunterdon Health System and immediately started working to bring a prostate seed implant program to the hospital.
- Hunterdon Regional Cancer Center was awarded a Susan G. Komen grant to support outreach to women over the age of 65 to educate them about mammograms. The program is called the VIP Program.

### April

- Hunterdon Regional Cancer Center sponsored a skin cancer screening; 118 people were screened.
- Mary Vecchio, RN and Jackie Allen, RN, presented their work on the VIP Program to their colleagues at the Oncology Nursing Society Annual Meeting.

### May

- Hunterdon Regional Cancer Center held its third annual Wine and Beer Tasting event, hosted by Perryville Wine and Liquors. \$7,100 was raised for Hunterdon Regional Cancer Center.
- The annual Family Fun Run/Walk, sponsored by Radom and Wetter of Branchburg, was another huge success, raising over \$30,000 for Hunterdon Regional Cancer Center.
- 237 people attended a program titled “Cancer Risks for Women” at the annual Women’s Day of Health.
- Hunterdon Regional Cancer Center offered a head and neck cancer screening.

### June

- Hunterdon Health System participated in the American Cancer Society’s Relay for Life and hosted the annual Survivors’ Day dinner.
- Hunterdon Regional Cancer Center hosted its first WebEx conference, bringing together physicians from a variety of area hospitals to discuss patient care.

- Jane Block, Founder of Partners in Healing, was awarded the Star Ledger Good Neighbor Jefferson Award in recognition of her work with Partners in Healing as well as her other community involvements.

#### July

- Pamela Vlahakis, Breast Care Coordinator, was named Business and Community Leader of the Year by the Flemington-Raritan Business Association.

#### September

- A second skin cancer screening was offered to residents of Hunterdon and surrounding counties; forty-six people were screened.

#### October

- Hunterdon Health System sponsored a rest stop for the Carpe Diem/Girasole bike ride, a living memorial to Paul Nardoni, a local resident who taught his family and friends what it means to love life... and seize the day.
- Hunterdon Regional Cancer Center offered its annual prostate screening. Seventy-one men were screened.

#### November

- Partners in Healing celebrated their tenth anniversary with a party at Beaver Brook Country Club. Roxanne Black of Friends Health Connection was the surprise guest speaker.

#### December

- The Hunterdon Regional Cancer Center Survivorship Lecture Series presented “It’s Only Fear” to a standing-room-only crowd.
- Partners in Prevention was started, coordinated by Jackie Allen, RN and volunteer Robin Ehrmann. Partners in Prevention is a peer-support program facilitated by people who have gone through the risk assessment and genetic testing process and are available to provide support to others going through a similar experience.
- As part of our survivorship initiative, a program was implemented to distribute a survivorship letter, signed by all staff members, and the National Cancer Institute booklet “Facing Forward: Life After Cancer Treatment” to all patients as they complete treatment.



## Head and Neck Cancer

Over the past several years, Hunterdon Medical Center has seen an increase in the number of patients diagnosed with head and neck cancer, including cancers of the tonsil, tongue, mouth, sinus and larynx (voice box). Treatment for head and neck cancers can be very toxic and has the potential to compromise a patient's nutritional status. Hunterdon Regional Cancer Center employs two dietitians dedicated to caring for patients with cancers. The dietitians are an integral part of the healthcare team, and play a vital role in the design and implementation of a treatment plan for patients with head and neck cancer.

Since achieving and maintaining adequate nutritional status is essential to the comfort of the patient and success of their treatment, it is imperative that the healthcare team take a proactive approach to managing a patient's weight, dietary needs and symptoms before, during and after treatment. Unfortunately, there is no standard of care for the medical management of the nutritional status for these patients. However, studies have demonstrated that patients receiving radiation and chemotherapy for head and neck cancer who received intensive nutritional counseling and interventions did better than those patients who received general nutritional advice.

The Hunterdon Medical Center Cancer Committee completed a retrospective review of the twenty-two patients diagnosed with head and neck cancers in 2006 to review the nutritional management plan and evaluate the effectiveness of the nutritional interventions. For this study, ten patients with esophageal cancer were included in the chart review and data collection, since the literature demonstrates that treatment side effects related to nutritional status are very similar between the two disease groupings.

Results of the study demonstrated that, while a large percentage of patients did receive a feeding tube, most patient still experienced some weight loss. Four patients had their treatment interrupted but it was unclear if the treatment interruption was related to compromised nutritional status. The dietitian saw all patients during their treatment.

