

RIQI/RI-PTN TCPI Exemplary Practice Story: North Main Radiation Oncology



At North Main Radiation Oncology, we pride ourselves on our empathetic and compassionate approach to care.

Radiation Oncology Associates, Inc., better known in our community as North Main Radiation Oncology, is a five clinician organization situated in Providence, Rhode Island. Given our location in an urban center, our patient population, is extremely diverse, consisting of individuals with a variety of ethnic backgrounds and beliefs. As can be seen on our website, <https://www.usoncology.com/patients/practices/northmain-radiation-oncology/northmain-radiation-oncology>, we provide a wide range of services, including: 3-D Conformal Radiation Therapy, Accelerated Partial-breast Irradiation (APBI), Calypso 4D Localization System ("GPS for the Body"®), Computer Tomography (CT) Scanning & Simulation, Image-Guided Radiation Therapy (IGRT), Intensity-Modulated Radiation Therapy (IMRT), and Low-Dose Rate (LDR) Brachytherapy. Additionally, we are a member of The U.S. Oncology Network, which is supported by McKesson. This network is “a community of more than 1,400 affiliated physicians with expertise in medical oncology, hematology, radiation oncology, gynecologic oncology, urology, oncology surgery and other specialties.” Beyond our extensive services and network integration, we believe we provide something that is even more important for our patients: *an approach to care that incorporates empathy and compassion*. At our practice, this mindset has a deep impact on our excellence in care which is reflected in our strong quality measures. Our engagement in a patient centered focus along with our efforts to optimize care coordination are other elements that lead us to be truly exemplary.

Prioritizing Empathy, Comfort and a “Family” Approach to Patient Care

At North Main Radiation Oncology, we see each patient as a new member of our family. From this perspective, we are able to provide optimal, quality care and in-depth resources that are tailored to each of our patient’s specific needs. In order to achieve this, daily huddles with the clinician regarding the day’s patients are very important and the comfort and emotional needs of the patient is always top priority. We *empathize* with the physical and emotional pain they are enduring, particularly given the emotions and trauma involved for those who are fighting cancer. By partnering with the Gloria Gemma Foundation (<https://www.gloriagemma.org/>), we help ensure access to a range of supports, including transportation, translators and assistance with a range of valuable services. When they are with us, we thrive at making our patients feel positive and experience a sense of security. We understand it’s the thoughtful touches that can make a big difference, such as providing free, hand-kitted hats and fresh flowers in our waiting room for all of our patients to enjoy. Comforting support and hugs are always available to patients and/or family members.

As described on our website: “we believe that excellent care begins with a skilled and compassionate team of individuals.” Given this priority, we have assembled an unmatched group of healthcare professionals dedicated to providing our patients with the best possible care and services. While we have a very low rate of staff turnover, when we do hire, we feel it is important to not only select individuals based on their skills and education but also their comfort with emotions and capacity for empathy. We take our time to interview potential candidates to ensure the practice’s aim of high quality service with a very caring staff will

continuously be supported by new members of our team. From our receptionist to our medical doctors, we make sure that all staff understand the value and importance of each individual we treat.

Quality Performance in Our Measure of Care

Our success in providing excellent patient care directly translates to excellence in our clinical quality measures. As can be seen in the adjacent chart, our performance for all four of the measures that we report is above the National MIPS Benchmarks. At North Main Radiation Oncology, we understand the importance and value of tracking clinical quality measures to assess outcomes and clinical success. We started monitoring our quality measures years before MIPS and were therefore able to successfully submit MIPS with all of its categories for the initial year, in 2017. Additionally, we were one of the first practices in Rhode Island that submitted all MIPS categories and we are receiving a positive payment adjustment on our CMS claims this year. Given the importance of tracking data in understanding our success, over time, we have invested in the infrastructure needed, such as an Analytics component for our EHR that was needed for accurate and efficient data reporting and MIPS submission.

Importantly, our excellent clinical quality measures reflect our strong patient care and the targeted interventions we provide. For example, we have adopted the Rhode Island Health Department's Quitworks RI program as an intervention when screening for patients who are using tobacco (we have a current performance rate of 93% in our *Tobacco Use: Screening and Cessation Intervention* measure). Quitworks RI is a community service that provides smoking cessation materials and telephonic counseling at no charge to the patient or their insurance company. We are also particularly proud of the support we provide for our patients who may be suffering from Depression. As part of our workflow, we perform Depression Screenings on all our patients by utilizing the PHQ2/PHQ9 Screening tool. Any patient who fails the Depression Screening is offered *free*, on site, counseling services provided by Margaret S. Wool, Ph.D. North Main Radiation Oncology hired Dr. Wool

North Main Radiation Oncology			
Quality Measure	Performance Target	Current Performance	National MIPS Benchmark
Prevention			
Tobacco Use: Screening and Cessation Intervention	100%	93%	83%
Body Mass Index (BMI) Screening and Follow-up Plan	85%	77%	45%
Documentation of Current Medications in the Medical Record ^a	N/A	91%	89%
Disease Management			
Controlling High Blood Pressure ^a	N/A	85%	62%

^a an additional measure not included in quarterly reporting for CMS

At North Main Radiation Oncology, our excellent patient care is translated to excellence in our Clinical Quality measures, as seen in the above table. In all four measures, we perform above the National MIPS Benchmark.

