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

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**Donna
Handley**

Vice President
of Operations,
Hartford
HealthCare
Cancer
Institute

Award season bears much fruit for HHCCI

It's a proud time to be a part of the Hartford HealthCare Cancer Institute family, as we seem to be awash in honors and recognitions. Besides the Commission on Cancer Outstanding Achievement Awards that were bestowed on the cancer programs at Hartford Hospital and The Hospital of Central Connecticut — truly a milestone moment for our Institute — we also are proud of the “Best Practice Repository” status given to the Breast Center at Backus Hospital by the National Accreditation Program for Breast Centers (NAPBC) and the newly-earned accreditation given to the program at Windham Hospital by the Commission on Cancer.

These awards signal the emergence of our Institute as the premier resource for world-class cancer care in Connecticut — a result of the work and dedication that all of us put into making sure our patients get the very best.

I'm just as proud of the awards and recognitions being bestowed on some of the individual providers, nurses and other caregivers within HHCCI lately. Dr. Peter Byeff, the medical director of the Hartford HealthCare Cancer Institute

at The Hospital of Central Connecticut, does honor to HHCCI as a recipient of the prestigious Heritage Award, given annually by the Johns Hopkins Alumni Association.

Then there is the 2015 Hartford Hospital Employee of the Year Award given to Mary-Kate Eanniello, RN, a nurse educator at the Hartford HealthCare Cancer Institute at Hartford Hospital who shares the award with Laura Saunders, a licensed psychologist at the Institute of Living. I have known Mary-Kate for many years, and can think of no one more deserving of this recognition.

It has indeed been an exciting time for our Institute lately, although I'm sure those who have been recognized these past several weeks would be the first to tell you that awards are not why we do what we do. The reason we are being recognized is because our collective focus is always on our patients.



Elliot Joseph, president and CEO of Hartford HealthCare, presented 2014 Commission on Cancer Outstanding Achievement Awards to the medical directors of the cancer programs at Hartford Hospital and The Hospital of Central Connecticut. At left, Hartford Hospital medical director Andrew Salner, MD, left, accepts the award from Joseph; at right, Joseph presents the award to Peter Byeff, MD, medical director of the program at The Hospital of Central Connecticut.

Hartford Hospital, HOCC honored for their work by the Commission on Cancer

More than 100 physicians, providers and caregivers gathered at the Hartford HealthCare Cancer Institute at The Hospital of Central Connecticut on May 13 to celebrate another significant milestone in the evolution of the

Institute as a leader in cancer care across Connecticut.

“We are leading the way in bringing the very best care to cancer patients across our state, and this occasion is a sign of just how well you are all doing your job,” said Elliot Joseph, president

and CEO of Hartford HealthCare, who was on hand to bestow trophies of recognition to the cancer programs at Hartford Hospital and The Hospital of Central Connecticut (HOCC).

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EXCELLENCE

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The two programs were among 75 nationwide to receive the 2014 Outstanding Achievement Award from the Commission on Cancer (COC), an accrediting arm of the American College of Surgeons. The COC bestowed the award on just 15 percent of the cancer programs it surveyed. The award is given to cancer programs which deliver a consistently excellent level of care across a wide range of standards.

A packed gathering of providers, caregivers and employees from cancer programs across the Institute turned out for the award ceremony at the Institute's newly built, comprehensive cancer center in New Britain. In handing out the trophies to the medical leadership of the cancer programs at Hartford Hospital and The Hospital of Central Connecticut, Joseph highlighted some of the findings in the surveys that COC inspectors conducted at each site. He noted that inspectors not only praised numerous aspects of the clinical and support services provided at each site, but also held many of them up as examples of best practice in the field.

Accepting the trophy on behalf of the program at Hartford Hospital, medical director Andrew Salner, MD, said the award was the result of an impressive level of coordination and dedication on the part of physicians and employees within the program, particularly cancer registrar Mary Fleming.

"We are fortunate to have people at all levels within the program who excel at what they do," he said.

Dr. Salner's comments were followed by David P. Eisenberg, MD, the Hartford program's physician liaison to the COC survey. He said the amount of work that goes into exceeding the goals as outlined in the survey requires tremendous dedication.

