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Backus Hospital  
Hartford Hospital  
MidState Medical Center  
The Hospital of Central Connecticut  
Windham Hospital



Member, Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Alliance

# Plus

## From tool kits to surgical tools

*Dr. Tessa Balach's role as  
an orthopedic oncologist  
is 'a perfect fit'*



Tessa Balach, MD, is one of only a handful of orthopedic oncologists practicing in Connecticut.

**A**s a youngster, Tessa Balach liked working with tools. "I grew up with a dad who always fixed things in the house and I was his assistant," she said.

Fast forward a few years at the University of Chicago where she was a student and worked as an athletic trainer, learning about the field of orthopedic medicine from the team physician, an orthopedic surgeon, and an orthopedic fellow.

"That was how I discovered orthopedic surgery and found my interest in it," Dr. Balach recalled, adding that when she learned orthopedics involved the very same tools she'd been so comfortable using growing up "it made the fit all the more perfect."

She would go on to earn her medical degree from New York Medical College and complete an orthopedic surgery residency where she also learned more about oncology, soon pursuing an oncology fellowship at University of Chicago Hospitals. In 2011 she was hired as an assis-

tant professor, Orthopaedic Surgery, UConn Musculoskeletal Institute at the University of Connecticut in Farmington, her primary location.

Also a Hartford Hospital medical staff member, Balach is one of only a handful of orthopedic oncologists practicing in Connecticut. She sees Hartford HealthCare Cancer Institute patients at Hartford Hospital and Connecticut Children's Medical Center.

She especially appreciates the diversity of cases in this field that treats patients for conditions ranging from

benign tumors such as lipomas, to the rare, malignant primary bone sarcomas such as osteosarcomas, which most often strikes teens and young adults; there are about 1,000 new cases annually in the United States.

Balach also treats metastatic bone disease, typically from the breast, lung, prostate and kidney; it can weaken bones, resulting in fracture. Her role is to identify and treat those bones susceptible to breaks, often by inserting a rod into a bone to help stabilize it.

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## Thankful for our team



**Donna Handley**

Vice President  
of Operations,  
Hartford  
HealthCare  
Cancer  
Institute

With Thanksgiving days away, I'm sure my colleagues join me in being thankful for the opportunity to be part of a healthcare team honored to care for our patients at the Hartford HealthCare Cancer Institute.

We take our responsibility for patient care very seriously and respect that commitment through our team of outstanding physicians, nurses, therapists, technologists, physicists, administrators, clinical researchers and more. We also make it a point to advance our care and keep abreast of the latest in oncologic care, through our varied disease management teams as well as educational opportunities. This includes the first-ever Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center Alliance event, Molecular Oncology for the Clinical Oncologist: Defining the Actionable Genome. Held last month in New York City, it discussed application of genetic profiling in patient care. This was a terrific opportunity to engage with

our Memorial Sloan Kettering (MSK) colleagues.

It was just over a year ago that we became the charter hospital with the Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Alliance. It is both a privilege and honor to be a part of this alliance, wherein we are aiming for one standard of care system-wide that aligns with MSK's standard of care, including collaborative research through clinical trials. This is a very exciting time for us at the cancer center with our primary focus on delivering advanced, patient-centered care by professionals. Many thanks to all who are a part of this great team.

# Bailey named East Region oncology director

**A**s newly named oncology regional director for Hartford HealthCare Cancer Institute (HHCCI) at Backus and Windham hospitals, Fred Bailey brings a vision aimed high at possibilities and focused on team building.

Bailey, PTA, MA, MBA, joined the East Region HHCCI team Oct. 29, assuming the role previously held by James F. O’Dea, PhD, MBA, who is now vice president, Operations, for the Behavioral Health Network.

A certified Lean facilitator with experience in oncology program development, he comes to the HHCCI from Eastern Connecticut Health Network (ECHN) in Manchester where he was administrative director of Rehabilitation, Sleep and Employer Services.

Bailey said the Cancer Institute’s reputation for high quality, patient-centered care close to home attracted him to his new position.

“I have friends and relatives who have been patients at HHCCI, and they have all raved about their experience — citing the location, as well as the compassion, professionalism, and expertise of all involved in their care. HHCCI’s selection as the charter member of the Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Alliance was also something that attracted me to HHCCI. This partnership provides



**Fred Bailey, PTA, MA, MBA**

amazing opportunities for collaborative research, as well as cancer care innovation for our patients and our providers.”

