The Medical College of Wisconsin is home to nationally recognized programs in adult and pediatric cancers with top-tier specialists and subspecialists who work together as interdisciplinary teams using state-of-the-art technology to care for cancer patients. Physicians at the Medical College and Froedtert Hospital have moved beyond traditional models in which care is delivered by separate medical specialties. In the 21st century, adult cancer care is built entirely around the patient and his or her needs for expert, coordinated and compassionate care.

Froedtert & the Medical College of Wisconsin opened their Clinical Cancer Center in May 2008. It is the vehicle for bringing cancer specialists to the patient in an interdisciplinary environment encompassing streamlined processes that reduce stress for patients and families who already are experiencing high levels of anxiety.

Designed through the input of patients, cancer physicians, and staff, the Clinical Cancer Center’s “hub” model incorporates and integrates concepts from major cancer centers across the nation. The hub model places the patient at the center, where he or she is surrounded by a team of specialists and staff.

The Clinical Cancer Center offers 13 site-specific programs with the expertise to care for every type of cancer. Programs at Froedtert & the Medical College of Wisconsin are disease-specific, not specific to a medical subspecialty. Breast cancer patients, for example, are likely to require the services of a medical oncologist, a surgical oncologist, a radiologist specializing in examinations of the breast, and a highly experienced radiation oncologist. In fact, 85% of all cancer patients require care from more than 1 type of specialist. At the Clinical Cancer Center, we are providing interdisciplinary care that is fundamentally informed and enhanced by the latest knowledge in basic sciences, clinical research, and new technology. This is a unique attribute of an integrated Clinical Cancer Center at an academic medical center.

Coordination of care begins when a new patient enters the system. One person serves as a dedicated “journey coordinator” to facilitate all the necessary steps for the patient, such as gathering medical records and scheduling appointments and diagnostic tests. Therefore, all the information needed is in place for the first meeting between the patient and a cancer physician. An experienced oncology nurse coordinates the treatment process and is a familiar and reassuring point of contact for questions and concerns. This arrangement reduces the difficulty patients inevitably experience navigating a complex treatment system.

The hub model maximizes the expertise available at the Clinical Cancer Center, as well. All specialty and subspecialty care is provided by the Medical College faculty, which includes more than 100 physicians whose entire careers are focused on treating specific cancers. These physicians work as teams to create individual treatment plans for patients. In addition, patients go to the same clinic each time they visit the center. Everything is in place for the patients’ convenience, including a dedicated cancer lab and pharmacy.

Many of these physicians are engaged in translational cancer research projects, designed to expand our knowledge about the detection, development, and diagnosis of cancer while providing the best possible outcomes for patients. There are approximately 150 cancer clinical trials currently taking place at Froedtert & the Medical College of Wisconsin.

Access to palliative care is important for many patients and families who are facing the physical and emotional challenges of cancer diagnosis and treatment. The Medical College is a national leader in the education of palliative care clinicians and the development of such programs. The expert care provided by Medical
College palliative medicine specialists is reflective of the services offered through the Jeffrey Siegel Quality of Life Center at the Clinical Cancer Center. Other key supports include genetic services, psychological counseling, survivorship programs, nutrition counseling, complementary medicine, social services, chaplains, and financial counselors.

Referring physicians are an important part of the team caring for each patient. By providing quality primary care and recognizing the need for referral to a cancer specialist, community physicians play a key role in their patients’ treatment. Through ongoing communication with referring physicians, we promote coordinated care both during and after treatment.

By redefining patient-centered cancer care, in a broad and detailed sense, Froedtert & the Medical College of Wisconsin may serve as a model for other cancer centers. Toward this end, we are participating in 3 projects with the Center for Health Design, an organization that seeks to provide benchmarks and evidence-based rationale for construction in health care. Data gathered on the Clinical Cancer Center’s day hospital (where chemotherapy is delivered), quality of life center, and overall hub concept may help determine the extent to which these designs improve patient care. Feedback from patients has been outstanding; we hope this project will validate our efforts and serve as an important assessment tool to refine programs. We are fundamentally committed to continued quality improvement, improved outcomes for care of cancer patients and providing the optimal environment for patient care and provider satisfaction. In this manner, the Froedtert & the Medical College of Wisconsin Clinical Cancer Center will continue serve as a vital resource to Southeastern Wisconsin and beyond.
The mission of the Wisconsin Medical Journal is to provide a vehicle for professional communication and continuing education of Wisconsin physicians.

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