

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Hartford HealthCare Cancer Institute and Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Alliance

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What is the Hartford HealthCare Cancer Institute (HHCCI)?

The Hartford HealthCare Cancer Institute was established to deliver high-quality, standardized, multidisciplinary and coordinated care to all Hartford HealthCare (HHC) cancer patients in all of the communities we serve. Comprehensive cancer services are offered at each of the acute-care hospitals within Hartford HealthCare: the William W. Backus Hospital, Hartford Hospital, MidState Medical Center, The Hospital of Central Connecticut and Windham Hospital. The Institute treats an average of 6,000 new cancer cases annually. The institute model of care provides all the types of expert care a patient may need for his or her treatment and overall quality of life. Cancer-care teams of oncologists, surgeons, radiologists, pathologists, nurses, researchers and others meet weekly at sites across HHCCI to discuss patients. A team is involved in every patient's care.

What is the Memorial Sloan Kettering (MSK) Cancer Center?

Founded in 1884 in New York City, MSK is the world's oldest and largest private cancer center and is a world leader in patient care, research and cancer educational programs. MSK was recently ranked by US News & World Report as the No. 1 hospital for cancer care in the United States. Each year, MSK treats 35,000 new patients and has 570,000 outpatient visits and 20,000 surgical cases. Its expert physicians are specialists in more than 400 types of cancer.

MSK has more than a dozen multidisciplinary cancer-care teams, which include the various experts a patient needs for treatment of his or her type of disease. These experts include surgeons, medical oncologists, radiation oncologists, radiologists, pathologists, psychiatrists, nurses and many others. MSK pioneered this multidisciplinary approach to treating cancer, which is the way the HHC Cancer Institute practices – focusing not only on cancer treatment but also on the patient's overall well-being and quality of life.

What is the purpose of the Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Alliance?

By establishing the MSK Cancer Alliance, MSK seeks to further its mission by bringing advances in cancer care to the community setting and to greater numbers of patients. MSK also is interested in learning from Alliance members. A major goal of the HHC Cancer Institute's membership in the Alliance is the integrated collaboration of physicians and other health care professionals from both institutions to improve patient outcomes. MSK wants to learn how to improve patient outcomes in communities geographically outside of its service area, how to translate its standards of care appropriately to the community setting and how to offer extended access to clinical trials. The HHC Cancer Institute seeks to bring leading-edge treatments to its patients. Both organizations already have learned much from one another.

This intense collaboration makes the HHC Cancer Institute's membership in the MSK Cancer Alliance a true and unique collaboration, which will be a model for future MSK Cancer Alliance members.

What does certification mean?

The goal of the Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Alliance is to improve the lives of cancer patients through dynamic and substantive relationships with community cancer care providers. To be successful, the MSK Cancer Alliance has established an in-depth review process that an organization needs to meet before it is certified. This includes an intensive review and assessment of a wide variety of cancer programs and services including the identification of areas where there are gaps, to ensure alignment with MSK's standards and practices. The process of certification typically involves teams of cancer experts and specialists from both organizations who spend significant amounts of time carefully reviewing processes and clinical standards across numerous disease specialties and disciplines so that the latest treatment advances and highest quality of care are provided.

FAQs continued

What is the status of the Hartford HealthCare Cancer Institute's relationship with the Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Alliance?

On Sept. 16, 2014, the Hartford HealthCare Cancer Institute became the first officially certified member of the MSK Cancer Alliance. The certification process entailed thorough statistical and clinical analysis of six disease specialties and 11 disciplines across the Institute. In that time, teams of experts and specialists from both organizations have spent countless hours collaborating and reviewing data, programs and processes within the cancer programs of the Institute, with the goal of establishing a single, elevated standard of care for patients across the HHC system. The two organizations shared educational resources, and MSK conducted quality and outcomes research at Institute facilities. HHCCI doctors are in the process of being integrated into MSK disease-management teams and will eventually participate in MSK clinical research. Hartford HealthCare Cancer Institute nurses, pharmacists, imagine experts and other care providers also have undergone training.

What does membership in the MSK Cancer Alliance mean for HHC Cancer Institute physicians?

HHC Cancer Institute physicians are receiving training in the implementation of MSK standards of care. Ultimately, they will have access to MSK clinical research, clinical trials and treatment plans. Referring physicians will be able to direct cancer patients to leading-edge care in their own communities. The HHC Cancer Institute already has five system-wide teams in breast, colorectal, urological, gynecological, and thoracic cancers working with MSK on treatment protocols and standards. That collaboration is expected to grow as the relationship evolves.

What does the HHC Cancer Institute's membership in the MSK Cancer Alliance mean for patients?

The vision is that HHC Cancer Institute patients will have access to world-renowned standards of care for six common types of cancer: breast, colorectal, kidney, lung, prostate and uterine. HHCCI's membership in the MSK Cancer Alliance will also give Connecticut patients unprecedented access to MSK clinical trials, which will be conducted and delivered by HHC Cancer Institute physicians. Clinical trials allow patients to receive the newest, most cutting-edge therapies and to participate in advancing the care of future generations of cancer patients. Clinical trials are not just for patients with advanced disease. Expanding MSK's clinical trials also speeds up data collection so that investigational therapies can be approved faster and be made available to more patients.

Does the HHC Cancer Institute's membership in the Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Alliance mean that more HHC Cancer Institute patients will go to New York for care?

Because the Alliance is bringing MSK standards of care to the HHC Cancer Institute, the Cancer Institute does not anticipate referring more patients to MSK. Patients with breast, colorectal, kidney, lung, prostate and uterine cancer will be treated by HHCCI physicians using MSK standards of care. For treatments not offered by the HHC Cancer Institute, such as bone-marrow transplants, patients will have the option to go to MSK, as they do now.

For more information about the Hartford HealthCare Cancer Institute, please visit www.hartfordhealthcare.org.

For more information about the Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Alliance, please visit www.mskcc.org/cancer-alliance.

More than 2,500 physicians practice within Hartford HealthCare (HHC) – more than 330 of whom practice within the cancer centers of the Hartford HealthCare Cancer Institute. Hartford HealthCare includes five-acute care hospitals (Backus Hospital, Hartford Hospital, MidState Medical Center, The Hospital of Central Connecticut and Windham Hospital), behavioral health (the Institute of Living, Rushford and Natchaug Hospital) and rehabilitation services (Hartford HealthCare Rehabilitation Network), a large physician group (Hartford HealthCare Medical Group) and clinical integration organization (Integrated Care Partners), research and educational facilities, visiting-nurse services (VNA HealthCare and VNA East), a laboratory system that spans the state (Clinical Laboratory Partners), and a number of services for seniors (Central Connecticut Senior Health Services), including senior-living facilities. HHC offers the full continuum of care for patients throughout their lives.