

# Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital Somerset

# 2020

## Steeplechase Cancer Center Annual Report



## Stronger Together: A Year of Resilience

**Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital  
Somerset**  
Steeplechase Cancer Center

**RWJBarnabas  
HEALTH**

**RUTGERS**  
Cancer Institute  
of New Jersey  
**RUTGERS HEALTH**

Let's beat cancer together.

# LEADERSHIP MESSAGE

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**Kathleen C. Toomey, MD**  
*Medical Director,  
Steeplechase Cancer Center,  
Robert Wood Johnson  
University Hospital Somerset*



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## Stronger together: A year of resilience

While 2020 was an incredibly difficult year for all of us, we also witnessed an extraordinary level of commitment from our team at the Steeplechase Cancer Center at Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital (RWJUH) Somerset – paired with an amazing level of perseverance from our patients.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, our staff maintained the highest safety standards to ensure that colleagues and patients were safe and protected. Despite limitations on the presence of loved ones at the cancer center, our patients continued to persevere on their treatment journeys while our team went above and beyond to provide clinical, emotional and psychosocial support. We found creative ways to make connections, from virtual cooking and exercise classes to additional resources that helped ease the pandemic-related struggles many patients were facing. In addition, our multidisciplinary tumor board never missed a beat, reviewing every patient's plan of care to ensure insight from all angles.

Beyond continuity of care, our focus on growth and strategic initiatives also remained strong. We implemented new technologies, expanded food insecurity screenings and broadened the outreach of our Tobacco Quitcenter through a partnership with the RWJBarnabas Health Institute for Prevention and Recovery. In partnership with Rutgers Cancer Institute of New Jersey, the state's only NCI-designated Comprehensive Cancer Center, Clinical trial enrollment was tremendous, offering patients access to the latest treatment strategies and informing the care of the future. Through virtual outreach opportunities, we provided at-risk populations with cancer awareness

and prevention strategies. We also underwent a rigorous and successful reaccreditation survey from the Commission on Cancer of the American College of Surgeons, which found us deficiency-free for all 32 elements of performance from 2017 to 2019.

Further growth is underway for 2021, particularly in medical expertise. This includes enhancing our medical oncology services by establishing a hospital-based medical oncology practice, with Rutgers Cancer Institute of New Jersey medical oncologists also joining our team. We are welcoming a thoracic surgeon and expanding our urology group, further driving the scope and quality of cancer care. In addition, a new revenue cycle manager will work to reduce unnecessary financial burden for our patients and connect them to helpful resources.

As we look ahead with hope, we are thankful for the humbling support of our community, which helped us through the toughest times of an unprecedented year. We are grateful for our physicians, interdisciplinary staff and volunteers, who bring abundant compassion and dedication to their roles every day. And we are inspired by our patients, whose resilience in such an adverse situation has filled us with awe. We have never been more proud and honored to be a part of your team.



# A FOCUS ON QUALITY

## New quality improvement council

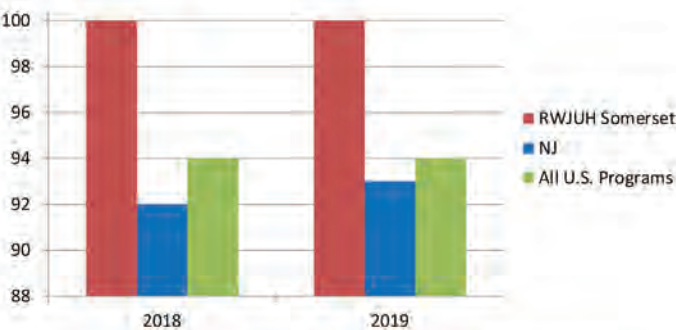
The Steeplechase Cancer Center established a Quality Improvement Council in 2020 as an employee-driven initiative to advance the quality of care and services provided to patients. This open committee encourages staff at all levels to contribute perspectives on how to improve workflow and patient experience. The council also further engages staff in potential research and quality improvement opportunities, including participation in annual Cancer Committee reviews, the RWJUH Somerset Quality Fair and poster presentations for professional societies and organizations.

## Quality measures

Compared to other cancer programs in New Jersey and across the U.S., the Steeplechase Cancer Center exceeds a number of performance standards for Rapid Quality Reporting System (RQRS) measures from the American College of Surgeons. RQRS is a reporting and quality measurement tool that provides clinical assessment of hospital-level adherence to quality of cancer care measures.

