

Healthcare Today

A Community Report on the Benefits of Family Healthcare from the Healthcare Providers in the Greater Boston Area. * Fall 1997

"Caring for the Whole Person"

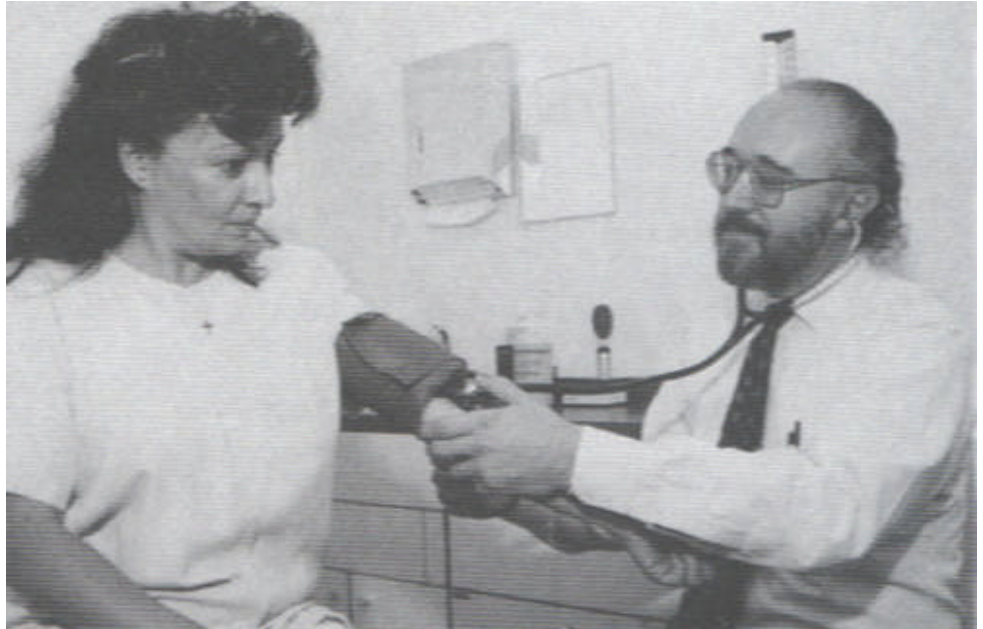
Commonwealth Hematology-Oncology combines technology and humanity

As a result of recent expansion, Commonwealth Hematology-Oncology is now the largest private practice cancer care network in Massachusetts. The group continues to grow and add cancer specialists throughout eastern Massachusetts as it strives to maintain the highest levels of quality care. But what's most exciting to the staff at Commonwealth Oncology is that increasing numbers of patients are now surviving cancer and blood diseases.

"With earlier detection, improved diagnostic techniques, and dramatic advances in treatment, patients today are leading longer and fuller lives," says Walt Kagan, M.D., Ph.D., of Commonwealth Oncology. "State-of-the-art treatments include the latest in chemotherapy drugs, high-tech radiation therapy, and immunologic treatments.

"We design different treatment programs to meet the specific needs of our patients. These treatments result in fewer side effects than ever before, and we are now much more effective in combating nausea, fatigue, and infection," says Dr. Mark Anderson of the group's Milton office.

The doctors, nurses, and technicians at Commonwealth Oncology aim to help patients maintain lifestyles that are as close to normal as possible. "Many patients come into our Infusion Center for chemotherapy on their lunch hour and then return to work or their everyday activities," says Paul Musto, M.D. in the Quincy office,



A check-up close to home with Dr. Walt Kagan.

Patients As Partners

"We treat the whole person, not just the disease," says James Everett, M.D., a medical oncologist in the group's Weymouth office. "Our focus on personalized, compassionate care is reflected in the tree of life symbol, which appears on all our material."

Commonwealth Oncology involves patients as active partners in their medical team, which includes the practice's radiation oncologists who work closely with primary care physicians and surgical specialists in the community.

"Key to our approach," adds Dr. Everett, "is patient and family education, including support groups, counseling, nutritional programs, and instructive literature and videotapes available in our Patient Resource Center."

Unlike clinics, which can be much more impersonal, at Commonwealth Oncology,

patients see the same doctor and nurse in private, comfortable offices. "We all focus on medical, emotional, and real-life issues," says Therese Mulvey M.D., who works in the Quincy office. "Many patients regard us as an extension of their family."

Maintaining Quality, Controlling Costs

Among its systems for quality control, Commonwealth Oncology has developed leading-edge software technology to monitor chemotherapy administration.

To ensure checks and balances, the group's physicians collaborate closely with each other. "We discuss clinical issues and try to reach consensus on optimal cancer care," says Michael Anderson, M.D., a medical oncologist in the Weymouth office. This includes a review of clinical trials - research studies that offer select patients the newest in treatment programs.

What about cost-effectiveness?

"By sharing resources, we are better able to control costs," says Dr. Kagan. "And since almost all our services are provided in our offices, we realize even more savings." He explains that office treatments are available at a fraction of the cost compared to most

hospitals and clinics.

Close To Home

The physicians at Commonwealth Oncology are well-connected with major medical centers, and, when appropriate, patients are referred to nearby teaching hospitals. But, according to Ronald Margolin, M.D. in the Dorchester office, "The vast majority of our patients receive all of their treatment right here in our offices."

Looking ahead, Commonwealth Oncology plans to expand further. Still, the group remains committed to the mission upon which it was founded: "to provide local patients with the best of both worlds - a marriage of technology and humanity."

Commonwealth Hematology-Oncology, with offices in Quincy, Weymouth, Milton,

Dorchester, and Boston, provides comprehensive cancer services in eastern Massachusetts.

These include screening and diagnostic evaluation chemotherapy, radiation therapy, and biological treatments; coordination of surgery; and family education. For more information, call 617-479-3550.