

## BREAST CANCER DOCTORS EMBRACE MULTIDISCIPLINARY APPROACH



*Dr. John Williams, Dr. Joseph Brown and Dr. Cynthia Dougherty confer with other breast cancer specialists at the Cancer Center at Lake Manassas.*

Recent technological advances in medicine meant that electronic medical records, X-rays and prescription information are all available instantly for seamless communication.

But the doctors who work with breast cancer patients at the Cancer Center at Lake Manassas have taken information sharing a step further. Oncologists, radiologists and surgeons gather in the same room once a month to discuss treatments for their mutual breast cancer patients.

Technology is invaluable, but this is a thoroughly human approach. Doctors confer with doctors – face to face -- about the physical and emotional needs of their patients.

The group of a dozen or so physicians – including medical director of the Cancer Center, radiation oncologist

Sanjeev Aggarwal, M.D. -- has been gathering for about a year, sharing new techniques and comparing notes on their patients' surgical, chemotherapy and radiation treatments.

Opening the group's January meeting, breast surgeon John Williams, M.D., described a new approach he had used during a recent surgery. Using a marker on poster board, he drew a picture of the surgery that used elements of breast reduction surgery to remove a cancer and, at the same time, leave the breasts looking intact and of equal size.

"Breast cancer is very complex," said Dr. Williams. "Particularly when I use a new technique, I need to know how my surgery is going to affect a patient's radiation or chemotherapy treatment. That's why we make this effort to talk to one another. The more reconstruction you do at the time of the initial surgery, the more difficult it can make radiation treatments. I took some special steps in this surgery to make Dr. Aggarwal's job easier."

Dr Aggarwal said, "These meetings are very important for us, especially when we alter the treatment slightly from what we've done before."

Breast surgeon Cynthia Dougherty, M.D., said, "Our jobs are very specialized, and don't overlap very much. But many of our patients see at least three different specialists throughout the course of their treatment. It's important

that we communicate."

Throughout the discussions during the January multidisciplinary meeting, the physicians introduced new research and talked about the latest studies. But time after time, they returned to each patient and her specific situation. General surgeon Joe Brown, M.D. explained, "Every patient is different. Treatment depends on how big the tumor is, where the tumor is, and how the patient is feeling about surgery. A 70-year-old woman may want to have mastectomies of both breasts to have a better chance of eradicating the cancer. A younger woman may want to approach the same situation with a breast preserving surgery."

Dr. Dougherty agreed, "I don't make treatment decisions for my patients. I give them all the information. It is up to them. A lot of women ask me, 'What would you do?' I'll tell them, but the decision is theirs."

"It's helpful for us to know how patients feel before we see them. In addition to these meetings, we all communicate all the time by phone about specific patients."

Jey Maran, M.D. medical oncologist, said, "The medical data on breast cancer is very clear, the treatments very established, so we don't usually disagree on treatment, but we are learning from each other to be comprehensive, and to consider each case from all perspectives."

### FUNDRAISER AT IRON BRIDGE AN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIR

The Fauquier Health Foundation, in partnership with the Cherry Blossom Breast Cancer Foundation, will host a wine tasting at the Iron Bridge Wine Company in Warrenton on Sunday, February 21, from 4 to 7 p.m. The fundraiser will feature a culinary trip around the world, with food and wine pairings from all over the globe.

Two outspoken advocates for breast cancer patients are heading up the evening. Jim Atkins, member of the Board of Directors of Fauquier Health Foundation and founding member of the Cherry Blossom Breast Cancer Foundation, and John William, M.D. breast cancer surgeon, have been instrumental in raising awareness and funds to provide a patient navigator for the Cancer Center at Lake Manassas. The position will serve all cancer patients, helping them to work through the health care process as they battle their disease.

Guests will be asked to contribute \$125 per person for the evening of exotic food, drink and good company. For tickets or more information, contact the Fauquier Health Foundation at 540-316-2614.

### CANCER CENTER AT LAKE MANASSAS

Location: 7901 Lake Manassas Drive,  
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Website: [www.cancercenterlm.org](http://www.cancercenterlm.org)

The Cancer Center at  
Lake Manassas is a partnership  
between Fauquier Health and  
Prince William Hospital.