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The Maine Center for Cancer Care New Program Initiatives Underway

The Maine Center for Cancer Care (MCCC) in Scarborough, an integral part of Maine Medical Center (MMC), is a multidisciplinary effort, providing a full range of medical and social support services for adults and children in new, dedicated outpatient and inpatient facilities.

While the advent of several new facilities has reinforced the cooperation among disciplines, a number of program initiatives are underway

to further advance the concept of well-coordinated, multidisciplinary, cancer care. One of these initiatives is the commitment to a single information system for all physicians and staff involved in the care of cancer patients.

Diane Skog, MMC's clinical data coordinator for Oncology Administration, said that for the last year, the Cancer Center has worked with KnowMed, Inc., of Berkeley, Calif., to deploy a computerized electronic medical data

system (EMDS). The system incorporates computer-driven staging algorithms, practice guidelines, chemotherapy regimen tracking, and clinical outcome measurements, while, at the same time, accumulating costs involved in the delivery of care.

A pilot study of lung cancer patients has illustrated the power of such a computerized information system to improve evaluation and management. The Maine Medical Center's Lung Cancer Database has

The Maine Center for Cancer Care is a state-of-the-art, comprehensive cancer program located at the Scarborough campus of Maine Medical Center, the largest tertiary care hospital in the state. As Maine's flagship center for multidisciplinary cancer care, the MCCC offers a full complement of diagnostic and treatment services for children and adults, as well as education, research, and patient support programs. The Center is approved by the American College of Surgeons' Commission on Cancer as a teaching hospital cancer program.

VITAL STATISTICS

- Total hospital bed size: 606
- Dedicated cancer unit beds: 44
- Number of analytic cancer cases seen in 1998: 1,771
- Managed care penetration in the state: 30 percent

SELECTED PATIENT SUPPORT SERVICES

- The Breast Care Center, located at MCCC, offers a multidisci-



plinary consultation service for women with breast cancer.

- The Marshall and Susan Gibson Pavilion, opened in 1998, is a spacious, modern patient care unit for cancer patients.
- The Maine Children's Cancer Program and the new Barbara Bush Children's Hospital provide a state-of-the-art cancer program for children of all ages with cancer.
- The MCCC sponsors yearly skin and prostate screening clinics and a yearly cancer symposium for professionals. A quarterly newsletter reports on new

initiatives in the cancer program and the latest in treatment techniques and protocols.

- The Learning Resource Center provides a full range of library services for people with cancer and their families.
- The MCCC's genetics program offers evaluation and counseling to patients and their families and educational seminars for house staff.
- The Women's Cancer Program offers a full range of treatment and support services to Maine women with a range of gynecological malignancies.

been integrated into the EMDS, along with evidence-based treatment guidelines. By linking surgery, pulmonary medicine, medical oncology, and radiation therapy physicians to each other and to radiology, laboratory medicine, and pathology, the coordination and speed of the initial workup has improved, staging has become more accurate, practice guidelines have been defined and adopted, and treatment options better organized.

Under the guidance of Peter Bates, M.D., chief of medicine at Maine Medical Center, information from the lung cancer database is now used to organize a bimonthly multidisciplinary lung cancer tumor board. Bates maintains that this has led to better patient tracking, and a much more meaningful discussion of staging issues and management options.

Bates points out that the lung cancer database program is now being extended statewide under the auspices of the Maine Medical Assessment Foundation and a consortium of seven hospital cancer programs. Using the KnowMed program, clinical information will be entered by cancer registrars at participating hospitals via the Internet. The data will be analyzed at the Maine Medical Assessment Foundation for staging accuracy and reported back to the hospital's cancer conferences. It is anticipated that, by the end of the year 2000, up to 80 percent of all lung cancer patients diagnosed and treated in Maine will be tracked using this online computerized database.

CLINICAL PROGRAMS

Over the past five years, the Maine Center for Cancer Care has seen the development of several new and

expanded clinical programs.

Among these are:

- *The Breast Care Center*, which is three years old, and has been a major success. The volume of patients using the Center has grown steadily. Services offered by the Center now include: breast health education, screening and diagnostic mammography and ultrasound, stereotactic needle biopsy, multidisciplinary consultation clinics, genetic evaluation and counseling, and survivor support.

- *The Stem Cell Transplant Program* has been expanded to include children who are enrolled in high-dose POG (Pediatric Oncology Group) chemotherapy protocols requiring stem cell rescue. The adult program, now 10 years old, transplants 20 to 30 lymphoma, leukemia, and myeloma patients each year, many as part of a multi-institutional trial.

- *The Radiation Therapy Center* has undergone major upgrading of its facilities and equipment with the purchase of two new dual energy linear accelerators. The Center has also implemented new services such as ultrasound guided prostate seed implants and stereotactic radio-surgery.

- *The Surgical Oncology Division* has sponsored several new surgical techniques for the diagnosis and treatment of malignancies, including: sentinel node biopsy for breast cancer and melanoma staging, directed cryotherapy for the treatment of liver metastases and laparoscopic surgical approaches to the staging and treatment of gynecological malignancies.

- *Screening and Education Programs* to heighten the awareness of Maine citizens to the causes of and need for early detection of cancers are now offered throughout

the year. This includes breast health education, melanoma and skin cancer screening, prostate cancer screening, and a broad range of women's health issues. The Center sponsors cancer support groups and works closely with the Cancer Community Center, a community-supported facility, which offers additional support groups and recognized alternative therapies.

- The availability of *NIH-Sponsored Clinical Trials* has greatly improved. The Cancer Center now offers, at any one time, more than 60 protocols sponsored by POG, GOG, RTOG, CALGB, SWOG, or as a collaborative effort with other cancer centers.

FUTURE DIRECTION OF DATA MANAGEMENT AT CENTER

The vision of the cancer program, said Robert Hillman, M.D., chairman of the Cancer Steering Committee, is for clinicians involved in the care of its cancer patients to have access to common electronic medical records. A disease management model would exist by which the entire continuum of a patient's cancer care would be available from initial entry into the medical system via a primary care physician to post-treatment and follow-up tracking by the Cancer Registry. Work-up data, history and physical information, radiology reports, pathology results, and treatment data would occur through networking with central registry, pathology, radiology, and the Cancer Registry. Networking to financial management systems would enable the Cancer Center to determine costs associated with specific cancer treatment pathways, and the ability to participate in global pricing. ■