

Cancer Care You Can Count On—Close to Home

When you or a loved one is diagnosed with cancer, you want the best quality and compassionate care close to home. The recent expansion of UPMC Hillman Cancer Center at UPMC Passavant–Cranberry means patients living north of Pittsburgh now have greater access to top cancer specialists and state-of-the-art treatments.



(left to right) Kiran Rajasenan, MD, UPMC Hillman medical oncologist and hematologist and chair of oncology at UPMC Passavant, Megan Hershman, BSN, RN, and Lindsey Litz, physician assistant, in the new UPMC Hillman Cancer Center location at UPMC Passavant–Cranberry.

In December, following extensive renovations, UPMC Passavant–Cranberry introduced a new UPMC Hillman Cancer Center location and increased services and cancer treatments at its expanded space at 3 St. Francis Way.

The new UPMC Hillman Cancer Center first floor location doubles its previous capacity to serve cancer patients. Added clinic space also increases nursing capacity with improved access to clinical trials. Having more exam rooms means multiple oncologists can now see patients there.

The expansion was made possible following the 2020 move of UPMC Magee-Womens Specialty Services from the UPMC

Passavant–Cranberry campus to the UPMC Lemieux Sports Complex, where there is now a hub for women's health care and services, in one convenient location.

MEETING COMMUNITY NEEDS

As part of the UPMC Hillman Cancer Center network, UPMC Passavant–Cranberry offers patients high-quality care and clinical trials in their community. UPMC Hillman Cancer Center is the only cancer facility in the region recognized by the National Cancer Institute as a Comprehensive Cancer Center.

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"It's a full-scale expansion. It means we can bring more cutting-edge treatments right to our patients in Cranberry Township and the surrounding communities," says Kiran Rajasenran, MD, a UPMC Hillman medical oncologist and hematologist and chair of oncology at UPMC Passavant.

The renovated UPMC Hillman Cancer Center is designed to meet the increasing demand for cancer services in the northern communities. Cranberry Township has seen tremendous growth in recent years and its aging population also means more cancer cases. Plus, advances in technology and treatment therapies have increased the number of people living longer and healthier lives with cancer.

"Technology has evolved considerably over the past decade," says Dr. Rajasenran. "Many cancers are now treated as chronic diseases, so we continue to see these patients for follow-up bloodwork, imaging studies, and office visits. The need for cancer care continues to grow."

"We have an obligation—not only to our patients, but also to our hospitals throughout the community—to reduce the burden of cancer," says Stanley Marks, MD, chairman and chief medical officer of UPMC Hillman Cancer Center. "This expansion will help us do that by improving patient access to clinical trials, oncology specialists, and other vital services and resources. That, in turn, will translate to better cancer care and better outcomes."

SAVING PRECIOUS TIME

Prior to the expansion, space constraints meant that many cancer patients in the Cranberry area had to travel farther to UPMC Hillman Cancer Center at UPMC Passavant–McCandless for appointments and treatments. Patients also had to travel there for clinical trials.



Top: Patient waiting area

Center: One of six physician exam rooms

Bottom: One of two private treatment bedrooms



That's a big hurdle, especially for older patients relying on neighbors for rides and those coming from rural areas beyond Cranberry, says Dr. Rajasenan, who grew up in Ellwood City. His elderly parents still live there.

"Convenience matters a lot when you have cancer," he adds. "You don't want to spend precious time traveling to see a doctor or to undergo treatment. Our expanded location eliminates the added barriers to care."

A CONVENIENT "ONE-STOP APPROACH"

Convenience was a big focus of the expansion—and it's a major benefit for local patients. The Cranberry location is closer and has ample parking. The first-floor location makes treatment even more accessible. The larger space makes it easier for patients to schedule doctor appointments and chemotherapy treatments.

There's an on-site lab so patients can get their bloodwork done there, too. In addition, UPMC Imaging Services is adjacent to the facility, where patients can go for CT scans, MRIs, and ultrasounds.

"It improves the experience we're able to offer our patients," says Shannon Puhalla, MD, a UPMC Hillman medical oncologist and hematologist at UPMC Passavant-Cranberry. "Having cancer is difficult enough. This space makes it easier—from scheduling and check in, to labs and treatment. It's more of a one-stop approach with the needs of our patients in mind."

Dr. Puhalla, a breast cancer specialist and clinical trial researcher, says the expansion also allows clinical trials to be brought to patients at UPMC Passavant-Cranberry. That's because there is now room for the staffing needed to support research, including a nurse coordinator and clinical trials research nurse.

"When you have cancer, you want to receive the absolute best, state-of-the-art treatment. It's a bonus when it's convenient and close to home," she says.

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10-year survivor: "I'm living with cancer, but I've had great care"

Bob Carlisle celebrated an important milestone this past Christmas—the 10-year anniversary of his rare blood cancer diagnosis. "I feel very fortunate. I'm living with cancer, but I've had great care at UPMC Hillman Cancer Center at UPMC Passavant," he says.