“We are so pleased Fred is joining our team and look forward to his leadership as we further strengthen and grow our Cancer Institute services at Backus and Windham hospitals in our East Region,” says Donna Handley, vice president of Operations, Hartford HealthCare Cancer Institute.

Team building is key to Bailey, who sees his role as a facilitator, providing staff the necessary tools toward achieving goals, he said, that benefit the patient.

As a Lean facilitator at ECHN, Bailey helped develop oncologic

survivorship and lymphedema programs and “found it very interesting and very meaningful work to help patients who have cancer,” adding it leveraged his rehab and exercise background.

Starting with Manchester Memorial Hospital (now ECHN) in 1992, his varied roles included director of Rehabilitation and Occupational Health Services. He earned a bachelor’s degree in sports medicine/athletic training from University of Connecticut, where he received a master of arts in exercise physiology. He also earned a master’s of business administration in entrepreneurial thinking and innovative practices from Bay Path College.

He is a member of the National Strength and Conditioning Association and the Tolland County Chamber of Commerce. Also an outdoorsman, Bailey enjoys mountain biking, hiking and even mountain climbing, having reached the summit of Mount Washington. He likens this new career path as a journey providing a great opportunity.

Already, he’s met many HHCCI staff members who are “really dedicated and passionate about what they do in providing excellence in cancer care. And that’s the type of program I want to be associated with.”

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“These are people who really need your help,” Balach said, noting there is greater emphasis on limb viability and newer medications that improve bone strength.

“Patients often are under the care of several physicians and benefit from having a care team that works and communicates well to assure they are getting the high quality we expect,” said Balach, who works col-

laboratively with many HHCCI staff members including medical and radiation oncologists.

She is also taking part in a prospective, blinded, randomized multi-institutional clinical trial through the University of Connecticut that is looking at the appropriate duration of post-operative antibiotics for patients treated with limb salvage surgery using

complex reconstruction techniques. This study, which she said may be the first of its kind, is aiming to reduce infection rates in these high-risk patients.

A surgeon with much of her care focused on cancer patients, Tessa Balach is still using tools — now, in many cases, to help her patients achieve an improved quality of life. A perfect fit.

# Advocates link system's clinicians and Disease Management Teams

**H**artford HealthCare Cancer Institute's six Disease Management Teams (DMTs) provide a structure for developing guidelines and standardizing cancer care across all Hartford HealthCare hospitals. The DMTs, created in 2014, focus on these disease sites: thoracic, gastrointestinal, gynecologic, breast, genitourinary and hematologic oncology.

Each DMT also includes one or more physician leader from each hospital serving in an advocate role and providing a vital link between the DMT and hospital specialists for that disease. The Breast DMT, led by oncologist Dr. Patricia DeFusco and Karen Weingrod, is now working to reinforce the important role of all DMT advocates.

At the monthly Breast DMT meeting, for example, physicians, nurse navigators, clinical research staff, genetic counselors and others involved in breast cancer care discuss topics, via videoconference, and reach consensus on guidelines for managing various aspects of care. Their work has included collaborating with the Gynecologic Oncology DMT to de-

velop guidelines for referring patients who might be at risk for hereditary breast and ovarian cancer for genetic testing and determining what, if any, interventions or surveillance to recommend.

The DMT advocate would then take the lead in communicating and explaining these guidelines to appropriate hospitals' clinical staff members.

"The idea is that the DMT would be the overall entity where clinical issues and standards of care are discussed, consensus is reached and recommendations and guidelines are developed and that those would then cascade via the DMT advocate to the five hospitals," said Weingrod, cancer program manager, Breast and GYN/Oncology Programs, Hartford HealthCare Cancer Institute at Hartford Hospital. "We wanted to have advocates at each hospital who would convey this information to their colleagues and talk about what the standards of care are and how they would be implemented at that hospital."

Mohamed Saleh, ME, MSTM, CSSBB, senior Lean Sensei, director,

Hartford HealthCare, said the advocate role is a pivotal ingredient toward bidirectional engagement, rapid decision making and ease of alignment across the Cancer Institute.

