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The Hospital of Central Connecticut  
Windham Hospital



Member, Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Alliance



## Path paved for HHCCI clinical trials

**T**he path toward shaping the future of cancer care may be likened to a strongly woven chain, similar to a strand of DNA. Through its Memorial Sloan Kettering (MSK) Cancer Alliance, the Hartford HealthCare Cancer Institute (HHCCI) is assuming an active, advanced role in this cancer research future, one clinical trial at a time.

The Cancer Institute has now opened three MSK clinical trials with another eight expected to open by month's end. HHCCI researchers already participate in well over 100 clinical trials exploring many aspects of cancer screening, diagnosis, treatment and support.

The MSK Alliance trials will provide interesting and innovative opportunities to advance cancer care for patients and clinicians by offering research not otherwise available in Connecticut. In particular, this research provides new insights into genomic and molecular oncology.

Kiran Avancha, Ph.D., RPh, CCRP, director of Cancer Clinical Research for the Hartford HealthCare Cancer Institute, is leading the institute's aim of building and delivering a strong, cohesive clinical trial program to patients' communities through the institute's five cancer centers: Hartford Hospital,



**HHCCI patients have unprecedented local access to MSK clinical trials conducted by Cancer Institute physicians right here in Connecticut.**

The Hospital of Central Connecticut, MidState Medical Center, Backus Hospital and Windham Hospital.

As a member of the Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Alliance, HHCCI patients have unprecedented local access to MSK clinical trials conducted by Cancer Institute physicians right here in Connecticut.

The Cancer Institute's initial trials focus on the hyperthermic intraperitoneal chemotherapy (HIPEC) procedure for gynecologic cancers, HER2 positive breast cancer, and urothelial carcinoma. Trial onset follows an extensive

planning process that will be the norm for all future trials.

"My priority right now is to make sure that the trials with Memorial (Sloan Kettering) are opened smoothly at Hartford Hospital, MidState, HOCC and Backus," says Avancha, noting all trials will be conducted at patients' local HHCCI hospitals.

### Strong focus on detail toward readiness

Achieving trial readiness stage has meant extraordinary preparation,

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## Greater collaboration benefits patients

Central to the Hartford HealthCare Cancer Institute's vision toward advancing our oncology care is seeking opportunities to expand and grow our services. Two such priorities actively under way are initiation of Memorial Sloan Kettering (MSK) Cancer Center clinical trials right here in Connecticut and our plans to broaden focus areas of cancer care.

Having now launched three clinical trials, we are at the inception of an exciting development with MSK. One of these initial trials focuses on metastatic gynecological cancer and applies heated chemotherapy within the abdominal cavity to destroy cancer cells. The treatment is known as HIPEC (hyperthermic intraperitoneal chemotherapy) and this trial's goal is to help extend lives. By month's end we plan to start many more trials.

I marvel at the progress we've made to reach this significant point in our relationship with

MSK and look forward to even more collaborative work to further extend the breadth of our clinical trial offerings among our five cancer centers.

Hartford HealthCare Cancer Institute is also working with MSK to extend our cancer care services to also include hematologic malignancies (e.g., leukemia, lymphoma, myeloma), ovarian cancer and neuro-oncology.

Each of these efforts will help us to advance our mission that emanates most visibly through the direct interactions of our clinical providers and support staffs who personify our Cancer Institute daily at Hartford Hospital, The Hospital of Central Connecticut, Backus Hospital, MidState Medical Center and Windham Hospital.

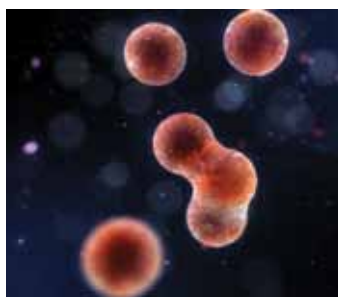


**Donna Handley**

Vice President  
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HealthCare  
Cancer  
Institute

namely meeting extensive, detailed standards set by both MSK and the Food and Drug Administration — including several thousands of “data points,” notes Avancha. They’re part of a 400-page document that details stringent criteria for HHCCI to be a clinical trial site.

Among requirements are that a hospital have a minus 70 centigrade refrigerator and a recording device for checking medications at room temperature. Others include a USP797 clean room for mixing investigational drugs; a CMS clinical laboratory improvement amendments-certified lab; and a College of American Pathologists-accredited lab. There are also



stipulations for each of the 11 disciplines that may be involved in a trial, including for pharmacy, nursing, radiology, lab medicine, medical oncology. Avancha says it took nearly seven months to prepare responses toward HHCCI’s first four open trials. The HHCCI’s executive team created an extensive dashboard noting available resources, needs and gaps on its way to becoming a trial affiliate.

