Virginia Mason Earns National Commission on Cancer Accreditation

The Commission on Cancer (CoC), a quality program of the American College of Surgeons (ACS) granted a full three-year accreditation to the Virginia Mason Cancer Institute in July, extending a history of continuous accreditation that began in 1941.

“The core of accreditation is providing and achieving a high level of quality care,” says Hagen Kennecke, MD, medical director for the Virginia Mason Cancer Institute. “We’re one of only two accredited academic comprehensive programs in Washington, so it’s a major honor and achievement.”

To earn voluntary CoC accreditation, a cancer program must meet 34 CoC quality care standards, be evaluated every three years through a survey process and maintain levels of excellence in the delivery of comprehensive patient-centered care.

A number of new initiatives helped earn the accreditation. For example, an Oncology Stewardship Program (OSP) was created last year to help guide treatment. “There are many new cancer treatments available now, and the challenge is deciding how to best incorporate them into our specific practice,” Dr. Kennecke says. “The OSP helps physicians, pharmacists and oncology nurses deliver the best available treatment for each patient.”

Virginia Mason also maintains a cancer registry and contributes data to the National Cancer Database (NCDB) — a requirement for COC accreditation. Each year, data from around 2,600 Virginia Mason patients is entered into the registry. The data is used to track outcomes, explore oncology trends and inform patient care.

“Our goal is to always exceed the accreditation requirements, not just meet them,” Dr. Kennecke says. “And we feel like we really did that this time.”

> For more information, contact: 206-223-6193 • VirginiaMason.org/Cancer

Psych Screenings Before Spinal Surgery Help Reduce Complications, Improve Patient Satisfaction

A patient’s mental state going into spinal surgery can play a major role in their recovery. That’s why the Neuroscience Institute (NSI) at Virginia Mason uses presurgical psychological screening to get patients ready for surgery — and for what comes after.

“Our goal is to help patients better prepare for surgery, in terms of home environments, psychological conditions, and their understanding of the surgery and healing process,” says Rajiv Sethi, MD, director of the NSI.

Every complex spinal patient meets with a member of the NSI’s neuropsychologist team, usually months before surgery. Using a standard screening tool, the neuropsychologist evaluates patients’ mental health and cognition. They also address plans for pain management and creating a safe, post-surgery home environment. This plan is then relayed to the team — a key step in the preoperative checklist and a requirement to proceed to surgery.

After a group discussion of the neuropsychological plan at a multidisciplinary conference, a pre-op care plan is developed. Patients may be referred to a psychiatrist for antidepressants and cognitive behavioral therapy, or to a social worker who can help patients prepare their homes in advance of surgery.

Presurgical screening has helped reduce complications and decrease patients’ length of stay at NSI. Helping patients manage their mental health and prepare for surgery has also increased patient satisfaction.

Dr. Sethi’s team has published several sentinel manuscripts on the importance of risk stratification and preoperative optimization in ensuring better outcomes for complex neurosurgical patients in the journals of Neurosurgery Spine, Spine Deformity and Spine. An eye-opening study on the assessments’ impact on outcomes is complete and will be submitted for publication in the coming weeks by Dr. Sethi and colleagues.

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Temporal Bone Lab with Otology/Otolaryngology Lectures
NOV. 1–2: Increase your knowledge on chronic ear surgery during this 2-day seminar at the Listen for Life Center on our Seattle campus. Through observation, dissections, drilling simulations and lectures, participants will gain a better understanding of the anatomy of the facial nerve and surgical techniques.

2019 Cardiology Update for the Primary Care Provider
NOV. 15: Learn about the latest in diagnosing, treating and managing hypertension, hyperlipidemia and coronary disease during this 1-day, 9-hour symposium at our Seattle campus.

For more information, email CME@VirginiaMason.org.