### RQRS Measure: Lymph Node Removal in Colon Cancer Patients

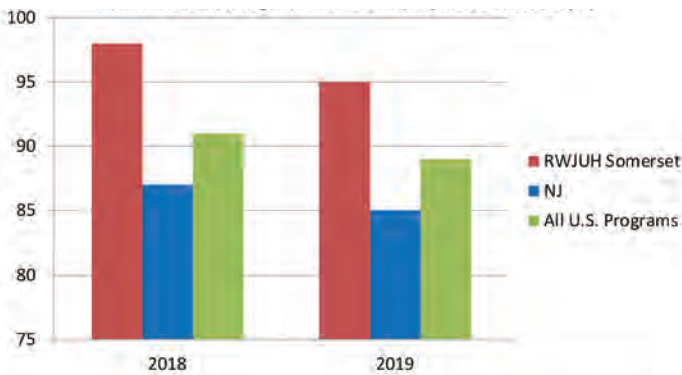
At least 12 regional lymph nodes are removed for resected colon cancer. (RLN)



COC National Benchmark = 90% RWJUH Somerset currently exceeds measure

### RQRS Measure: Tamoxifen or Aromatase Inhibitor Administration in Breast Cancer Patients

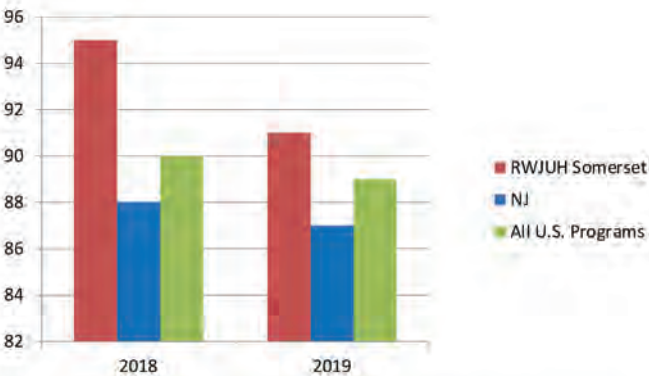
Tamoxifen or aromatase inhibitor is considered or administered within 1 year (365 days) of diagnosis for women with AJCC T1cNOMO, or Stage II or III hormone receptor positive breast cancer. (HT)



COC National Benchmark = 90% RWJUH Somerset currently exceeds measure

### RQRS Measure: Radiation Therapy Administration Following Breast Cancer Surgery

RT is administered within 1 year (365 days) of diagnosis for women under the age of 70 receiving breast-conserving surgery for breast cancer. (BCSRT)



COC National Benchmark = 90% RWJUH Somerset currently exceeds measure



# COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND SCREENINGS



Cancer prevention and awareness efforts targeted to RWJUH Somerset employees in 2020 included pink masks to encourage breast cancer screenings.

## High risk breast cancer screening program launched

In 2020, RWJUH Somerset's Steeplechase Cancer Center introduced a comprehensive screening and risk reduction program for women who are at high risk for developing breast cancer based on a combination of personal, lifestyle and genetic risk factors. The American Cancer Society defines a woman as high risk for breast cancer if her lifetime risk of developing the disease is 20 percent or higher.

At their mammogram appointment, participants use a tablet to complete a risk assessment that interfaces with their medical record. Risk level is determined using the Tyrer-Cuzick risk model, and the information is provided to patients and their physicians. Those at high risk for developing breast cancer can meet with a nurse practitioner to develop a tailored program for reducing their risk, which may include:

- Additional screening imaging studies, such as breast screening ultrasounds or breast MRIs
- Genetic counseling and testing to help determine any hereditary predisposition to breast cancer
- Prevention strategies, including lifestyle and dietary changes
- Meetings with breast surgeons and medical oncologists as needed



## Tobacco QuitCenter partnership broadens outreach

The Steeplechase Cancer Center's Tobacco QuitCenter merged with the RWJBarnabas Health Institute for Prevention and Recovery (IFPR) in 2020 to broaden its efforts in helping people conquer tobacco addiction and reduce their risk for cancer and other health problems. A leader in New Jersey for substance use disorder-focused prevention and recovery support services, IFPR offers a comprehensive Nicotine and Tobacco Recovery Program that works to perpetuate real, long-term change.