"There are hundreds and hundreds of pages that go into the



Staff members from both Hartford Hospital and The Hospital of Central Connecticut, along with Hartford HealthCare Cancer Institute leadership, at the May 13 ceremony. Front row, from left: Susan McCard, Hartford Hospital; Mary Fleming, Hartford Hospital; Judith Keating, The Hospital of Central Connecticut; and Iris Soto, Hartford Hospital. Back row, from left: Pat Garcett, Hartford Hospital; Cindy Lane, Hartford Hospital; Abbi Bruce, Hartford Hospital; Lourdes Lopez, Hartford Hospital; Kris Popovitch, The Hospital of Central Connecticut; Ann Marie Szymula, The Hospital of Central Connecticut; Donna Handley, vice president of operations, Hartford HealthCare Cancer Institute; and Nicole Tomarchio, The Hospital of Central Connecticut.

standards," he said. "The data entry alone is a huge commitment. In my role, I am able to check on how we are doing compared to other programs that are surveyed by the COC on a regular basis, and we are always right there near the top. It's a privilege to work with so many good people."

Accepting the trophy on behalf of the program at The Hospital of Central Connecticut, medical director Peter Byeff, MD, said the award is a sign of how advanced the program has become for a hospital the size of HOCC. He praised the physician leadership within the program for establishing a world-class standard of excellence for clinical research and other disciplines, as well as the hard work of the staff to maintain those standards, particularly cancer registrar Judith Keating.

"I think if you look around you, you can see why we have succeeded," said Dr. Byeff, addressing the staff and providers in the audience.

Dr. Byeff's comments were echoed by Christine Bartus, MD, the HOCC program's physician liaison to the COC survey.

"So much of this is due to the work of our staff and their determination to go above and beyond," she said.

Donna Handley, vice president of operations for the Institute, pointed out that the recognition given to the programs at Hartford Hospital and The Hospital of Central Connecticut reflected the world-class care being delivered across all of the cancer programs within the Institute – which include Backus Hospital, MidState Medical Center and Windham Hospital. She noted that many of those who attended the ceremony provided care at programs besides Hartford and HOCC.

"The awards we celebrate today are a shining reflection of the amazing work being done across all of our cancer programs," said Handley, pointing to the recent COC accreditation given for the first time to the program at Windham Hospital. "I am so grateful for the culture of teamwork and patient-centered commitment and dedication that we have created. These awards are for all of you, and you should all be immensely proud."

Backus breast center earns reaccreditation

Group also selected as best practice designation

Backus Hospital's Breast Center has earned a full three-year reaccreditation from the National Accreditation Program for Breast Centers (NAPBC) with the surveyor also selecting the program as a "Best Practice Repository" for other programs to follow and establishing Backus as a national leader in breast care.

NAPBC accreditation — a program administered by the American College of Surgeons — is granted only to those centers that have voluntarily committed to provide the best in breast cancer diagnosis and treatment and are able to comply with established NAPBC standards. Each center must undergo a rigorous evaluation and review of its performance and compliance with NAPBC standards. To maintain accreditation, centers must undergo an on-site review every three years.

"The process of certification requires input from the entire multidisciplinary team. Patients can be assured the care they receive is state of the art and based on national guidelines. It also means the program is dedicated to quality care and improved outcomes. Achieving certification is an important accomplishment for the Backus Breast Program and the community we serve," says Kathleen Kurowski, MD, Backus Breast Center Medical Director.

The review showed that the Backus Breast Center was in compliance in all areas of review including leadership, clinical management, research, community outreach, professional education and quality improvement.



The Backus Breast Center team includes, from left, Nicole Anderson, MD, Radiation Oncologist; Stacy Spooner, MD, Chief Radiologist; Anca Bulgaru, MD, Medical Oncologist/Hematologist; Donna Slonski, RN, OCN, CBCN, Breast Care Coordinator; Kathleen Kurowski, MD, General Surgeon and Medical Director of the Breast Center; Donna Goss, CTR, Cancer Program Coordinator; Mirela Stancu, MD, Pathologist; Jim O'Dea, PhD, MBA, Regional Director of Oncology Services; Lisa Bazinet, BA, RN, OCN, Regional Manager of Oncology Services; Susan Johnson, PharmD, RPh, Director of Clinical Research; Corinne Dutka, RN, OCN, Assistant Nurse Manager of Oncology Services; and William Reed, NAPBC Surveyor.

