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From the Leadership Team



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Dear Colleagues:

It's hard to believe that the Midwest Cancer Alliance, the outreach arm of The University of Kansas Cancer Center, is now five years old. I was out of town for its annual meeting at the Kauffman Foundation on Sept. 27, but by all accounts this gathering of members from across Kansas and western Missouri was a successful demonstration of the extraordinary strides Roy Jensen, Gary Doolittle, Hope Krebill and team have made during the last five years.

Cancer center director Roy Jensen's vision for the MCA was to marshal the region's exceptional cancer resources to support the system of care provided to patients while keeping them "close to home." The MCA is a membership-based organization that has grown from five hospital partners to a collaborative network of 19 hospitals and research institutions. Its newest member, Newman Regional Medical Center in Emporia, Kan., joined this past spring.

We are a stronger, healthier region because of the MCA's Partners Advisory Board – with members such as Stormont-Vail HealthCare, Children's Mercy Hospitals & Clinics, Truman Medical Centers and The University of Kansas Hospital. They are helping us develop a strategic focus on Comprehensive NCI Designation as well as invest significantly in collaborative research.

Headquartered at the KU Clinical Research Center in Fairway, the MCA provides extensive support to cancer care professionals in communities stretching from Kansas City, Mo. to Goodland, Kan. The organization encourages collaboration, information sharing and professional growth,

coordinates networking events and members-only web resources on best practices, and offers continuing education and professional development opportunities. Through its Tele-Oncology Service alone, the MCA has used interactive televideo (ITV) to coordinate collaborative conference calls with hundreds of health professionals and educate more than 4,000 cancer care professionals.

The MCA also partners with health care professionals across the region to educate people about cancer. Cancer screenings and educational events can lead to earlier diagnoses and actually help prevent some forms of cancer. To date, the MCA and its members have screened and educated nearly 12,000 patients at health fairs and community outreach activities.

Some of the MCA's most significant efforts have involved patient care through the cancer center's clinical trials at MCA-member facilities. Because they are spread out across the state, the hospitals in the MCA network have helped remove one of the hurdles to receiving advanced cancer care by offering trials as close to patients' homes as possible. So far, more than 90 patients have enrolled in clinical trials at member locations such as Salina Regional Health, Via Christi Hospital in Pittsburg, Stormont-Vail HealthCare and St. Francis Health Center in Topeka and St Rose Ambulatory & Surgery Center in Great Bend. Hays Medical Center is the site of a [key breast cancer trial](#).

Patients at MCA member facilities can get second opinions via ITV as well, and so far more than 120 second opinions have been rendered. And through ITV, some rural Kansans can even see specialists without leaving home. That was true for Ed Olejniczak of Wilson, Kan., who saw KU Cancer Center hematology/oncology specialist Abdulraheem Yacoub (you can read more about that [here](#)).

The MCA's Patient Navigator program has been around since mid-2009, helping patients, caregivers and families by decreasing barriers to quality care. The patient navigators at MCA-member locations might, for example, arrange financial support or transportation to appointments. MCA patient navigator Carol Bush, located at our Wichita campus, helps train navigators at all of the MCA member sites.

Our MCA team does an excellent job of working with members to identify

and provide the support services they need but aren't able provide on their own, such as psychosocial oncology, which focuses on the mental health of individuals affected by cancer. For example, Goodland Regional Medical Center saw a need for behavioral health and patient education classes and asked the staff in Fairway for help. The Fairway staff teamed up with Turning Point: The Center for Hope and Healing, which set up interactive support group sessions in Goodland while offering the service to all MCA members. In addition to group sessions, MCA's licensed psychologist, Susan Krigel, recently developed one-on-one counseling to individual patients seen by MCA-member medical professionals.

Significant advances in patient care and treatment also mean more cancer patients are living longer. In October and November, the MCA and Turning Point will host the second "Going Forward: Life After Treatment" survivorship series first piloted earlier this year. On Oct. 26, the MCA partners with KU Cancer Center and Children's Mercy Hospital on the long-term care strategies of adolescent and adult survivors of childhood cancers in a "Bridging the Gap" conference that will focus on providing evidence-based information and strategies for primary care health professionals.

The MCA does so much more than I've touched on here, and we are truly fortunate to have such caring and committed MCA staff and members. Their teamwork benefits cancer patients across Kansas and western Missouri and establishes our region as a leader in cancer care, research and treatment – giving us hope for conquering cancers in our time. Thanks and congratulations to all.

To find out the latest news about our employees and the exciting things going on at KU Medical Center, check out KUMC's internal newsletter, [KUMed Central](#). It arrives in your inbox every Monday.

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