

BREAST CENTERS  
AT RHODE ISLAND AND  
THE MIRIAM HOSPITALS



**The Comprehensive  
Cancer Center**

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*Rhode Island Hospital • The Miriam Hospital*  
*Lifespan Partners*

*Welcome to the breast centers  
at Rhode Island and  
The Miriam hospitals.*



Whether you have come to our centers for screening or treatment, please be assured that our centers are at the forefront of breast cancer diagnosis, treatment and support. Our multidisciplinary team of medical professionals offers patients the highest level of expertise and our state-of-the-art facilities are equipped with the latest technology, resulting in:

- Early detection of breast cancer, when it is most treatable
- Treatments that allow many women to continue their usual activities
- Prompt attention to symptoms caused either by the disease or side effects of treatment to minimize discomfort and disability
- Integrated facilities that offer patients convenient and prompt care as they go from initial visit to definitive diagnosis to appropriate treatment

As faculty members of The Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University, our physicians train the next generation of breast cancer specialists, and are actively engaged in research to develop new and ever more effective treatments for breast cancer as well as a potential cure for this disease. Patients are offered access to promising new treatments as participants in clinical trials.

The breast centers at Rhode Island and The Miriam hospitals are two of the first centers in New England to be accredited by the National Accreditation Program for Breast Centers (NAPBC). NAPBC accreditation ensures that a center includes:

- Comprehensive care, including a full range of state-of-the-art services

- A multidisciplinary team approach to coordinate the best treatment options
- Information about ongoing clinical trials and new treatment options

## COMPREHENSIVE, MULTIDISCIPLINARY CARE

Our multidisciplinary medical teams include many dedicated specialists—doctors, nurses, nurse practitioners, breast cancer nurse navigators, psychiatrists, social workers, rehabilitation therapists and nutritionists—who work with patients every step of the way, from diagnosis to treatment to follow-up care. Every week, the physicians involved in a patient’s care meet to discuss the unique circumstances of the patient’s condition and treatment. These interdisciplinary meetings focus on thorough discussion of each patient’s case.

*Throughout treatment, the team keeps the patient’s primary care physician informed about the patient’s treatment plan, progress, and future care.*

Physicians from medical oncology, radiation oncology, and surgery work together to provide an appropriate treatment plan. Many of our nurses are trained and certified in oncology nursing, with emphasis on quality care and evidence-based practices, and have received certification in oncology nursing from the Oncology Nursing Certification Corporation. Throughout treatment, the team keeps the patient’s primary care physician informed

about the patient's treatment plan, progress, and future care. Physicians are also available to provide second opinion consultations.

## BREAST CANCER CLINICAL RESEARCH

As part of our commitment to providing state-of-the-art care and improving our understanding of the disease, we offer breast cancer patients treated at the Comprehensive Cancer Center the opportunity to participate in a variety of clinical research trials. Patients may participate in studies investigating the impact of exercise, diet and other lifestyle factors on their state of health and quality of life. Women identified at increased risk of developing breast cancer may also be offered the opportunity to enroll in cancer prevention studies.



## DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

Early and accurate diagnosis of abnormalities in the breast can save lives and reduce unnecessary procedures and surgery. The Miriam Hospital Breast Imaging Center and the Anne

C. Pappas Center for Breast Imaging at Rhode Island Hospital offer our patients state-of-the-art diagnostic services. Imaging techniques interpreted by board-certified breast radiologists are available, including:

- Digital mammography
- Breast ultrasound
- Breast MRI
- Guided biopsy and excision
- Galactography

Both imaging facilities meet the FDA's Mammography Quality Standards and are certified by the American College of Radiology. The

Pappas Center has been designated a Breast Imaging Center of Excellence by the American College of Radiology.

## TREATING BREAST CANCER

After reviewing the patient's medical tests, medical history, family history and prior treatments for cancer, the multidisciplinary team will meet with the patient, discuss the patient's preferences and recommend a treatment plan that may include radiation therapy, chemotherapy, hormone therapy or surgery. Each patient is also

evaluated for genetic aspects of the disease and is referred to a genetics clinic, as appropriate.

