

Northwest Cancer Specialists certified as Breast Center of Excellence

Practice is one of seven clinics nationwide meeting criteria that advances breast cancer care

Northwest Cancer Specialists (NCS) has earned designation as a US Oncology Certified Breast Center of Excellence. NCS is a member of the US Oncology network of affiliated community-based oncology practices, according to the practice's physicians.

As a certified Breast Center of Excellence, NCS provides comprehensive breast cancer care for newly diagnosed patients. The designation means patients have rapid access to the information, education, psychosocial support and evidence-based treatment options they need to maximize their care from the time of diagnosis to survivorship.

Services provided by the NCS Breast Center of Excellence include: Nursing support, initial consults and second opinions, comprehensive consults through a multidisciplinary approach, chart review and/or tumor board discussions, nutritional education, social services, financial counsel-

ing and genetic counseling

Additional benefits of the NCS Breast Center of Excellence include coordination of clinical care using multiple approaches, scientific evidence-based pathways and research.

To earn Center of Excellence designation, NCS had to show its use of evidence-based medicine through a multidisciplinary approach that uses Level I treatment pathways, clinical trials, and patient case review. NCS was also required to establish a patient navigation team to coordinate vital clinical and non-clinical patient services.

Level I Pathways, developed by physicians affiliated with US Oncology, are evidence-based and provide guidelines for selecting the best treatment for the patient. Based on current evidence, Pathways evaluate effectiveness and side effects. The result is a pathway to better care and more predictable costs.

In addition, NCS had to demonstrate access to a variety of key services outside the practice for breast cancer patients. These services include digital mammography and breast MRI, as well as education on chemotherapy, radiation and anti-nausea.

The cornerstone of the NCS Breast Center of Excellence is the multidisciplinary approach to treating cancer that delivers coordinated, patient-focused care. The Center of Excellence team includes NCS medical and radiation oncologists and other specialty physicians outside the practice including surgeons, pathologists and radiologists; a patient care coordinator/navigator; the patient and their family; and non-clinical support staff at NCS.

Once diagnosed, a patient is referred to NCS by a surgeon or family practice physician. The patient's case is then given to the nurse navigator who contacts the patient within 24 hours. An important member of NCS patient navigation team, the nurse navigator guides the patient through the logistics of diagnosis and treatment. This includes coordination of paperwork, appointments and referrals.

After testing, the patient meets with the medical oncologist and

radiation oncologist; diagnostic testing results are also shared with the referring physician.

The next step is a tumor board meeting or a chart review to discuss the patient's case. A tumor board consists of a team of physicians—surgeon, medical oncologist and radiation oncologists—who collectively review and work together to determine the best course of treatment for each patient.

Tumor boards typically include a medical oncologist and radiation oncologist from NCS. Physicians not affiliated with NCS are also part of the case review and can include a surgeon, radiologist, pathologist and other oncologists.

A key component of the NCS Breast Center of Excellence clinical coordination is its patient navigation team. Comprised of clinical and non-clinical staff, the team works together to support patients, their families and partners by providing coordinated disease-specific care, individualized patient education, psychosocial support, and access to additional community resources.

"The logistics of breast cancer treatment can be demanding for patients, and they don't need to be," says Brad Perrigo, Executive Director of Northwest Cancer

Specialists. "Our patient navigation team helps ease the burden for patients. They make sure each patient's care is seamlessly coordinated and that they receive the education, clinical support and access to community resources they and their families need during the entire journey."

Criteria for program objectives and Breast Center of Excellence certification were developed by US Oncology network physicians. Practices earning the designation are selected by members of the US Oncology Breast Center of Excellence Committee. The committee is comprised of physician leaders who serve on the US Oncology national breast cancer committee.

Northwest Cancer Specialists has seven locations in the Portland-Vancouver metropolitan area: Adventist Office in Southeast Portland; Meridian Park Office in Tualatin; Providence Office in Northeast Portland; Rose Quarter Cancer Center in Portland; St. Vincent Office in Southwest Portland; Salmon Creek Office in Northeast Vancouver; and Vancouver Cancer Center in Southeast Vancouver. For more information, visit www.nwccancer.com.