

STAR Program Certification at Jupiter Medical Center

BY STACEY JUSTINE, MS



In March 2012 Oncology Rehab Partners—a healthcare company providing facilities and clinicians with tools and programs to deliver oncology rehabilitation care—contacted our program, Jupiter Medical Center (JMC), to discuss the benefits of becoming a STAR-certified provider. Sue Goulding, oncology administrative coordinator at Jupiter Medical Center’s Ella Milbank Foshay Cancer Center, recognized the excellent opportunity to provide our cancer survivors with certified rehabilitation. Accordingly, Oncology Rehab Partners and our Director of Oncology Services began discussions to evaluate the program. It was apparent that this program far exceeded our offerings at the time. Our leadership was impressed with the program’s promise to train JMC team members to help deliver outstanding cancer rehabilitation services. Over the years, JMC’s Outpatient Rehabilitation Department had tried to implement a cancer rehab program. However, these attempts met with minimal success for several reasons. The main challenges were a lack of tools and systematic processes to deliver the appropriate rehabilitation to the cancer survivors. We enlisted the support of several key physician champions, including Marcelle Bertrand, MD, medical oncologist and then chair, Cancer Committee; John A.P. Rimmer, MD, medical director, Kristin Hoke Breast Health Program at JMC; and David Herold, MD, medical director, Radiation Oncology at JMC—all of whom remain supportive of the STAR Program to this day.

Three-Phase Implementation

Implementing the STAR Program at JMC was a three-phase process. The first phase involved training members of the Oncology and Rehabilitation Departments throughout the hospital. We trained 45 members of our staff, representing nine different clinical and support specialties. These included nurses; mental health professionals; physical, occupational and speech therapists; massage therapists; exercise physiologists; and dietitians. Over the four-month certification process, the STAR team spent approximately 20 hours each to complete the self-directed computer-based training modules. In addition to the online training, the members of the STAR team met regularly for in-services designed to bring the team members together.

The second phase involved implementing protocols to help direct care, as well as identify problems patients were



MORE ONLINE!

Read an interview with Julie Silver, MD, co-founder of Oncology Rehab Partners and developer of STAR (Survivor Training and Rehabilitation) Program Certification online at: www.accc-cancer.org/oj/MJ2012.



experiencing that might be amenable to rehabilitation interventions. Examples of tools implemented include:

- *Timed Up and Go*
- A 6-Minute Walk Test
- A brief pain inventory.

We also established a “front door,” which is the most direct route for patients to access the cancer rehabilitation services. By having patients and physicians use one phone number, or one point of contact, it established an easy-to-access entry point for the STAR Program. To facilitate the referral process and trouble shoot, the directors of the Oncology and Rehabilitation Departments met regularly. Bringing these two departments together was critical to the program’s success.

The post-launch and third phase involved tracking outcomes and continuing education for our staff on an ongoing basis. Less than one year post-launch, we have seen more than a 50 percent increase in oncology patient referrals to the Rehabilitation Department and we anticipate rapid growth over the next 12 months. Jupiter Medical Center was the first cancer program in Florida to earn the STAR Program Certification from Oncology Rehab Partners.

Why STAR Program Certification?

The STAR Program is the gold standard in cancer rehabilitation for hospitals and cancer centers that offer multidisciplinary survivorship care. Julie Silver, MD, assistant professor at Harvard Medical School, cancer survivor, and author of several books on oncology rehabilitation, developed the STAR Program certification with her team of clinicians. Certification through the STAR Program appealed to JMC as a credible comprehensive training program that complemented our ongoing commitment to provide world-class healthcare to the patients in our community. The program allowed use of evidence-based medicine to effectively care for cancer survivors, and addressed the unique health and quality-of-life

issues by cancer survivors who are undergoing treatment or living with its aftermath.