Throughout treatment, the team will update the patient's primary care physician on the patient's progress. When treatment is completed, they will send him or her a comprehensive summary of the patient's treatment history and a plan for follow-up care.

## SURGERY

Our breast centers offer patients who require surgical treatment a variety of procedures. Each patient's care team will recommend the most effective treatment for the particular needs of the patient. Surgical options include:

**Lumpectomy:** The surgeon removes the tumor and a small margin of surrounding healthy tissue, preserving most of the breast.

**Axillary lymph node dissection/sentinel node sampling:** Evaluation of the lymph glands (nodes) under the arm on the side of the cancer is part of the assessment and treatment of most patients with breast cancer. If there is no evidence of spread of the cancer to these lymph nodes, the surgeon may be



able to perform a limited surgical procedure called sentinel node sampling to remove and examine a small number of these nodes, in place of a more extensive surgery to remove all of these nodes, called an axillary lymph node dissection.

**Mastectomy:** The surgeon removes the entire breast, usually with sentinel node sampling or axillary lymph node dissection at the same time. When possible, the skin and nipple area can be used subsequently during breast reconstruction.

**Reconstructive surgery:** A variety of methods of breast reconstruction, whether immediate or delayed, can be offered to many patients who require or choose a mastectomy.

## CHEMOTHERAPY

Chemotherapy refers to the use of drugs to kill cancer cells that may have spread outside the breast. It is usually administered by vein (IV)



in a comfortable lounge chair in a private cubicle in the doctor's office or clinic. Chemotherapy usually follows surgery, but may be recommended before surgery in certain cases. It always is recommended in cases of inflammatory breast cancer.

## RADIATION THERAPY

Radiation therapy reduces the risk of breast cancer coming back in the breast and lymph nodes after surgery. While for most breast cancer patients external beam radiation (usually administered daily for three to six weeks) remains the standard treatment after lumpectomy (and sometimes after mastectomy), some



patients with small cancers are treated with brachytherapy, a newer option that delivers a shorter course of radiation administered with a radioactive seed or catheter placed directly into the area from which the cancer was removed. Rhode Island Hospital was the third hospital in the nation to offer the Axxent electronic brachytherapy system to treat early stage breast cancer, offering patients much shorter treatment time with less exposure to radiation, fewer side effects, and better outcomes.

## HORMONE THERAPY

Anti-estrogen hormone therapy may be recommended if a patient has a type of cancer that is stimulated by hormones. Medications that block hormones from attaching to cancer cells, slowing the growth of tumors and killing tumor cells, or medications that stop the body from making estrogen are both types of hormone therapy.

## SUPPORT AND REHABILITATION

### *Support Throughout the Process*

Coping with breast cancer at any stage is difficult. The Breast Health Navigator Program at Rhode Island and The Miriam hospitals helps patients and their families through this trying time. Breast health navigators are registered nurses trained in oncology who work in conjunction with treating physicians to guide



patients through diagnosis, treatment and recovery. Navigators are available in person and by telephone to help patients make informed decisions and cope with the variety of issues. They facilitate communication with health professionals, coordinate services, arrange interpreters and transportation, assist with insurance and financial questions, and provide emotional support to patients and their families. The program is funded in part by a grant from the Avon Foundation.

### *Lymphedema Program*

In addition to a full array of treatment options, the breast centers at Rhode Island and The Miriam hospitals offer a lymphedema program to help patients manage lymphedema, a swelling of soft tissue in the arm that can result from the buildup of lymphatic fluid, which may happen after surgery or radiation treatment.



## *Complementary Therapies*

To add to a patient's comfort while receiving treatment, the Adele R. Decof Comprehensive Cancer Center at The Miriam Hospital offers complementary therapies free of charge.