This free program helped Bound Brook resident Tye Brown, pictured left, who was encouraged by her physicians to quit smoking before undergoing bariatric surgery in 2020. Tye worked with a tobacco treatment specialist to set a quit date and participate in weekly virtual counseling sessions. She also had access to free nicotine replacement products as part of the program. By the end of her sessions, she was smoke-free for seven weeks and ready for bariatric surgery – and since that time, she's lost more than 100 pounds.

## Breast cancer awareness event features Erin Brockovich

In October 2020, Erin Brockovich headlined a free RWJUH Somerset virtual Breast Cancer Awareness Month event on “Breast Cancer Clusters: Blown Out of the Water,” with more than 60 participants. Breast surgeon and Steeplechase Cancer Center’s medical director of breast cancer services Deborah Lue, MD, provided an overview of breast cancer risks and causes – including environmental contaminants – as well as diagnostic tools and the latest treatment options. Brockovich, the renowned environmental crusader and author of *Superman’s Not Coming*, shared her story of inspiring environmental change to safeguard health.

## Addressing health disparities through outreach

Through RWJUH Somerset’s Community Health Partnership with the Far Hills Race Meeting Association, the Steeplechase Cancer Center collaborated with Crossroads4Hope (formerly the Cancer Support Community of Central New Jersey) to facilitate outreach programs on cancer prevention with a particular focus on at-risk and underserved populations. These virtual sessions included:

- A Chronic Disease Series for the Black and Brown Community on topics including cancer prevention and early detection, healthy eating to reduce cancer risk and building trust with health care providers
- A series for the LGBTQ+ community addressing cancer prevention, breast cancer screening, barriers to care and cancer incidence rates

In addition, in partnership with RWJUH Somerset’s PROUD Family Health, the Sanofi US Breast Cancer Program at the Steeplechase Cancer Center worked to increase access to mammogram appointments for the LGBTQ+ community, particularly in light of studies showing that lesbians and bisexual women have a greater risk of breast cancer than other women. PROUD Family Health is New Jersey’s first center providing specialized primary medical care services for the LGBTQ+ community.

## Grant-funded colorectal cancer awareness efforts

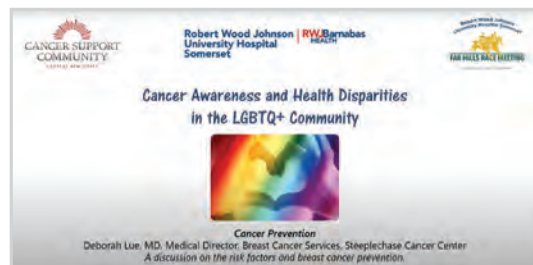
Through a grant from Screen NJ, the Steeplechase Cancer Center and Community Health Department facilitated 10 webinars providing colorectal cancer education and prevention strategies, reaching more than 250 people in 2020. Focusing on underserved communities, the program also funded screening colonoscopies for 14 individuals.



Serena Collado, director, Community Health Department, moderated a virtual discussion with Erin Brockovich for Breast Cancer Awareness Month.

## Cancer screenings and education

Despite the challenges of the pandemic, nearly 80 people received prostate cancer screenings coordinated through the Steeplechase Cancer Center and Community Health Department. In addition, the Community Health Department reached more than 4,000 people through more than 550 programs focused on cancer prevention and awareness.



# NEW PROGRAMS, TREATMENTS AND TECHNOLOGIES

## 3D stereotactic breast biopsy now available

The Steeplechase Cancer Center's Sanofi US Breast Care Program now offers 3D-guided breast biopsy, an advanced, minimally invasive technique utilizing the Hologic® Affirm™ Prone Breast Biopsy System. This state-of-the-art technology helps physicians localize and accurately target lesions that may be challenging to detect using conventional imaging techniques. The biopsy system has several key advantages over standard X-ray biopsy procedures, including faster targeting and fewer X-ray exposures, resulting in shorter patient procedure times and reduced radiation dose.

"In addition to the technology advantages, this new biopsy system is faster and more comfortable for patients, which results in a better overall experience," says Deborah Lue, MD, medical director of breast cancer services at the Steeplechase Cancer Center. "It's one of many ways we're enhancing the quality of care for our patients."

