

## White Plains Hospital's Cancer Program: Advancing Oncology Care

By Jennifer Webster

TWO FIRST-RATE PRACTICES — WHITE PLAINS HOSPITAL PHYSICIAN ASSOCIATES ONCOLOGY AND HEMATOLOGY AND WHITE PLAINS HOSPITAL PHYSICIAN ASSOCIATES CANCER AND BLOOD SPECIALISTS OF NEW YORK — JOIN FORCES TO PROVIDE INNOVATIVE TREATMENTS AND TEACH THE PUBLIC ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF CANCER RESEARCH.

**E**VERY PATIENT'S CANCER journey is unique in terms of both personal struggle and the nature and course of the disease. At White Plains Hospital, scientific and technological advances in individualized medicine allow physicians to tailor treatments to meet each patient's needs. Personalized treatments, otherwise known as precision medicine, hold out the promise of reducing side effects and enhancing the efficacy of treatment. Finally, White Plains physicians' ongoing education and outreach are making patients more aware of their role in creating the best cancer care for the future.

This endeavor is made possible by the collaboration of two well-established Westchester cancer practices. Recently, both have aligned with White Plains Hospital as members of White Plains Hospital Physician Associates.

### Two Complementary Practices

"When I completed my training at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, my thought, as a young woman, was to give patients and families state-of-the-art medical care in a warm, friendly and homey atmosphere," says Sara Sadan, MD, founder of Oncology and Hematology, now part of White Plains Hospital Physician Associates, and Director of Breast Cancer and Women's Medical Oncology at White Plains Hospital. "My parents had cancer, and while they had professional, solid care from their physicians and nurses, our family had no idea of their diagnoses, nor a clear understanding of the courses of their diseases. What could have been completely different for my parents, my siblings and myself was the surrounding atmosphere, the feeling of support and the education about goals and expectations."

Upon completing her fellowship at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, Dr. Sadan set about creating in Westchester County the practice she would have wanted for her parents' care. In 1995, she opened Oncology and Hematology, which recently joined the White Plains Hospital Physician Associates. While her



Pictured are Sara Sadan, MD, and Dan Costin, MD, FACP. White Plains Hospital is pleased to offer medical oncology services through two practices: White Plains Hospital Physician Associates Oncology and Hematology and White Plains Hospital Physician Associates Cancer and Blood Specialists of New York. The collaboration of these two teams allows White Plains Hospital to treat cancer patients more effectively.

**“At the end of the day, what matters is not our people or our facilities, but what we are doing inside the facility — that vision that tells us ‘We must do better; we must get to the next step in cancer treatment.’”**

— Dan Costin, MD, FACP,  
Founder of Cancer and  
Blood Specialists of New  
York and Medical Director  
of White Plains Hospital  
Cancer Program

practice has steadily grown during the past nearly two decades, patients consistently experience personalized, hands-on care and attention.

“We constantly use technology, email, phone — everything at our finger tips — to maintain communication with other physicians and to stay up to date with the most modern advances,” she says. “Each patient is given 100 percent attention when we take care of him or her. We give the best care in a warm, friendly atmosphere where patients and their families feel informed and well-guided, with a team of supportive professionals around them.”

During the same two decades, Dan Costin, MD, FACP, was building another practice: Westchester Institute for the Treatment of Cancer and Blood Disorders, now White Plains Hospital Physician Associates Cancer and Blood Specialists of New York. He also began working closely with White Plains Hospital on research studies and clinical trials to improve the effectiveness and reduce the toxicity of cancer care.

In addition to holding numerous cancer care administrative positions in the area, Dr. Costin focuses with fierce intensity on research and the continuous improvement of cancer treatments for present and future patients.



Dr. Sadan consults with her patient.

