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Cancer Screening: A Team Effort

The Cancer Center at Mississippi Baptist Medical Center in Jackson, Miss., places great emphasis on increasing community awareness of the importance of cancer prevention and screening. Priority is given to serving the educational needs of the community through seminars on various topics, such as colorectal, prostate, breast, skin, and lung cancers. Educational programs are also presented to local elementary students.

Every September, as part of Prostate Cancer Awareness Month, the Cancer Center provides free prostate cancer screenings to men who are age fifty and older, or who are between the ages of forty and fifty and are African American or have a family history of prostate cancer. Screening participants receive a digital rectal exam and a PSA test. Since 1994 more than 210 men have been screened.

In 1994 the Cancer Center targeted members of the Mississippi state legislature for inclusion in its prostate cancer screening services. In 1997 this program was expanded to include members of the state supreme court. Each January a team of nurses and urologists travels to the state capitol to perform digital rectal exams and PSA testing for members of the House and Senate, supreme court justices, and staff members.

The goals of the program are twofold, according to Ginger Cocke, director of public relations. "Our primary consideration is always to identify health problems related to prostate disease to promote early intervention," Cocke said. "At the same time, we recognize the need to educate our leaders in government who play an important role in shaping health care policy."

The Mississippi legislature is

becoming increasingly involved in issues related to cancer. In July legislators passed a new law involving the off-label use of FDA-approved drugs for the treatment of cancer. With significant health care reform occurring at the state level, Mississippi Baptist's intent is to serve as an educational resource to government leaders about the many aspects of cancer care delivery.

"Our prostate screening program gives members of the legislative and judicial branches of government exposure to the clinical and financial processes of the hospital," Cocke explained. "We want Mississippi Baptist to be recognized as an information resource for our leaders as well as the entire community."

Screening sessions take place over the course of two mornings each January. Carla Moss, R.N., B.S.N., oncology project coordinator, schedules the event with the House information officer at the state capitol who then promotes the screening via a legislative newsletter. This newsletter includes information about eligibility requirements, registration hours, and screening location.

Since 1994, nearly 160 House and Senate members have been screened, with five suspicious test results and two individuals testing positive for malignancy. The number of participants continues to increase each year. The program is completely funded by a grant from a pharmaceutical company.

A COMMITMENT TO BREAST HEALTH

In 1993 Mississippi Baptist opened the freestanding Healthcaring Center for Women to provide wellness care. In addition to emotional health and osteoporosis programs, the Center offers a mammography screening program dedicated to increasing women's awareness of

breast health. Since 1994 the Center has provided clinical breast exams, mammography, and self-breast exam instruction.

From the beginning, the Center's objective was to develop a quality mammography screening program that would attract the attention of women and their physicians, according to Deb Primos, R.N., M.H.S., coordinator of the Healthcaring Center for Women. The initial effort to emphasize screening rather than diagnostic services was a deliberate attempt to concentrate on providing this one aspect of breast health as effectively as possible. Training R.N. staff in breast examination was a priority. Nurses performing the breast exams received clinical training through the M.D. Anderson Breast Module in Houston, Tex. Health education for patients is also a major component. "Our experience in developing the mammography screening program has given us a solid foundation upon which to expand our services," Primos said. Later this year the Center will open a comprehensive, one-stop breast care center, which will offer screening, diagnostic, and psychosocial services.

Physician collaboration has driven development of the new comprehensive breast center. A multidisciplinary task force comprised of general and plastic surgeons, radiologists, medical and radiation oncologists, ob-gyns, pathologists, and key administrators oversees the center's development, reviewing the initial proposal, conducting focus groups and site visits, and finalizing logistical issues.

Encouraging physicians to become involved in projects of special interest is important for a cancer center operating in an environment relatively untouched by

managed care and primarily driven by physician referral, Primos said. In Mississippi Baptist's service area, which consists of Jackson's 300,000 population and three surrounding counties, four hospitals compete for the majority of oncology services. Of the city's two oncology practices, one two-person group

practices exclusively at Mississippi Baptist, while another six-person group practices at all four hospitals. Cocke, Moss, and Primos all agree that developing quality programs has been key to building productive relationships with local physicians.

The success of Mississippi Baptist's cancer screening programs

relies on a team effort shared among the hospital's nursing staff and administration and community physicians. "Our team efforts to initiate health education and screening programs have made Mississippi Baptist synonymous with quality cancer care," said Moss. ■

Mississippi Baptist Medical Center has served the Central Mississippi region for more than eighty-six years. The Cancer Center provides a full range of services including health promotion/screening, psycho-social and spiritual support, diagnosis, treatment, home care, and hospice. As part of the Premier Health Alliance, Mississippi Baptist operates as a multiple care delivery system, serving the Jackson area and smaller surrounding communities within a 100-mile radius.



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VITAL STATISTICS

Total hospital bed size: 566
Dedicated cancer unit beds: 68
New analytic cancer patients seen each year: 1,690
Managed care penetration in the state: 8 percent

PATIENT SUPPORT SERVICES

■ Community seminars related to colorectal, prostate, skin, and

lung cancer are offered throughout the year to corporations and schools.

■ A closed-circuit television channel is dedicated specifically to provide information to inpatients on oncology-related topics.

■ The Hederman Room is available in the inpatient area for patients and families as a respite from the patient room. Reading

materials, movies, and crafts are available.

■ The Appearance Center at Baptist offers wigs, breast prostheses, and appearance consultation at reduced rates to women undergoing cancer treatment.

■ New Beginnings, a five-part community seminar on bereavement, is offered three times a year.