

RAISING THE BAR FOR BREAST CARE

Memorial Hospital opens new state-of-the-art breast center.

Connie Brian is no stranger to breast cancer. Her maternal grandmother died with the disease at age 43, and her mom was diagnosed at age 51. The year her mother died, Brian had a baseline mammogram. “I knew there was a family predisposition to breast cancer and so I tried to keep an eye on it for 20 years. I knew that doorbell was going to ring someday, I just didn’t know when,” says Brian.



Breast Nurse Navigator Kim Powell, RN, and patient Connie Brian. Memorial’s Breast Nurse Navigator guides patients through diagnosis and treatment.

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— Dianne Johnson, M.D.

When Memorial Hospital opened their new state-of-the-art breast center earlier this year, they were thinking of women just like Connie and others throughout the Jacksonville community. “Quality patient care and good diagnostics have always been at the core of what we do,” says Dianne Johnson, M.D., Medical Director for Memorial Breast Center. “But now the physical building is much prettier, and patient comfort is taking a priority as well.”

Although she had scheduled her annual mammogram at Memorial since 2004, at her visit this year, Brian noticed some changes. In addition to the same experienced and compassionate staff and physicians she recognized from her past visits, she was pleased to see the beautiful changing rooms and convenience of the newly constructed center. She also noticed a five question insert had been

added to her paperwork, and Brian believes this slip of paper may have saved her life.

NAVIGATING THE WAY

By answering yes to the first four questions, Brian knew she was likely at risk for breast cancer. The fifth question asked if she’d like to speak with Memorial’s nurse navigator, Kim Powell, RN.

A nurse at Memorial for almost 20 years and a breast cancer survivor herself, Powell functions as an advocate and a care coordinator for women who have been diagnosed with breast cancer. “I’m on call 24-7, and every patient has my cell phone number,” says Powell. “I follow up with them after appointments and tell them what to expect along the way. I maintain constant contact.” She estimates most patients call her at least weekly and some as often as three times a week. From diagnosis through treatment and survivorship, Powell is there every step of the way,

offering information, direction and encouragement.

Powell also coordinates with referring physicians, assisting them in whatever way is needed. This includes help in setting up tests and procedures and obtaining insurance verification. “I work closely with the doctors in the community and try to go out to the offices and meet with them on a monthly basis,” she says.

In Brian’s case, even though her mammogram was negative, due to a family history of breast cancer, Powell offered to perform a Tyrer-Cuzick risk assessment. The computerized test evaluates a patient’s personal risk factors, and those scoring more than 20% are considered to be high-risk. 54-year-old Brian scored a 36.6%, making her eligible for a diagnostic MRI.

“High risk screening is advised for patients with one or more first degree relatives who have been diagnosed with breast cancer,” says Dr.



Johnson, “and certainly in cases where a male family member had it. If a patient qualifies for a screening MRI and wants to proceed, we take care of it.”

Approximately 5-10% of breast cancers can be traced to gene mutations inherited from an individual’s mother or father. Women with mutations of BRCA1 or BRCA2 genes have up to an 80% risk of developing breast cancer. Memorial Breast Center offers a free risk assessment screening for any woman in the Jacksonville area. Women with a family history of breast cancer are encouraged to call for scheduling times and to bring a recent mammogram study with them to the center.

Surprisingly, MRI results for Brian revealed a tiny tumor, less than one centimeter in size. A biopsy confirmed it was invasive ductal carcinoma and in June, Brian underwent a lumpectomy followed by series of radiation treatments.

At this early stage, Brian’s cancer was very curable says Dr. Johnson, but she estimates it wouldn’t have been detected on mammogram for about two years. “We use radiopaque markers for all tumors and, even in retrospect, this tumor was so small, there

was no way to diagnosis it on mammogram,” she says.

LEADERS IN BREAST CARE

As a comprehensive, nationally accredited breast center, Memorial Breast Center ensures every breast cancer patient is presented to a multidisciplinary team of cancer experts. “Referring physicians are notified when their patient is being presented,” says Dr. Johnson. “Once the conference is over, a summary letter is sent out with any recommendations that were made.” Every patient is presented to the team a minimum of one time and, in many cases, more than once.

Memorial Breast Center is fully accredited by both the National Accreditation Program for Breast Centers (NAPBC) and the American College of Radiation (ACR). It’s currently the only ACR Breast Imaging Center of Excellence in Jacksonville. This means physicians referring to Memorial Breast Center can be assured their patients will receive the gold standard treatment of breast care, including the use of the most technologically advanced diagnostic and screening equipment available.

All ultrasound, stereotactic and MRI-guided core biopsy

results are compared to the expected result to assure they’re concordant. Biopsies are also tracked and monitored proactively, and referring physicians are notified of pathology results along with any recommendations for follow-up. The board-certified radiologists of Mori, Bean and Brooks, PA are happy to discuss individual cases with referring physicians at any time.

“It’s incredibly important for referring physicians to know their patients will receive the absolute best care if they start out in a breast center or an outlying clinic associated with a breast center,” says Dr. Johnson. “All patients with a diagnosis of breast cancer will eventually end up in a breast center, but it takes a lot longer.”

The entire team at Memorial Breast Center is dedicated to providing the highest quality treatment for each and every patient they serve, including information about clinical trials and cutting edge therapies. The beautiful new facility offers a relaxed, private atmosphere where women can undergo diagnostic and treatment procedures in a comfortable setting.

Memorial Breast Center’s main lobby. Patients will feel comforted in a spa-like environment; Memorial Breast Center Medical Director Dianne Johnson, MD.



Memorial Breast Center has several waiting areas and lounges. A premium was put on patient comfort during the design phase.

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