“We are actually integrating our DNA with Memorial’s DNA — that’s the kind of new vision,” says Avancha of the research team’s strong preparations. Clinical trial preparations also included hiring a large team of researchers.

“Our goal is to treat more patients on these studies,” says Avancha. Last year Hartford HealthCare Cancer Institute enrolled more than 1,200 patients in its own trials.

### **Trials systemwide**

HHCCI is using a specific process to open trials across each of its five acute care hospitals. Interested

physicians are invited to learn about the new trials being brought to the Institute where feasibility and interest are gauged. The HIPEC trial, for example, is being offered at Hartford Hospital, the only HHC site where this complex procedure is now performed.

Initially, trials will be offered at Hartford Hospital, MidState, HOCC and Backus; some trials will also be offered at Windham Hospital. Patients enrolled in trials will receive trial-related care (e.g., infusions, blood draws and follow-up) at their local hospitals.

Hartford Hospital gynecologic oncologist Dr. Amy K. Brown, who is helping lead the HIPEC trial, says it brings “access to potentially life-extending treatment that currently is not available at Hartford HealthCare and allows the data from our patients to be combined with the MSK patients’ to determine in the future if this will extend life expectancy or not.”

She adds that collaboration with MSK is going to allow more access to cutting-edge treatment.

Initial trials and physicians involved are:

■ **HIPEC procedure for ovarian, fallopian or primary peritoneal cancer treatment.** HIPEC is for patients suffering metastatic cancer that has spread to the abdominal cavity. The procedure cycles heated chemotherapy through a heated perfusion circuit into the abdominal cavity for 100 minutes to destroy microscopic cancer cells. The treatment goal is to extend the patient’s life expectancy. Patients from any of the five HHCCI cancer centers will be eligible to be part of the trial. Surgeons who will be performing the HIPEC procedure are Drs. Amy Brown, Bret Schipper,

Aaron Shafer, Jonathan Cosin, Heather Einstein and Clare Zhou. This trial started in April.

■ **MSK 10-208 study for patients with upper tract urothelial cancer.** In this study, patients who are candidates for surgery receive four cycles of chemotherapy followed by surgery. The study’s objective focuses on treatment response. Drs. Anoop Meraney, Steven Shichman, Jeffrey Kamradt and Ryan Dorin are enrolling patients. This trial started in fall 2014.

■ **ATEMPT study for patients with breast cancer.** Trial patients are assigned to be in one of two groups where each group receives two medications, different in each group. Patients will also complete quality of life surveys and symptom questionnaires with the study’s primary objective to compare toxicities of both. Drs. Patricia DeFusco, Wylie Hosmer, Dennis Slater, and Dinesh Kapur are enrolling patients. This trial started in August 2015.

Within the next three months, Avancha is aiming for a portfolio of some 10 to 20 protocols covering prostate and breast cancers, as well as protocols for hematology, lung cancer, renal cell cancer and survivorship. A host of other disease protocols are being reviewed by a joint MSK/HHCCI research committee that meets biweekly to explore new research proposals. Each protocol will need MSK Institutional Review Board approval, a budget and in some situations an industry sponsor.

MSK has more than 900 clinical trials and enrolls about 25,000 patients annually in their clinical trials, says Avancha.

“By default they offer a clinical trial to every patient who walks through their doors. We are hoping that we will ultimately be able to offer a unique and innovative research trial for every HHCCI patient who might need one and qualify,” he says.

# Integrative Medicine expands its scope

**H**artford HealthCare has been a leader in integrative medicine for decades. Now the organization is taking those services to the next level. The Department of Integrative Medicine is now a division of the Helen & Harry Gray Cancer Center. The department has added board-certified integrative medicine physicians and physician assistants to its staff, accepts third-party insurance and will soon be part of each patient's electronic health record.

A tangible sign of the program's growth is the new, fully remodeled integrative medicine space at the Avon Cancer Center. The recently opened eight-room suite provides areas for consultation with physicians and PAs, as well as rooms for integrative medicine treatments that include acupuncture, massage therapy, Reiki and energy therapy, guided imagery and hypnotherapy. Patients may also receive spa services and take part in health and wellness classes.

Eric R. Secor, PhD, ND, MPH, MS, LAc, is associate director of integrative medicine for Hartford HealthCare's Hartford Region, which includes the Gray Center and The Hospital of Central Connecticut. Secor says research increasingly shows that integrative medicine provides important benefits to people dealing with cancer. Just as important, patients themselves find the therapy helpful.

"The feedback from patients is overwhelmingly positive," Secor says. "There's a fair amount of stress associated with diagnosis and treat-



Multi-purpose treatment rooms are used for acupuncture, Reiki and energy therapy, massage and hypnotherapy.

ment of cancer. Anything that can decrease stress, decrease pain and improve quality of life provides value to cancer patients going through surgery, chemotherapy or radiation."

