

This **magazine article** was written for Mercy Hospital in Portland, Maine to draw attention to their Oncology/Hematology Department in *Senior Source Book* magazine.

Mercy Hospital Caring For the “Whole Person”

Every disease is accompanied by fear and doubt. That’s only natural. The challenge is to minimize those concerns as much as possible. Allowing the patient to become a full partner in the treatment of the disease is absolutely essential. The patient’s active input and control, along with a strong dependable support group, is vital in achieving that goal.

Cancer is no different.

Cancer Patients Sharing in Decisions

Patients need to feel a sense of control over their illness and, more importantly, their lives. Clearly, the science of medicine is essential to effectively treat the disease. However, the patient’s personal wishes and desires need not be compromised in the process. Ideally, the two work hand in hand.

This philosophy is what anchors the Oncology/Hematology Department at Mercy Hospital in Portland. Regardless of the type of cancer, or the stage that it’s in, the focus is always on the ‘whole person’ and how to minimize the impact of this disease on their daily lives. Input from the patients is wholly encouraged, including the types of medical treatment the patient wishes to explore, conventional or otherwise.

Comfort Care

To that end, the Oncology/Hematology Department has created what it calls, “Comfort Care.” It consists of a team of professionals that include social workers, psychiatrists, home care nurses, dieticians, physical therapists, oncology physicians and nurses, physician assistants, pharmacists, spiritual counselors and others.

The sole mission of this team is to focus on the overall needs of the patients, be they physical, social, emotional, spiritual or psychological, and then find solutions to enhance the patients’ daily lives. The Comfort Care Committee meets once a week to stay on top of the ever changing needs of their patients. This weekly meeting allows them to quickly remedy any problems.

There are two full time doctors at the clinic. Dr. Richard Krull is triple board certified in oncology and brings more than 30 years of medical experience with him. He is enthusiastic about his work, and readily shares his knowledge. Dr. Krull is ably joined by Dr. Anna

Niegowska, who is board certified in internal medicine. Together they form a highly motivated team that readily attends conferences, and networks with other doctors to remain current on the latest developments in their field.

Warmth and Privacy

The Oncology/Hematology clinic itself has just relocated to the fourth floor of the hospital. The first thing you notice is how open and airy it feels, without compromising privacy. An emphasis has also been placed on natural light, which abundantly filters into the rooms and hallways.

Carolyn Murphy R.N. appreciates the new space. “It has a coziness and warmth that you might not expect in a hospital setting. That’s important to the patients. It also allows for privacy and counseling areas.”

Debra Cote, a patient at the clinic, concurs. “It just feels comfortable here,” Cote said. “The doctors and nurses explain everything to me. And when I’m not here, they call me right back if I’m having a problem.”

Treating the whole person in a dignified manner is what Comfort Care is all about. Living with a disease means just that – living! The Oncology/Hematology Department at Mercy Hospital provides the kind of nurturing environment that makes its patients feel “whole” and in control of their lives once again.