At North Main Radiation Oncology, supporting our patients' mental health is a priority. We provide the adjacent information to patients who may benefit from counseling services provided on-site by Dr. Margaret Wool

With

- CHANGES IN RELATIONSHIPS
- CHANGES IN SELF-IMAGE
- FEELINGS OF LOSS
- LOSS OF CONTROL
- UNCERTAINTY
- DEPRESSION
- ISOLATION
- ANXIETY

MARGARET S. WOOL, PH.D.
COUNSELING YOU THROUGH
MEDICAL CARE



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Coping

In the wake of a diagnosis of serious illness, or life-threatening illness, patients and their families face many challenges. Serious illness creates a dramatic shift in daily life and future expectations, and many find themselves at a loss for how to cope with the emotional terrain. Even the most resilient individuals can find the challenges of serious illness overwhelming.



is a Learned

Certain times in the illness experience are known to be particularly stressful. These include diagnosis and medical treatment. Even finding medical treatment can be a time of increased worry, with less contact with medical caregivers.

Addressing these issues fosters improved coping responses in both patients and their families. There are ways to improve your coping resilience and strategies we can help. Focusing on the following interacting areas is often of real benefit:

- Emotional responses and well-being
- Facing physical challenges
- Maintaining important relationships
- Communication with family and friends

Confidential meetings by appointment
401-261-1500




Skill

Dr. Margaret Wool has been helping patients and their families cope with serious illness since 1991. She has collaborated with numerous Rhode Island health providers to offer support and therapeutic counseling for their patients. She is a Clinical Associate Professor at Brown University Warren Alpert Medical School and serves as a consultant to NorthMain Radiation Oncology in Providence, RI. Dr. Wool has written and lectured extensively on the process of adjusting and living meaningfully with life-threatening illness. Her research has focused on the experiences of people coping with lung cancer and with breast cancer.



as a consultant to ensure that our patients receive needed emotional support. We understand that coping is a learned skill and want our patients to benefit from counseling during what is typically a very difficult period in our patients' diagnosis and care. Included is the brochure that is provided to patients as they are encouraged to meet with Dr. Wool.

Keeping the Dots Connected: the Patient Voice and Enhanced Care Coordination

As our patient care is deeply rooted in our focus on the patient experience at North Main Radiation Oncology, there are a number of additional features of our practice that are critical to our success. First, it is important to us that we include the patient voice in our ongoing quality improvement. Given this, we regularly survey all patients and utilize their feedback to identify areas where we can focus our efforts. We have a patient portal available for patients who wish to access their health information regarding the care we provide. Also, based on our patients' background and needs, we have specific education materials available in their own language such as, Spanish and Portuguese. For those needing information to be provided in different languages, we have a telephone number available (in Spanish & Portuguese) to obtain information about our practice in their own language. Given our urban location and the diversity within the population we serve, ensuring these types of services are in place is often vital to a positive patient experience.

While we strive to provide excellent opportunities for enhanced and clear communication with our patients, we also leverage technology for enhanced communication and interoperability with other providers in our state. With our current workflows in place, transitions of care are improved, burden on our staff is reduced and patients are happier. In order to accomplish this, our organization partnered with other primary care and specialty practices through signing compacts. With these agreements in place, we have worked to improve interoperability by encouraging the use of Direct Email for referrals, rather than relying on faxing or telephone calls. This not only is helping the patients with almost immediate appointments but also reducing staff burden by reducing incoming and outgoing calls.

Conclusion

North Main Radiation Oncology is a small practice with a big, caring heart. We understand the importance of tracking clinical quality measures to support the patient centered care we provide. We benefit from our affiliation with The US Oncology Network, along with the inclusion of other resources, such as comprehensive oncology practice management tools and solutions to ensure practice viability and success. We are open to innovation and work to be a leader on our healthcare community in incorporating applications of interoperability in our external provider and practice relationships. But, most importantly, our patients are *family*. We strive to ensure that our clinicians and staff stay focused on patients' health and emotional needs as they move towards recovery.