In addition, JMC's STAR Program fulfilled the Commission on Cancer's accreditation requirements to ensure patient-centered care by establishing a program that offered access to rehabilitation services to help patients affected by cancer cope with the activities of daily living and enable them to resume normal activities. Currently, our STAR Program connects cancer survivors to a multidisciplinary team of clinicians, including physical therapists, occupational therapists, speech therapists, social workers, dietitians, and nurses who are trained to help them manage and heal the physical and psychological effects that can arise during and after cancer treatment. Information about the STAR Program is given to all cancer patients. Appropriate referrals would include:

- Patients who are unable to return to their previous activity level—including work, home, recreation, and their social activities
- Patients with pain that is not due to tumor and/or malignancy
- Patients who are having difficulty lifting an arm overhead
- Patients experiencing fatigue that interferes with function
- Patients with untreated or worsening lymphedema, to name a few.


The total investment for the STAR Program Certification—generously funded by the JMC Foundation—was approximately \$22,000, and included two expert-directed webinars, access to the online STAR self-directed modules, and four in-service presentations. In addition, the STAR Program included 50 Survivor Guidebooks, two press releases, website content about the JMC STAR Program, a Joint Solution Sheet with Oncology Rehab Partners, an article to send to local media to help market the new program, and a referral letter for STAR services.

Our team continues to meet when STAR Program updates are presented through Oncology Rehab Partners. Kelly Raymond, senior physical therapist at JMC's Health and Rehab, is the STAR Program coordinator in charge of quarterly STAR Program meetings. These sessions are designed to keep the team together to ensure the program thrives and that all cancer survivors have access to the healthcare services they need.

Treating the Whole Patient

STAR Program certification continues to advance our survivorship care, to provide an increase in patient referrals, and to systematically train dedicated clinicians to become oncology rehab experts. JMC found it could use existing interdisciplinary resources while creating a reimbursable oncology rehab program. The program allowed JMC to track outcomes,

expand our survivorship research, and assist in applying for continuing education units (CEUs) for our clinicians.

At JMC, we pride ourselves on treating the whole patient—not just the patient's illness. Our comprehensive cancer program takes a holistic approach to caring for our patients. The opportunity to further enhance our program by implementing the STAR Program through Oncology Rehab Partners made perfect sense, as JMC is committed to finding ways to bring the best possible cancer care services to our community. Oncology rehabilitation should be the standard of care in all hospitals that treat cancer patients. By developing a cancer rehabilitation and survivorship program, we have made survivorship a distinct and important part of the care continuum. Our goal is to provide cancer patients, and all our patients, with the most comprehensive medical care available, and the best possible outcomes for recovery. 

—Stacey Justine, MS, is director, Outpatient Rehabilitation, Jupiter Medical Center, in Jupiter, Fla.

I am so glad that Jupiter Medical Center had the STAR Program. I was actually considering moving until I found out that Jupiter Medical Center could provide the care that I needed. I think that every cancer survivor should have the opportunity to get the care that they need. I was looking at all the major cancer centers in the United States and was relieved to know that I didn't need to look any further than Jupiter Medical Center.—Sandra Wade, a STAR Program patient currently receiving physical therapy treatment at Jupiter Medical Center's Health and Rehab and advocate of the STAR Program



OTHER ACCC MEMBERS WITH STAR PROGRAM CERTIFICATION

- Alexian Brothers Medical Center, Elk Grove Village, Illinois (launch date, April 2012)
- Bassett Healthcare Network, Cooperstown, New York
- Bridgeport Hospital, Bridgeport, Connecticut (launch date, spring 2012)
- Centra Regional Cancer Center, Lynchburg, Virginia. (This ACCC-member program saw an 82 percent increase in referrals over the first year of the program, with an additional 60 percent in year two.)
- Johns Hopkins, Baltimore, Maryland
- Kent Hospital, Warwick, Rhode Island
- McLaren Bay Regional Medical Center, Bay City, Michigan (launch date, May 2012)
- Saint Alphonsus Regional Medical Center, Boise, Idaho
- St. Francis (Bon Secours), Greenville, South Carolina. (This ACCC-member program saw a 53 percent increase in referrals to the program over the first 4 months.)
- St. Luke's Hospital, Chesterfield, Missouri
- South County Hospital, Wakefield, Rhode Island (launch date TBD)

Source: Oncology Rehab Partners



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF JUPITER MEDICAL CENTER

Jupiter Medical Center STAR Program-certified clinicians and providers are a multidisciplinary group that includes inpatient and outpatient therapists, cancer center staff, psychosocial therapist, wellness coordinators, and nutritionist (not pictured).