

# **Midwest Cancer Alliance: Partnership to Support Quality Cancer Care**

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## **Introduction**

Over 85% of cancer patients nationwide receive care in the community setting (NCI, 2007). In 2008, the Midwest Cancer Alliance (MCA) launched with a vision of marshaling the exceptional cancer resources of the region to support the system of care provided to patients while keeping them “close to home”. With an emphasis on education and research, the MCA was developed to connect hospitals and physician groups across Kansas and western Missouri with the purpose of:

- Providing strong support to community cancer care professionals;
- Enhancing cancer care for patients across the region;
- Advancing access to innovative, investigator-initiated and cooperative group clinical trials;
- Advancing access to newly developed therapies and prevention strategies;
- Providing continuing professional and community education opportunities;
- Facilitating second opinion and consultation services; and
- Providing patient navigator technical assistance across the network.

A membership-based organization, the MCA currently has 14 partners spanning the region including:

- Children’s Mercy Hospital and Clinics
- Goodland Regional Medical Center
- Hays Medical Center
- Kansas Bioscience Authority

- Kansas State University
- Mt. Carmel Regional Medical Center
- Promise Regional Medical Center
- Saint Luke's Health System
- Salina Regional Health Center
- St. Francis Health Center
- Stormont-Vail HealthCare
- Stowers Institute for Medical Research
- Truman Medical Center
- The University of Kansas Hospital

## **Methods**

In collaboration with members, the MCA facilitates a wide-array of cancer related services. Activities range from developing clinical trial infrastructure including, a centralized Institutional Review Board (IRB), online Velos clinical trials management software to facilitate enrollment and trial data management, and access to Southwest Oncology Group (SWOG), Clinical Trials Support Unit (CTSU) sponsored trials, and research initiated by The University of Kansas Cancer Center's Investigators.

MCA provides professional and community education specific to the needs of the community. Members have access to The University of Kansas Cancer Center Tumor Boards as well as continuing education such as chemotherapy and oncology nurse certification curricula.

## **Results**

Numerous cancer-related activities have occurred since the inception of the MCA.

- Over 11,450 individuals attended MCA community education and screening events.

- 6,200 cancer screenings resulted in 470+ referrals back to local physicians for follow-up on abnormal results.
- Over 3,096 Continuing Nursing Education (CNE) credits and 296 Continuing Medical Education (CME) credits.
- Five members have capacity to enroll patients through MCA sponsored trials with access to SWOG and CTSU.
- 7 cases have been presented at tumor boards.
- 9 second opinion consultations occurred through the use of telemedicine technology.

### **Discussion**

Less than three percent of adult cancer patients participate in clinical trials (Christian & Trimble, 2003). The MCA was established, in part, to address disparities such as this, in an effort to enhance the excellent cancer care provided across the region. The MCA appears to hold great promise of achieving this vision, by leveraging region's collective cancer resources and cancer expertise.

Christian, M. C., & Trimble, E. L. (2003). Increasing participation of physicians and patients from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups in National Cancer Institute-sponsored clinical trials. *Cancer Epidemiol Biomarkers Prev*, 12(3), 277s-283s.

NCI Community Cancer Centers Program Pilot: 2007-2010. Retrieved: February 10, 2010, from <http://www.cancer.gov/newscenter/pressreleases/NCCCPpilotQandA>