The Sanofi US Breast Care Program is one of only a select few in New Jersey to achieve full accreditation by the National Accreditation Program for Breast Centers and has also been named a Breast Imaging Center of Excellence by the American College of Radiology.



Anne Moch, MD, medical director of the Sanofi US Breast Center, seated right, and radiologist Allyn Hernandez, MD, left, with the center's new 3D-guided breast biopsy system.

## Brachytherapy for skin cancer

Patients at the Steeplechase Cancer Center now have access to brachytherapy for the treatment of squamous or basal cell skin cancers. Brachytherapy is a radiation oncology procedure that uses a special applicator to target the cancer site on the skin's surface and minimize radiation to the surrounding healthy skin. This nonsurgical option can be particularly beneficial for areas where the cosmetic outcome is important, like the face.

"The technology allows us to precisely control the dose of radiation, and it requires fewer treatments than external beam radiation therapy," says radiation oncologist Joel Braver, MD. "Patients may have some initial skin irritation or blistering, but that generally resolves in three to six weeks to yield an excellent cosmetic result."



Radiation oncologist Joel Braver, MD, demonstrates the new brachytherapy technology for skin cancer treatment.



## Screening addresses food insecurity

More households throughout New Jersey became food insecure in 2020, due in part to an array of COVID-19-related challenges that included higher rates of unemployment and difficulty accessing groceries. With the help of oncology dietitian Karen Connelly, RD, CSO, the Steeplechase Cancer Center expanded its Hunger Vital Sign screening to identify any patient receiving radiation or chemotherapy who may need food assistance. In 2020, more than 300 patients received screenings, and those identified as food insecure received grocery store gift cards.

“With so many people struggling – paired in some cases with the need to take time off from work for cancer treatment – it doesn’t take much to become food insecure,” explains Connelly. “Good nutrition is so important for those with cancer, as it helps optimize the response to treatment and enhance survivorship. Looking ahead, we hope to expand our efforts by creating an on-site food pantry for convenient access to healthy foods.”



In 2020, the Steeplechase Cancer Center’s Radiation Oncology Department provided more than 5,000 radiation treatments. The department is accredited by the American College of Radiology’s Committee on Radiation Oncology Practice Accreditation Program.

## Scalp cooling technology helps prevent hair loss

Because chemotherapy drugs attack rapidly dividing cells in the body, including hair follicles, many patients experience hair loss during chemotherapy treatment. To help address this unwelcome side effect, the Steeplechase Cancer Center now offers the Paxman Scalp Cooling treatment.

Scalp cooling helps lower the temperature of the scalp, reducing blood flow around hair follicles to prevent hair loss. Patients receive their own silicone cap with an insulated cover. Scalp cooling begins 30 minutes prior to chemotherapy infusion and continues during treatment and for up to 90 minutes after treatment.

For Gail Holy of Asbury Park, the technology was a welcome alternative to losing her hair during chemotherapy following breast cancer surgery in November. While the cold temperature was a bit of a shock at first, she quickly got used to it with the help of warm blankets and a scarf. She recently completed 12 weekly sessions of chemotherapy without losing her hair.

“It was completely worth it and I would do it again,” says Gail, whose course of treatment meant wearing the cap all day. “Hair is part of your physical and emotional identity, so keeping my hair was very empowering. It made me feel less ill and less conspicuous.”

The cost of the scalp cooling treatment was generously supported by a lead gift from Steeplechase Cancer Center medical director Kathleen Toomey, MD, to Somerset Health Care Foundation. The technology is offered free of charge as part of the center’s holistic approach to cancer care, which addresses psychosocial needs in addition to medical care.

“It’s truly a gift that this is available for all patients – you can’t put a price tag on that,” adds Gail. “I’m so grateful for that option and for everyone who took care of me. The entire team was compassionate and kind, and they made me feel at home.”



Gail Holy of Asbury Park, pictured seated above and below, used Paxman Scalp Cooling treatment throughout her chemotherapy to prevent hair loss.



# CLINICAL RESEARCH OPENS NEW DOORS

## Examining COVID-19 and cancer

The Steeplechase Cancer Center is excited to contribute to global efforts to broaden the body of knowledge about COVID-19 by participating in the NCI COVID-19 in Cancer Patients Study (NCCAPS). This natural history study collects information over time on how the virus affects patients with cancer, how it impacts cancer treatment and what factors may influence disease severity. The study is open to those who are receiving treatment for cancer and are awaiting COVID-19 test results or have had a recent test result confirming COVID-19, and each participant is followed for up to two years. Knowledge gained through the study will help guide future treatment for those with cancer and COVID-19.