The 68-year-old Cranberry resident, whose wife is a nurse at UPMC, also feels fortunate because he now only needs to drive five minutes to UPMC Passavant-Cranberry for bloodwork, chemotherapy treatments, and follow-up appointments with his medical oncologist, Dr. Rajasenan.

"I think it's great. I can get everything done there," he says. "When you have cancer and need treatment, it's nice not having to deal with the traffic."

Bob was diagnosed in late 2011 with Waldenström's macroglobulinemia—a rare, slow-growing form of blood cancer that causes abnormal protein in the blood that crowds out normal blood cells. The elevated protein levels can cause serious complications if left untreated. It's also known as lymphoplasmacytic lymphoma, a form of non-Hodgkin's lymphoma.

Because his cancer is treatable, but not curable, Bob requires regular monitoring to watch for changes in symptoms or blood levels. Bob has bloodwork done every three to four months and sees Dr. Rajasenan every six months. Every two years—"almost like clockwork"—he needs another round of biotherapy treatment to decrease the protein levels in his blood. Infusion treatments take four to five hours and are administered once a week over four weeks, followed by ongoing physical exams and monitoring of lab results.

As a Cranberry Township resident for the past 28 years, Bob has witnessed the area's explosive growth. That's a big reason why he was thrilled to hear UPMC Hillman Cancer Center was expanding services at UPMC Passavant-Cranberry.

"The Cranberry area has changed drastically. It just keeps growing," says Bob. "Being able to get the care I need close to home is very important. The parking is easy and free, plus it saves me from driving another half hour or so to McCandless."



Bob Carlisle, 68, of Cranberry, has a rare blood cancer, but said he feels fortunate he can get treatment so close to home at UPMC Passavant-Cranberry.

Key Features

UPMC Hillman Cancer Center at UPMC Passavant–Cranberry now includes:

- First-floor office with a new patient-centered layout designed for privacy, comfort, and accessibility
- Six physician exam rooms
- 14 semi-private infusion bays with reclining treatment chairs
- Two private treatment bedrooms
- Personal TVs during treatment
- On-site lab for bloodwork
- On-site access to UPMC Hillman's robust clinical trials
- Clinic space where patients benefit from a collaborative approach to cancer care by a multidisciplinary team of medical oncologists, oncology nurses, a clinical trials research coordinator, and other staff dedicated to supporting cancer patients and their loved ones

MEDICAL ONCOLOGISTS

Seven UPMC Hillman medical oncologists now see patients at the new center. They include:

- Robert Edwards, MD, gynecologic oncologist
- Stephanie Kim, MD, medical oncologist
- Brian McLaughlin, MD, medical oncologist
- Jennifer Osborn, MD, medical oncologist
- Shannon Puhalla, MD, medical oncologist
- Kiran Rajasenan, MD, medical oncologist
- Neal Spada, MD, medical oncologist

At-a-Glance Cancer Services

Your guide to cancer care in Pittsburgh's northern communities.

UPMC HILLMAN CANCER CENTER AT UPMC PASSAVANT–CRANBERRY

3 St. Francis Way
Cranberry Township, PA 16066

- Gynecologic oncology
- In-house lab
- Medical oncology
- Treatment
 - Chemotherapy
 - Hormone therapy
 - Immunotherapy
 - Injections
 - Targeted therapy
 - Also serves as a general infusion center for UPMC Passavant–Cranberry, providing a variety of infusion services, including rheumatology drugs, antibiotics, and fluids

- Breast and gynecological ultrasounds
- DXA (bone densitometry)

- Breast surgery
- Breast Cancer Risk Management Clinic
- Cancer risk assessment and genetic counseling

UPMC Magee-Womens Specialty Services partners closely with UPMC Hillman Cancer Center for women's cancer diagnostics and prevention. It also works in coordination with expert surgeons and teams at UPMC Passavant–Cranberry and UPMC Passavant–McCandless and outpatient centers located in Allison Park and Wexford.

UPMC HILLMAN CANCER CENTER AT UPMC PASSAVANT–MCCANDLESS

9100 Babcock Boulevard
Pittsburgh, PA 15237

- Medical oncology
 - Includes chemotherapy, immunotherapy, hormone therapy, and targeted drug therapy

- Radiation oncology

- Surgical oncology

- Imaging — advanced radiation oncology diagnostic services

- PET-CT scan (cancer treatment planning)
- 4D PET-CT scan (diagnostic imaging)
- 4D CT scan (diagnostic imaging)
- On-Board Imager® (OBI) and Cone-Beam CT (image-guided radiotherapy) ■

UPMC IMAGING SERVICES AT UPMC PASSAVANT–CRANBERRY

1 St. Francis Way
Cranberry Township, PA 16066

- CT
- MRI
- Ultrasound

UPMC MAGEE-WOMENS IMAGING AT UPMC LEMIEUX SPORTS COMPLEX

8000 Cranberry Springs Drive
Suite 2M600
Cranberry Township, PA 16066

- Advanced breast cancer diagnostics and care, including biopsies
- Breast imaging
 - 3D mammograms (screening and diagnostic)

The information in this article was provided by UPMC.