As a result of the study, several recommendations were made for future management of patients with head and neck, as well as esophageal, cancer. These recommendations include:

- Pretreatment assessment of the patient by the oncologist and dietitian, and prophylactic insertion of a feeding tube for high-risk patients;
- More active involvement of the dietitian during and after treatment to monitor nutritional status and provide nutritional counseling, and
- Aggressive management of side effects to ensure compliance with the treatment plan and decrease the possibility of treatment interruptions.

In addition, it was recommended that each patient's weight be closely monitored post-treatment to ensure ongoing adequate nutrition in order to achieve maximum treatment response and quality of life.

All recommendations have now been integrated into practice. As a final recommendation of the Cancer Committee, this study will be repeated in one year to assess compliance with, and effectiveness of, the recommendations.

### **Esophageal Cancer**

The National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN) guidelines provide the foundation for care in the treatment of cancer. Since Hunterdon Medical Center states clearly its commitment to following these guidelines when evaluating patients and recommending treatment options, the Cancer Committee directed the Cancer Registry staff to review the records of all patients treated for esophageal cancer in 2006 to measure compliance with the guidelines.

The results of the chart audit demonstrate that Hunterdon Health System treated ten patients for esophageal cancer in 2006 and the NCCN Guidelines for Treatment were followed in all ten cases.

### **2007 Cancer Program Goals and Objectives**

The 2007 Cancer Program goals focused on 4 areas: clinical services, community outreach, quality improvement and program development. With the help of the entire cancer program team, all of the 12-month goals were achieved and significant progress was made relative to the multi-year goals.

#### **Clinical Services**

- Hunterdon Regional Cancer Center received approval in 2007 to start a brachytherapy program for prostate seed implants. The first patients are expected to be treated in early 2008, and will be managed by an interdisciplinary team that includes urologists, radiation oncologists, physicists, nurses and staff from Medical Imaging and the operating room.
- Using web-based technology, Hunterdon Regional Cancer Center now has the capabilities to connect with expert physicians from Fox Chase Cancer Center, Lehigh Valley Hospital and anywhere else around the world, if necessary, to consult on complicated cases. Through their community physician, patients at Hunterdon Regional Cancer Center have access to world-class physicians to receive second opinions on diagnosis and treatment options without ever having to leave the comfort of their community cancer center.
- The Family Risk Assessment Program (FRAP) at Hunterdon Regional Cancer Center continues to see an increase in interest and participation in its education and assessment programs, with a spike in referrals correlating to a direct-to-consumer marketing campaign launched by the testing company in October 2007. Hunterdon Regional Cancer Center has risk assessment programs for breast, ovarian, gastrointestinal, prostate and melanoma cancers, as well as other cancers associated with hereditary syndromes such as uterine, pancreatic, kidney, bladder and brain. The

interdisciplinary team actively works with clients to prevent cancer through increased screening, education and risk reduction measures. In 2007, Hunterdon Regional Cancer Center added the services of a genetic counselor to support the growing risk assessment needs of our professional and lay community.

- Survivorship is a growing area of interest and need in the cancer community. The interdisciplinary team at Hunterdon Regional Cancer Center has initiated staff education on survivorship and has implemented several programs addressing the needs of patients in this area. Staff of Hunterdon Regional Cancer Center have secured funding to support patient focus groups to further explore the needs of cancer survivors and develop strategies to most effectively address those needs.
- In January 2007, Hunterdon Health System started a Palliative Care Service to better meet the needs of patients suffering from acute and chronic illness. Palliative care is specialized care that focuses on the whole person. It recognizes that people living with serious illness need expert symptom management, as well as spiritual and emotional support. The interdisciplinary Palliative Care Team, which is comprised of a physician, chaplain, social worker, nurses and other members of the healthcare team, work to relieve physical, emotional and spiritual suffering so patients can enjoy the best possible quality of life while dealing with illness. Hunterdon Health System is one of only seventeen hospitals in the state with a Palliative Care Program.

### **Community Outreach**

- Hunterdon Health System has a solid foundation in family practice medicine. Recognizing how essential a strong, active relationship between the family practice physician and oncologist is for a patient's overall health and well being, the cancer team initiated a family practice education and outreach program that includes on-site visits to family practice offices in Hunterdon and surrounding counties. The meetings have resulted in improved communication between the family practice offices and Hunterdon Regional Cancer Center, and streamlined services for patients. These meetings have been so successful that they will continue through 2008 in an effort to provide coordinated, seamless care for patients.
- The Hunterdon Health System website has been updated for easier navigation. Hunterdon Regional Cancer Center staff participated in the creation of a virtual tour of the Cancer Center, which will be added to the website in early 2008.