## Evaluating chemotherapy dosing procedures

Carboplatin is a chemotherapy agent that is widely used to treat many types of cancers. A study available at the Steeplechase Cancer Center is examining whether a contrast medium called iohexol can help with dose calculation in patients receiving intravenous carboplatin. Iohexol is used in procedures like CT scans to determine how well the kidneys are processing substances in the blood – in this case, carboplatin. Understanding how to best calculate the dose of carboplatin given to patients may help physicians improve its use and reduce side effects.

## Cancer research continues to flourish

Through RWJBarnabas Health's partnership with Rutgers Cancer Institute of New Jersey – the state's only National Cancer Institute-designated Comprehensive Cancer Center – the Steeplechase Cancer Center can offer patients throughout the region access to a wide range of clinical trials close to home.

Clinical trials give patients an opportunity to participate in the latest treatment protocols while examining new approaches that may benefit other patients in the future. In 2020, 105 patients were enrolled to clinical trials at the Steeplechase Cancer Center, marking the highest annual enrollment to NCI therapeutic trials despite the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. At any given time, there are approximately 25 protocols actively enrolling patients, and an additional 30 protocols that continue to follow previously enrolled patients. The clinical trial portfolio includes treatment-focused studies for breast, colorectal, genitourinary, lung and gynecologic cancers, in addition to biomarker and registry trials.



Heather Davis, RN, research nurse, left, and Susan Maney, research data coordinator, right, review the test kit for the NCI COVID-19 in Cancer Patients Study.



# SUPPORT AND SURVIVORSHIP



Margaret Sullivan, Somerville, completed a 2-mile walk as part of the virtual Steeplechase Distance Run.

## Virtual Steeplechase Distance Run

The 12th annual Steeplechase Distance Run was held virtually from September 27 through October 4, with more than 300 cancer survivors, family members, friends, caregivers and community members showing their support by running or walking during that week.

The event raised \$67,000 to benefit Steeplechase Cancer Center educational and support programs and a patient assistance fund. This fund is used to arrange transportation for patients to get to and from their medical appointments and for their supportive needs, including financial assistance for wigs and prostheses offered at the Sanofi US Wellness Boutique, groceries, medications, house cleaning services and other living expenses.

The Steeplechase Distance Run was founded by Cynthia Lee, MD, a fellowship-trained breast surgeon at RWJUH Somerset and part of the RWJBarnabas Health Medical Group. The Peer Group for Plastic Surgery, PA: Colin Failey, MD was the 100-mile challenge sponsor in 2020.

## Nurse navigators provide support and guidance

At the Steeplechase Cancer Center, multi-site oncology nurse navigator Lenore Rubino Rogers, MSN, RN, CHPN, OCN and oncology breast nurse navigator Kimberly Cromwell-Piniella, BSN, RN, CBCN, OCN serve as a resource to guide patients through their care, from diagnosis and treatment to recovery and survivorship. During 2020, that meant finding more creative ways to assist patients in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, from facilitating appointment logistics during lockdown to providing additional connections to sources of financial and social support. Together, the two nurse navigators had more than 5,600 patient encounters in 2020.

"A cancer diagnosis is anxiety-provoking on its own, but the challenges of the pandemic created additional stress for our patients," says Cromwell-Piniella. "With greater limitations on in-person holistic services and the number of visitors able to accompany patients for appointments, they needed more emotional support. We were happy to be on site throughout the year to provide that personal connection."



Breast cancer patient Judith Murray with her medical team. From left, Simona Schneider, APN; Judith; Lindsay Potdevin, MD, breast surgeon; and Yolanda Sims, office coordinator.

## Cancer team goes the extra mile

When Judith Murray, 78, was diagnosed with breast cancer in early 2020, the Sayreville resident was grateful to learn she could receive all of her care at the community hospital she knew very well: RWJUH Somerset. She also was impressed with how Steeplechase Cancer Center team members went out of their way to ensure her treatment went smoothly, including arranging transportation to and from her appointments. After a successful lumpectomy surgery performed by breast surgeon Lindsay Potdevin, MD, in March, Judith was afraid to go to the grocery store due to COVID-19 concerns and was running short on food – so nurse practitioner Simona Schneider, APN sprang into action. She arranged for her own daughter to shop for and deliver groceries to Judith's home.