Secor praises the work of nurses and other clinicians in helping patients manage the side effects of medical care, but says integrative therapies complement those efforts.

"The nice thing is that it isn't another medication or another surgical procedure," he says. "Sometimes it's nice to be able to have a massage — to be touched and talked to. This provides great benefit, particularly when it's done with input from the patient's oncologist, nurse or other physician in the treatment team."

Many patients are referred to the department by nurse navigators, case managers or physicians. The department's integrative medicine physicians and PAs are usually the first providers patients see. They consult with patients on wellness, stress reduction, medication and nutritional supplement management, diet and more, and they identify integrative medicine therapies that seem best for each patient.

The department's medical director is Dr. Erika Capelluti, PhD. Capelluti is board-certified in internal medicine, pulmonology and integrative medicine. She is a senior physician with the Connecticut Multispecialty

Group and director of Pulmonary Rehabilitation for Hartford Hospital.

Secor is a naturopathic physician and licensed acupuncturist and holds additional degrees in public health research and occupational and environmental health. Secor is one of the only integrative medicine physicians in the country who completed National Institutes of Health-funded postdoctoral research while at the University of Connecticut Health Center as well as spending 18 years in private practice.

"Our center is unique, because we're involved in high-quality clinical care, evidence-based medicine, education and research," says Secor. "It was developed to provide a highly rigorous environment where seriously ill patients can receive excellent care."

The expansion at the Avon Cancer Center, Secor says, is just the first step in expanding Integrative Medicine's offerings and outreach.

"We want to do community-based care, pediatric to geriatric," Secor says. Its services will also be available to patients with other issues, such as complex pain and orthopedic problems requiring surgery.

According to Secor, "We're trying to design a center that will provide patients with the best care in the context of their particular medical condition."



## Implementing Lean principles in daily management

**Mohamed Saleh, ME, MSTM, CSSBB**

*Senior Lean Sensei, Director, Hartford HealthCare*

**T**his past spring, Hartford HealthCare Cancer Institute strategically transitioned from monthly meetings to daily management efforts to address patient and staff constraints and opportunities.



**Saleh**

*This article is part of a series about how the Hartford HealthCare Cancer Institute is using Lean management tools.*

This decisive shift was made as part of the institute's Lean journey to evolve and strengthen its H3W (How Hartford HealthCare Works) operating model. It also further anchors our values and leadership behaviors and supports our operating elements of recognition, patient stories, organizational messages, idea generation and metrics tracking.

This transition was piloted among

14 demonstration areas, including six specific to the cancer institute. Pilot areas were Hartford Hospital including Avon location, The Hospital of Central Connecticut, MidState Medical Center, Backus Hospital and the Urology Medical Practice in Hartford.

Within three months of pilot launch, teams resolved 102 of 137 identified improvement opportunities. Fundamental elements of our daily management system are:

- 15-minute daily huddles using a visual management board that is often posted in a centralized area on units and that allows for remote video conferencing. Daily team huddles strengthen accountability, communication and employee involvement in problem solving. This helps further employee understanding of system initiatives. It's also a platform to help foster growth of future leaders and respects and leverages employee experience and creativity. Daily huddle elements include recognition and celebration, daily play book, unit specific or system announcements, strategic performance metrics, improvement center and learning moments.

- One-on-one status checks to develop leaders at all levels by advancing their problem solving capabilities and reinforcing system behaviors.

- Rounding and leader standard work. This standard leadership approach helps leaders better understand business barriers and challenges toward more effective one-on-one coaching. Elements of rounding include waste walks, standard work observations and safety rounds, skip rounds and interactive rounds.

- Monthly unit performance reviews and Cancer Institute strategy deployment pillar structure. Reporting on business performance strengthens accountability and notes progress while allowing for barrier removal and resource support. It also engages and empowers experts to drive direction of how problems are addressed, clarifies priorities and builds consensus through collaborative goal setting.

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*As senior Lean Sensei for Hartford HealthCare, Mohamed Saleh primarily supports the Cancer Institute, Hartford Hospital, Neuroscience, Strategy and Marketing.*

## Advanced Lean Training graduation



The Cancer Institute leadership teams were among June Hartford HealthCare graduates of an intense, six-month Lean training boot camp for the Lean management system, formally adopted from the Toyota Production System. Graduates also included employees of Neuroscience Institute, Bone & Joint Institute, Hartford Hospital, The Hospital of Central Connecticut, MidState Medical Center, Backus Hospital, Windham Hospital, Hartford HealthCare Medical Group, Planning & Marketing, Clinical Laboratory Partners, Natchaug, Rushford, as well as Hartford HealthCare executives. This advanced Lean training is designed to evolve and strengthen our H3W Operating model to better serve our patients with higher quality care and focuses on strengthening competency to better drive respect for people and continuous improvement.