The therapies are relaxing and may have the added benefit of decreasing anxiety,

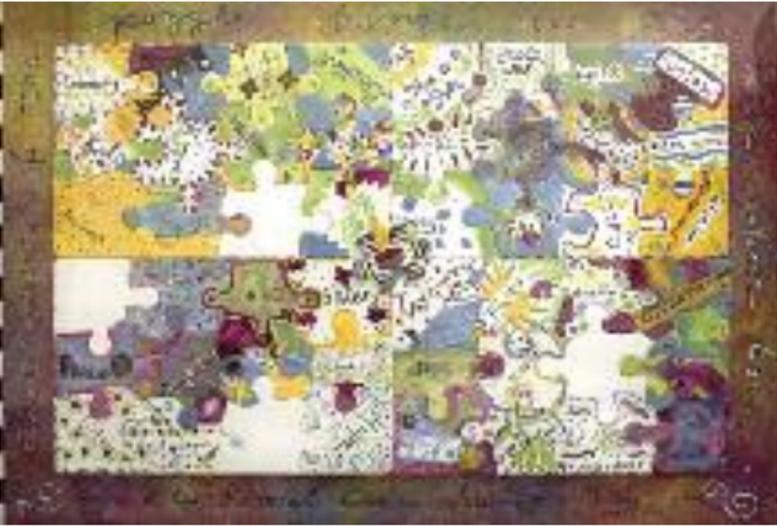
nausea and pain. Currently, patients may request reiki therapy, massage therapy and hypnosis. Pet, art and music therapy are also part of the care environment. If you are interested in learning more, please

request The Miriam Hospital's Complementary Therapies brochure.

## *The Healing Arts Program*

Recognizing that the expressive arts can play a significant role in promoting healing and good health, the Healing Arts Program is an integral part of patient care at Rhode Island and The Miriam hospitals. Committed to helping patients by fostering their creativity, we offer many hands-on arts projects for patients that





engage the imagination and ease the mind. To learn more about the Healing Arts Program, visit [www.lifespan.org](http://www.lifespan.org).

### *Patient Education and Ongoing Support*

Individualized education for patients and their families is provided prior to beginning treatment, and continues throughout and after the process. For a patient who has been treated for breast cancer, the treatments may come to an end, but life will continue with a new awareness and set of concerns. To help patients live the healthiest lives possible after they complete treatment, the Adele R. Decof Comprehensive Cancer Center at The Miriam Hospital offers an education program that features lectures twice a year on topics such as



exercise, work, nutrition, sexuality, family and friends, the psychological and social aspects of disease and recovery, and lymphedema management, among others.

## COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Rhode Island and The Miriam hospitals promote awareness of breast cancer through a variety of programs for the community. For information about current programs and events, please visit [cancer.lifespan.org](http://cancer.lifespan.org).

## CONTACT US

For additional information about the Breast Centers, call the Comprehensive Cancer Center at Rhode Island Hospital at 401-444-5435 or The Miriam Hospital at 401-793-2920.



*For Sandra Bessacini,  
Kindness is Powerful Medicine*



“I am and will continue to be a breast cancer survivor.”

Sandra Bessacini says these words with conviction. It’s been a long journey to get to this point. When Bessacini first learned she had breast cancer,

she says she was completely stunned. This wasn’t supposed to happen to her.

Cared for and guided by the staff at the Comprehensive Cancer Center, Bessacini says they were warm, helpful and caring, from the person who greeted her upon arrival to her surgeon. The staff answered her questions, and created a friendly, soothing environment, showing nothing but kindness every step of the way. She says that it was a very trying time and it was very important to have that kindness and care.

Cancer brought her life into sharp focus, and taught her to appreciate all that she has. In particular, Bessacini is grateful for her six-year-old granddaughter, her joy in life. And Bessacini is grateful for all the treatments she received at the Comprehensive Cancer Center, because that is what makes it possible for her to be there for her granddaughter and her family for a long time to come.