"It was incredible," says Judith, noting that she feels "at home" at the Steeplechase Cancer Center. "It's not easy having cancer, but it meant a lot to me that everyone was so caring."





Maddie Csontos, third from right, with gift boxes she presented to the Steeplechase Cancer Center team.

## Caring for the caregivers

After seeing the impact of her cancer on her grandparents, who were treated at the Steeplechase Cancer Center, Montgomery High School student Maddie Csontos founded A Granddaughter's Gift Foundation to help support those undergoing cancer treatment. The granddaughter of Dr. Lloyd Davis, former director of medical informatics at RWJUH Somerset, Maddie expanded this outreach during the COVID-19 pandemic to show gratitude for frontline health care staff through a project called "Self Care for the Selfless." Together with her family and a close friend and daughter of a breast cancer survivor, she presented 40 gift boxes filled with donations of self-care items to pamper Steeplechase Cancer Center health care heroes.

## Community support at the holidays



To brighten the holidays for patients, Joe Horner, Somerville Elks Lodge #1068's "Elk of the Year," second from right, donated \$4,000 to purchase items for the children and grandchildren of Steeplechase Cancer Center patients and survivors, as well as gifts for other young hospital inpatients.

## Additional forms of support

Many support services are available as part of the holistic approach to healing for patients. In addition to nurse navigator support, these services include social work and nutrition counseling, genetic counseling and assistance with needs like transportation. The Sanofi US Wellness Boutique, which offers prosthetics, wigs, scarves, lymphedema sleeves and other items to help patients look and feel their best, served nearly 850 patients in 2020. In addition, support groups facilitated through the Steeplechase Cancer Center had more than 2,000 patient encounters last year, including virtually.



In its continued support of Steeplechase Cancer Center patients and their families, the Somerset County Prosecutor's Office Detectives/Police/Benevolent Association's Local 307 donated toys and gift cards during the holidays.



Lisa Lindenberg styles a wig in the Sanofi US Wellness Boutique.

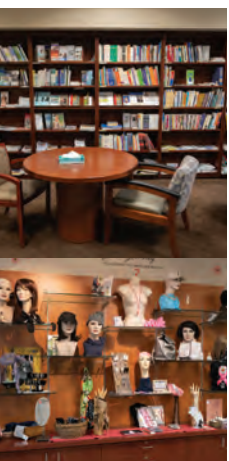




## Clinical cancer services

The Steeplechase Cancer Center offers a broad range of clinical services, including:

- Clinical research trials
- Diagnostic services, including 3D mammography and the Lung Cancer Screening Program
- Genetic counseling
- Infusion therapy
- Laboratory services
- Medical oncology
- Oncology rehabilitation services
- Pathology
- Plastic and reconstructive surgery
- Radiation therapy
- Radiology, including PET/CT
- Surgical oncology, including minimally invasive and robotic techniques



## Cancer support services

The Steeplechase Cancer Center's support services include:

- Complementary medicine and exercise programs
- Nutrition counseling and education
- Patient resource library
- Patient support groups
- Social work services
- Tobacco Quitcenter
- Sanofi US Wellness Boutique
- Survivorship programs

## Quick access numbers

Administration .....	908-927-8714
Breast Cancer Patient Navigator .....	908-252-4053
Breast Imaging Center .....	908-704-3740
Cancer Registry .....	908-704-3755
Chinese Medical Program .....	908-595-2322
Genetic Counseling .....	908-243-8692
Indian Medical Program.....	908-595-2348
Infusion Center .....	908-927-8720
Lobby Reception .....	908-927-8721
Lung Cancer Screening .....	908-595-2633
Occupational Therapy .....	908-685-2945
Oncology Dietician .....	908-704-3784
Oncology Patient Navigator .....	908-685-2902
Oncology Research .....	908-685-2481
Radiation Oncology.....	908-927-8777
Sanofi US Wellness Boutique.....	908-927-8779
Social Work .....	908-595-2363
Survivorship Care Planning .....	908-243-8660
Tobacco Quitcenter .....	908-685-2442

**For a referral to an RWJBarnabas Health cancer specialist, call **844-CANCERNJ (844-226-2376)**.**

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[rwjbh.org/beatcancer](http://rwjbh.org/beatcancer)

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