In addition, NAPBC named Backus a "Best Practice Repository" because of strengths in patient navigation, nursing, clinical trial accrual, education, prevention and early detection programs.

"The reaccreditation of the Breast Center validates our commitment to our patients as we strive to provide the highest quality of care, through a multifaceted, multidisciplinary approach," says Dr. Anca Bulgaru, Medical Oncologist.

The program received its first full three-year full accreditation designation in 2012.

"Being recognized as a nationally accredited breast program once again, and to be recommended for best

practice in four areas is truly an honor," says Donna Slonski RN, OCN, CBCN, Breast Care Coordinator and

Certified Breast Patient Navigator. "It is a reflection of the hard work, dedication and commitment from our stellar team as we work together to continue to provide a standard of excellence in caring for our breast health patients. I'm proud to be part of the team."

Each of the Breast Cancer programs of the HHC Cancer Institute (Backus, Windham Hospital, Hartford Hospital, Hospital of Central Connecticut and MidState Medical Center) is accredited by the NAPBC.

"The HHCCI is deeply committed to reducing unnecessary variation and leveraging best practices within our system of care," said James F. O'Dea, PhD, MBA, regional director of the HHC Cancer Institute. "These national standards, together with the work of the Breast Cancer Disease Management Team of the HHCCI will continue to ensure that our patients throughout the institute are receiving state-of-the-art clinical care, close to home."



East Region conducts successful screenings for head and neck cancer

Hartford HealthCare Cancer Institute programs within the East Region provided free head and neck cancer screenings for 144 people at events at Windham Hospital on April 21 and at Backus Hospital on April 23. In the Windham Hospital Family Health Center, 18 people received screenings provided by William Culviner, MD, and Stephen Rouse, MD. At Backus, 126 people received screenings provided by Steven Green, MD, Thomas Lesnik, MD, Gregory Lesnik, MD, Richard J. Martin, MD, DMD, Robert H. Strick, DMD, and Sami Yousuf, MD. Fourteen people screened at Backus' event and three from Windham were referred for follow-up evaluation. It was Windham's first ever head and neck screening event; it's Backus' fourth time hosting the event.



Dr. William Culviner administers a head and neck examination to a patient at the Windham Hospital Family Health Center during a free clinic last month.

According to the American Cancer Society, an estimated 59,340 people (43,390 men and 15,950 women) will develop head and neck cancer in 2015. It is estimated that 12,290 deaths (8,900 men and 3,390 women) will occur this year because of the disease.

“Head and neck cancer is highly curable if it’s caught early. That’s why these screening events are so valuable for the community,” said Backus Hospital Community Health Nurse Alice Facente, RN.

Facente says people can also be screened by their primary care provider, an ear, nose and throat special-

ist and in most dentists’ offices.

“There is definitely a population that is more at risk of getting head and neck cancer, and the best way to get early diagnosis and timely treatment is through screenings like this one,” said Kate Starkey, Regional Oncology Program manager.

Risk factors for head and neck cancer include alcohol consumption, tobacco use, over exposure to sunlight, being infected with the human papillomavirus (HPV), and exposure to the Epstein-Barr virus (EBV). Men are at greater risk than women and people over 40 also carry a greater risk.

Hartford Hospital oncology nurse educator Mary-Kate

When Mary-Kate Eanniello was a little girl, she would watch her aunt shining and polishing her white nursing shoes before heading out for another shift as a nurse at the local hospital.

“I would see her putting on her uniform getting ready to go out, even on Thanksgiving when everyone else was home with their families, and I would think, ‘That’s



Mary-Kate Eanniello, RN

what I want to do,” said Eanniello, an oncology nurse educator at Hartford Hospital who was named an Employee of the Year for 2015. “I knew she loved to take care of people, and that made such an impression on me.”

Following her aunt’s example, Eanniello went on to earn her nursing degree and embarked on a career as a nurse educator at Hartford

Hospital, the bulk of it spent in oncology. Far from finding the work depressing, Eanniello said she has learned over the past 30 years in the field that cancer patients are incredibly inspirational.

“When you are faced with a life-or-death situation, you learn pretty quickly what’s important and what’s not,” she said. “It’s a blessing to work with cancer patients because if you listen to them closely, they share the most amazing lessons about how to