### **Quality Improvement**

- As Hunterdon Health System expands and enhances cancer care services, it is vital to collect baseline data to better understand program growth and success. Baseline information has been collected in 2007 on enrollment in the prostate and gastrointestinal risk assessment programs, referrals to the prostate seed implant program, and use of Intensity Modulated Radiation Therapy (IMRT) in prostate and other cancers. In addition, data continues to be collected on patient navigation for breast and gastrointestinal cancer to help gauge the need for and success of the navigation program. As a new service that started in the fourth quarter of 2007, two patients with gastrointestinal cancer were successfully navigated through the system. Since data collection was started in July, 2007, 243 breast patients have been navigated through the system

- Adherence to national guidelines is the cornerstone of quality care at any excellent cancer center. As part of the quality assurance/quality improvement program at Hunterdon Health System, the charts of all ten patients diagnosed with and/or treated for esophageal cancer in 2006 at Hunterdon Health System were evaluated for adherence to national guidelines for treatment. Documentation in all ten charts indicated that the physicians involved in the care of the patient, from surgery to medical oncology (chemotherapy) and radiation therapy complied with the national guidelines for treatment of esophageal cancer.

### **Programmatic**

- Hunterdon Medical Center has had a patient navigation program for breast care since 2002. Over the past five years Pamela Vlahakis, the Breast Care Coordinator at Hunterdon Health System, has assisted thousands of patients with a known or suspected breast cancer with obtaining the services they need in a timely and efficient manner. Following guidelines set by the interdisciplinary team, women whose mammogram is designated as highly suspicious for cancer are seen by a surgeon within 24-48 hours of their diagnostic mammogram. Because of the rapid response time and the individualized care patients referred to the Breast Care Program receive, patient and physician satisfaction is extremely high. Based on the success of the Breast Care Program, Hunterdon Health System is adding a second Care Coordinator to navigate patients with other cancer diagnoses through the system to ensure timely and efficient care.
- Approximately 18% of patients treated at Hunterdon Regional Cancer Center are enrolled in clinical trials. This number far exceeds the minimum established by the American College of Surgeons Commission on Cancer for Community Cancer Centers and, in fact, is more representative of the percentage of patients enrolled in research studies in a major cancer center. In 2007, Hunterdon Regional Cancer Center expanded the research program even further to incorporate pharmaceutical research protocols, giving the patients of Hunterdon and surrounding counties even more options for cancer care.

## Cancer Committee

The Cancer Committee oversees all the cancer-related programs and activities of Hunterdon Health System. Cancer Committee members include:

<b>MEMBER</b>	<b>SPECIALTY</b>
Brian Quinn, MD – Chairman	Medical Oncology
Samuel Bae, MD	Gastroenterology
Myron Bednar, MD, QI Coordinator	Medical Oncology
John Bello, MD, FACS	General Surgery
Kenneth Blankstein, MD, Cancer Conference Coordinator	Medical Oncology
Michelle Grove, MD	Gynecology
David Cohn, MD	Pulmonary
Steven Diamond, MD, Cancer Registry Quality Coordinator	Pathology
Andrew Greenberg, MD	Radiation Oncology
Allen Kern, MD	Urology
Christopher Cassetty, MD	Dermatology
Mark Malzberg, MD	Medical Imaging
Robert Pickoff, MD	Chief Medical Officer, Administration
Carla Jardim, MD, Community Outreach Coordinator / Physician Liaison	Family Practice
David Adelman, R Ph.	Director, Pharmacy
Jackie Allen, RN, CNS, AOCN	Prevention Nurse
Michele Capossela	American Cancer Society
Audrey Vitolins, MSW, LCSW	Coordinator, Oncology M/B Services
Donna Miller, RN, OCN	Oncology Unit QI
Rene Falls, RN, OCN	Clinical Research Nurse
Carrol Fiorino, RN, MSN, AOCN	Nurse Manager, 3 West
Nicole Baker, MS, RD	Oncology Dietician
Joan Grady, RN, MSN, AOCN	Executive Dir, Hunterdon Regional Community Health
Michele Kamin, RT (T)	Manager, Radiation Oncology
Carol Klein, MA, CCC-S, MPA	Director, Rehabilitation Services
Claire Long, RN, BSN, CPHQ	Director, Quality Improvement/Risk Management
Pat Longworth, RN, BSN	Assistant Director, 3 West
Marci Paulk, RT	Assistant Director, Medical Imaging Services
Elaine Sein, RN, BSN, OCN	Fox Chase Cancer Center Partners
Mary Stamets, CTR	Cancer Registry Manager
Barbara Tofani, RN, MSN	Director, HRCC
Pamela Vlahakis, RN, CEN, CRN	Coordinator, Breast Care Program