

CANCER CARE EXPERT

Texas Cancer Associates

Defined, cancer is the rapid, uncontrolled, abnormal growth of cells.

As cancer grows, it competes with normal cells for space and nutrition. Due to the wide variety of cancers that affect millions of Americans each year, the range of treatment options vary based on the cancer type, location, and extent of the disease.

Thanks to rapid medical advances, these options continue to increase each year. This provides patients with treatments that have fewer side effects, less invasive procedures, a smaller number of IV-transmitted medicines, and an increased amount of oral medications. As a result, patients' treatments yield better outcomes and are less obtrusive to their daily lives.

THE INFORMATION AGE AND CANCER TREATMENT

Medicine is not the only vital element for treatment; the information used to process and transfer knowledge surrounding the treatment must be state-of-the-art. Just as advancements have been made in treatment options, information technology and medical insight into the disease and its biology have contributed to an alteration in how a patient's care is approached. In 2006, the American Cancer Society reported that cancer deaths had decreased as a result of these innovative advancements. The use of technology systems for maintaining updated medical records, rapid information exchange, patient education, and treatment planning have revolutionized cancer care. Technology benefits patient care by enabling physicians and their staff to more accurately update patient records and it reduces the margin for error. Dr. Jivesh Sharma of Texas Cancer Associates understands the important role that technology plays in healthcare. "In today's world, physicians can no longer merely know all of the medical facts, but they must be excellent navigators of information," he says. "It is incumbent upon us to step into the worlds of business, e-business, and healthcare technology while carrying our ethical advocacies with us. Texas Cancer Associates is on the forefront of these changes with our medical records, the use of computerized risk assessment tools, and other cutting-edge technology."

NEXT GENERATION CANCER CARE

Compared to care in the last century, a physician's approach to cancer treatment is revolutionary. A few decades ago, a middle-aged woman with stage II breast cancer would be treated in the exact same manner as the other thousands of middle-aged women with a similar staged cancer. Today, however, things have changed. "We understand that the person is not necessarily representative of a population," Dr. Sharma says. "Rather, they are an individual and are now treated as such." Individualized, custom plans help physicians determine what treatment options are best for them and their particular situation. Texas Cancer Associates is implementing next-generation cancer care through the use of systems that can assist with individualized treatment planning and assessment.

The shift in focus to the cancer patient as an individual often leads to the possibility of several treatment options. Patients should consider seeking the opinion of multiple doctors for their diagnosis and treatment plans. An excellent physician and cancer care team should provide a comprehensive visit, including discussion with the patient and their family regarding diagnosis, medical options, support services, and financial responsibility to best streamline the patient journey.