This is also reflected in the advocates' other role of encouraging specialists at each hospital to participate in DMT meetings. The advocates have a teleconference one week before each monthly DMT meeting to review the agenda and go over the topics to be discussed. They share this information with their colleagues and urge them to come and contribute to the DMT's discussions so the DMT can have as much engagement as possible from clinical staff at each hospital.

"We have many wonderful people in the Cancer Institute across the five centers," said DeFusco. "We need to engage their expertise and interpretation of the literature in order to develop guidelines."

Weingrod adds the advocacy initiative is just one example of an ongoing effort to communicate and foster interactions among those involved in breast cancer care at the Hartford HealthCare Cancer Institute.

## Bone marrow registry drive a success



As part of the recent Sept. 16-17 bone marrow registry drive, potential donor Cindy Paul of Berlin swabs her cheek for a DNA sample. She was among 12 people who registered at HOCC and nine people at MidState for the registry drive sponsored by Hartford HealthCare Cancer Institute at the respective hospitals and HOCC cancer center. Pictured at right is Cristina Balboni of Be The Match Registry, event co-sponsor with the Leukemia Lymphoma Society, Connecticut Chapter. Every year more than 14,000 patients suffer from a variety of bone marrow functioning diseases including leukemia and lymphoma and need a bone marrow transplant for survival. A registrant is contacted if found to be a match for a patient. To register, you must be between the ages of 18-44, in generally good health and willing to donate to any patient in need. For more information, call 203.694.8631 or visit [bethematch.org/](http://bethematch.org/)

## Foley Foundation holds a special place at the HHC Cancer Institute at Hartford Hospital

The Ron Foley Foundation was established in 2010 in memory of Ron Foley of West Hartford, a respected business and community leader who died of pancreatic cancer in 2005. Its mission is to fund medical research leading to improved diagnosis and more effective treatment and a cure for pancreatic cancer; promote public awareness of pancreatic cancer through education; and reduce human suffering caused by pancreatic cancer by giving direct financial aid to pancreatic cancer patients.

Since 2011, the foundation has partnered with the Hartford HealthCare Cancer Institute at Hartford Hospital. In recognition of the foundation's generous support, the hospital has named the programs and services supported by the foundation The Ron Foley Foundation Pancreatic Cancer Research, Screening and Education Program at Hartford Hospital. This includes annual educational seminars related to pancreatic cancer that are offered to the public.

Programs scheduled for this month with physician presenters were Nov. 5 at Hartford Hospital Family Wellness Center in Avon and Nov. 17 at Hartford Hospital Education Center, Gateway Medical Park in Glastonbury; please call **860.545.1888** for more information.



**Nancy Wilcock, left, and Gladys Silva became friends as both women's fathers were battling cancer at the Hartford HealthCare Cancer Institute at Hartford Hospital in 2013. Since then, they have worked together to help raise awareness and funds to fight pancreatic cancer through the Ron Foley Foundation.**

## Shared loss creates lifelong bond

**N**ancy Wilcock of Rocky Hill, and Gladys Silva of Newington, might never have met except for the shared heartbreak of losing their fathers to pancreatic cancer. Although they're of different ages and backgrounds, their common experience created a lasting bond. Today, the two women are fast friends, and both are helping the West Hartford-based Ron Foley Foundation in its efforts to raise awareness and funds to fight pancreatic cancer.

Wilcock and Silva met in 2013 while both of their fathers were patients on the inpatient oncology unit (CB2) at Hartford HealthCare Cancer Institute at Hartford Hospital. Wilcock's father was in a coma and nearing the end of life when she and her extended family gathered for a catered dinner in the unit's family lounge. Silva's father had been admitted that day and she'd had nothing to eat all day. Enticed by the

aroma of food, she went into the lounge, where Wilcock and her family insisted she sit down and share the meal with them.

"It was such a blessing," Silva recalled. "I was so exhausted by what I'd been going through. We just instantly connected."

"We started talking and found out that both our dads were there. Her dad wasn't at the end; he'd been fighting it for a longer period," said Wilcock.

As the days went by, Wilcock and Silva spent a great deal of time together on CB2, where the two men's rooms were just across the hall from each other.

"We definitely found support and comfort with one another," Silva said.

Wilcock's father died in November, but she stayed in touch with Silva and visited her and her family in the hospital as Silva's father's condition worsened. She lent support to

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