

**Clinical Update**  
Compliments of  
John Muir Health

# Physician News

SERVICE LINE SPOTLIGHT:

## Breast Health Services Update:

This month, we met with Breast Health Services to see what's new in this dynamic service line. Breast Health Services brings together a highly specialized team, providing comprehensive screening and diagnostic capabilities, advanced treatment for breast cancer, surveillance for high risk individuals, rehabilitation, survivorship and routine breast care. Our dedicated Breast Health Services nurse navigators provide education, support and assistance in connecting individuals with resources specific to their needs.

The group takes a personal approach with each patient, with a multidisciplinary team that can tackle complex cases. Tumor boards consisting of board certified breast surgeons, plastic surgeons, gynecologists, medical oncologists, radiation oncologists, pathologists, radiologists and a genetic counselor collaboratively discuss and provide individual treatment options based on national guidelines and clinical trial eligibility to managing physicians for each patient.

Breast Health Services is recognized as a Breast Imaging Center of Excellence by the American College of Radiology. It is also accredited through the National Accreditation Program for Breast Centers (NAPBC) as well as American College of Radiology (ACR) accredited in Radiation Oncology. These nationally-recognized awards and accreditations are additional validation of the quality care that you can expect from these departments.

**JMHPN: What are some recent developments in your department – programs, initiatives, successes?**

**Deborah Kerlin, MD, Medical Director of Breast Health Services:** Our newest developments include establishing a genetic BRCA support group; developing a high-risk breast clinic; broadening our ultrasound screening program and launching our new intra-operative radiation therapy capability as well as installation of a new TrueBeam Stx linear accelerator.

**Vivian Wing, MD, Director of Medical Imaging:** Knowing that dense breast tissue may obscure small masses on mammography, the addition of screening breast ultrasound to our imaging armamentarium will help us detect small cancers in women with dense breasts and other risk factors. We are proud to be one of only a few breast centers in the Bay Area which offers this service.



The welcoming waiting room at the Breast Health Center in Walnut Creek.

**Linda Womack, Executive Director of Medical Imaging:**

Community awareness around this issue was heightened by a California law that was passed in April of 2013 which mandates that women with dense breast tissue be notified and made aware of other tests such as breast ultrasound and MRI that are available to further evaluate their breast tissue.

**William Bice, MD, Director of Radiation Oncology and Chief Physicist:**

Intraoperative radiotherapy is delivered in the OR as a single treatment post-lumpectomy. For eligible patients this is a convenient alternative to standard radiotherapy. In conjunction with UCSF we were recently invited to enroll as the first non-academic treatment center in the TARGIT-US trial. Led jointly at John Muir Health by Marjaneh Moini, MD, Radiation Oncologist, and myself, this trial requires special training for all members of the treatment team. TARGIT-US replicates a successful European study with an endpoint of disease-free survival at five years.

The installation of a new Varian True Beam linear accelerator also spells good news. Sub-millimeter accuracy offers highly precise delivery of radiation. Reduced treatment times due to faster treatment delivery supplement this precision and enhance patient comfort. Image guidance is used routinely to insure proper patient alignment. Combined, these improvements allow us to better confine the radiation to the target and enhance sparing of normal, healthy tissues.

**Of what are you most proud?**

**Dr. Kerlin:** When I look at what we’ve put in place, and how comprehensive our program has grown, including the full array of screening, diagnostics, treatment, rehabilitation and survivorship, the expertise that comes along with that, the high risk program, genetic counseling services, and the survivorship program with a dedicated nurse navigator who provides education and support for individuals every step along the way... it is very satisfying.

We are also very proud of our Every Woman Counts Program, providing high-quality breast cancer screenings and diagnostics to women of our community who are low income and uninsured or underinsured. Our Breast Center at Concord has a unique and successful breast cancer screening and diagnostic program through the Every Woman Counts Program which began in 1997. Our program allows patients to complete their clinical breast exam, screening and/or diagnostic imaging, breast ultrasound, and ultrasound guided core biopsy on the same day. This is largely attributed to the dedication, efficiency and expertise of our radiologists, Vivian Wing, MD, Joan Reynolds, MD and their colleagues as well as the Medical Imaging and Cancer Institute staff, working collectively to minimize “lost to follow-up” cases in this unique patient population. As well, if a woman is diagnosed with breast cancer, we provide Nurse Navigation services and enrollment in the Breast and Cervical Cancer Treatment Program for treatment and continuity of care.

**Brenda Carlson, Executive Director of Oncology:**

We have grown so much in the past ten years – and have been recognized as an accredited breast health program. That really speaks to the quality of the elements within the program. Across the board, we adhere to the highest standards of care. It’s rare that you’ll see that to the same degree at other community hospitals.

**What do you wish other MDs knew about your department?**

**Dr. Kerlin:** The programs and services are available to all managing physicians for their John Muir Health patients.

We’d like to raise awareness of the pre-treatment conferences that we offer – ongoing, on a weekly basis, that allow a patient’s case to be presented to a pretreatment, multidisciplinary board once biopsy proven disease is identified. This allows for discussion of other diagnostic studies and clinical trials that may benefit the patient prior to definitive treatment.

We also welcome all managing physicians to present their patients to our multidisciplinary Tumor Board for discussion of prospective treatment recommendations. This allows for collective input in care planning and the patient does not have to leave the system to seek a second opinion.

**What will be most challenging in future?**

**Dr. Kerlin:** One great challenge is to continue spending our dollars as wisely as possible, and to continue to provide this comprehensive level of service and capability with the highest level of quality. We are sure we’ll be able to meet that challenge.

For more information or questions about our Breast Health Services, please call (925) 947-3322.



Deborah Kerlin, MD, Medical Director of Breast Health Services, left, with Brenda Carlson, Executive Director of Oncology.



Left to right: Margo Thelander, MS, Genetic Counselor, Vicki Rocconi, RN, Cancer Center Nurse Navigator, and Jodi Luckenbill, Receptionist, at the Breast Health Center in Walnut Creek.