

spotlight

Maryland Oncology Hematology



Clinic location in Annapolis, Md.

Maryland Oncology Hematology is one of the largest independent oncology practices in Maryland, serving patients in the state and the metro Washington, D.C., area. With 14 physician-owned locations, Maryland Oncology Hematology provides its communities value-based and integrated cancer care close to home through its dedicated staff and membership in the US Oncology Network.

A State-Wide Structure

Maryland Oncology Hematology joined the US Oncology Network in 2003. The US Oncology Network allows the practice to collaborate with more than 1,380 independent physicians on patients' treatment and care plans.

"Through the US Oncology Network, independent doctors come together to form a community of shared expertise and resources dedicated to advancing local cancer care and delivery for better patient outcomes," says Mark Lamplugh Jr., head of marketing and growth at Maryland Oncology Hematology. "We support each other through the network. For example, if they are doing something new in Texas that enhances the patient experience, we will talk about it, share resources, and do the same for our patients here."

All 14 locations of Maryland Oncology Hematology are owned by the physicians who work in the stand-alone facilities. The practice employs both its physicians and non-clinical staff and offers management services, so patients' treatments are top of mind for the physicians. The practice

executive team consists of Lamplugh; the director of practice operations, Naycherie Alvira; the director of clinical operations, Jenny Elrod; the controller, Victor Coker-Apiah; and the newly hired executive director, Robert Davis. This team oversees every practice location and their operation. The practice has established a corporate headquarters to house its billing, research, human resources, finance, managed care, and marketing teams who provide support for all clinic sites.

Each location within Maryland Oncology Hematology is intentionally designed with patients in mind to offer the best experience possible during their cancer care, including ease of access to a facility, free parking, and well-thought-out design to create a welcoming environment. This structure is what sets the private practice apart from its larger hospital-based competitors.

A Suite of Services

Patients are referred to Maryland Oncology Hematology by their primary care provider or other healthcare professional and visit the location closest to their home. Patients can see the physician they prefer, even if it means traveling to a farther location. Medical oncology and hematology services are provided at each clinic by a team made up of approximately 40 medical oncologists and several nurse practitioners, physician assistants, registered nurses, coordinators, schedulers, practice administrators, and medical assistants. The department structure and number of staff vary by location due to patient volumes and

practice needs. For example, the Laurel, Md., and Lanham, Md., clinics are only open two days a week. Staff from the Brandywine, Md., and Silver Spring, Md., locations offer their expertise and services in these two clinics.

Most Maryland Oncology Hematology infusion suites are semi-private, with private rooms available for those who wish to be alone during treatment. Televisions, magazines, and books are available for patients as they receive their infusions. The practice also offers a dedicated pharmacy in each location that is typically connected directly to the clinic suite. The in-house pharmacies provide patients their medical oncology and hematology infusions as well as any other prescriptions that need to be filled. These pharmacies are dedicated to helping patients get the lowest cost for their medications; therefore, they can often offer patients a discounted rate. Pharmacy staff include 18 infusion technicians across 6 divisions, medically integrated dispensing technicians, and 3 pharmacists.

In November 2020, Maryland Oncology Hematology added radiation oncology to its service line. The practice now provides radiation oncology in partnership with Adventist Healthcare at White Oak Cancer Center in Silver Spring, Md. Radiation oncology is located on the first floor of the new cancer center, which sits as a stand-alone facility next to the main hospital. This department is staffed by a radiation oncologist who serves as the practice's radiation oncology medical director, an OCN-certified nurse, a physicist, a dosimetrist, and a supporting clinical team.

Maryland Oncology Hematology now offers IGRT, IMRT, and SBRT using a Varian TrueBeam.®

The practice also offers patients breast and colorectal surgical oncology services, which are available at the White Oak Cancer Center and Aquilino Cancer Center in Rockville, Md. The Aquilino Cancer Center is also operated in partnership with Adventist Healthcare. As the practice continues to grow, it is looking to expand its surgical oncology offerings to include thoracic oncology in the future.

Meeting Patients' Needs

Patients complete a screening tool at every appointment that allows staff to identify and address any patient needs. Maryland Oncology Hematology offers weekly support groups, counseling, transportation support, financial assistance, intimacy and fertility services, and nutrition. The practice also connects patients to available community resources. Patients may be referred or can self-refer to these free supportive care services.

As a member of the US Oncology Network, Maryland Oncology Hematology screens patients for research and clinical trial opportunities. New patients are screened for participation in an available clinical trial prior to starting treatment. If a patient is following a treatment plan and no longer receiving clinical benefit, they will be rescreened for clinical trial participation if it can be considered as a treatment option.

"The [US Oncology] Network gives us the opportunity of getting involved with the larger trials since we are a smaller community-based practice," Lamplugh explains. "Patients often go to a larger institution because they think they're getting the latest and greatest, but they can also get that same care with us, close to home."


Physicians, tumor board participants, and next-generation sequencing portals can also refer patients to an available clinical trial for which they qualify.

Physicians, nurses, clinical research coordinators, and data coordinators make up the staff of Maryland Oncology Hematology's research team. Through the US Oncology Network, the practice offers Phase I to IV oncology clinical trials with more than 40 currently open for enrollment.

COVID-19 and Care Delivery

Maryland Oncology Hematology has faced new challenges to delivering quality cancer care during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, including maintaining cancer screenings and experiencing a higher incidence of breast cancer. Due to COVID-19 social distancing requirements and stay-at-home orders, the practice saw fewer patients receive cancer screenings. The practice is now reaching out to its local communities to help patients feel safe resuming their regular screenings.

To address the high incidence in breast cancer brought about by recent COVID-19 restrictions, Maryland Oncology Hematology implemented a new breast cancer program that emphasizes the need for increased outreach, screening, and supportive care services for patients. A dedicated nurse navigator is being hired to follow all patients in the program to help them navigate their care from referral to treatment and survivorship.

Maryland Oncology Hematology staff take pride in the patient-centered services it offers, allowing the practice to compete with the large academic centers in the state. "I am proud of the patient care that we provide," says Lamplugh. "We had more than 12 nurses nominated for *Care Magazine's* oncology nurse of the year contest. That is more than any other cancer program in the country, and I think that right there is something to be proud of because all those nominations were done by our patients." 



Clinic location in Rockville, Md.



Maryland Oncology Hematology corporate headquarters in Calverton, Md.



Clinic location in Columbia, Md.



Clinic location in Bethesda, Md.