“We have lived through a really amazing time in cancer treatment,” says Dr. Costin, who serves as Medical Director of White Plains Hospital’s Cancer Program as well as founder of Cancer and Blood Specialists of New York, now part of White Plains Hospital Physician Associates. “There is still so much we need to do. Part of our passion is to give absolutely the best care to all our patients; physicians must give up-to-date, cutting-edge care while also learning something that will help the next patient a year from now or five years from now. Our mission is to have a cancer program in which patients receive care but also have access to interesting, innovative and exciting new protocols that push the envelope of therapy to the next level for future patients.”

Attention to immediate human detail and cancer care focused on the future — the two practices had just the strengths to complement each other when they joined forces under the auspices of White Plains Hospital’s Cancer Program.

“Before we joined White Plains Hospital Physician Associates, we had a staff of 30 people, from physicians to medical assistants and secretaries. We were standing on our own,” Dr. Sadan says. “Yet, when we coupled with White Plains Hospital in January 2013, our practice and White Plains Hospital supported and nurtured one another to the extent that the fruits of our union resulted in expanded and expedited access to resources for our cancer patients.”

“Our two groups had many shared interests,” Dr. Sadan says. The new union represents a pooling of wisdom and resources. The two practices share a tumor board and draw on White Plains Hospital’s deep reservoir of specialists, including cardiologists, internists, infectious disease specialists and hospitalists, as well as strong radiology and pathology departments, all to manage care for complex cancer cases.

### The Power of Place

White Plains Hospital’s Cancer Program offers human touches that distinguish it from other programs in the region. Nurses and other patient care professionals are specially trained to help cancer patients. A certified patient navigator guides patients from diagnosis through treatment. Infusion



Dr. Costin checks in with his patient in the Cancer and Blood Specialists of New York infusion suite, located at White Plains Hospital’s Dickstein Cancer Treatment Center.

# DAN COSTIN, MD, FACP

**A TENACIOUS ADVOCATE** of research to improve cancer care, Dr. Costin has been for many decades a leader among White Plains oncology professionals. As principal investigator in several studies and protocols, Dr. Costin and his team have done much to raise community awareness of White Plains Hospital's role in new developments driving medical oncology.

- + **Administrative posts:** Founder of Westchester Institute for the Treatment of Cancer and Blood Disorders, now known as White Plains Physician Associates Cancer and Blood Specialists of New York; Medical Director of White Plains Hospital's Cancer Program
- + **Medical school:** University of California, San Francisco
- + **Internship and residency:** Beth Israel Hospital
- + **Fellowships:** National Cancer Institute, New York University
- + **Research interests:** Breast cancer, lung cancer, prostate cancer, lymphoma, colorectal cancer, ovarian cancer, pancreatic cancer, kidney cancer



Joshua Raff, MD, a member of White Plains Hospital Physician Associates Oncology and Hematology, examines a cancer patient.

treatment takes place in the Lowenthal Infusion Center, a freestanding space that offers private or community rooms, depending on patient preference, as well

as amenities such as large, flat-screen televisions and dedicated valet parking. In addition, educational opportunities are available to help patients and their families understand their conditions, treatments and outlook.

Hospitalists at White Plains Hospital enhance cancer patients' care by providing 24/7 medical oversight and ready help in times of emergency. When oncologists are away from the hospital or conducting office visits, they find having the support of consistent physician care for their patients very helpful. Close attention by and enhanced communication with a hospitalist are luxuries not previously available. Having expert cancer care available in Westchester County means medical treatment fits well with local community values, Dr. Sadan says. Not only are travel times to appointments and treatment reduced; patients remain in the community — among familiar faces — as well.

"Every community has different needs," she says. "If you live in Manhattan, for example, 'community ties' may be less prominent and possibly less important for patients and their families. At White Plains Hospital, we understand our role in our neighbors' lives. This is the place we go when we are not well, so ensuring that it creates a feeling of safety, trust and warmth is of vast importance. We are committed to making sure our community and our neighbors have excellent medical care."

## Research in Depth

At the heart of White Plains Hospital's Cancer Program is a dedication to improving cancer treatments through research. Dr. Costin encourages any eligible patient to join a clinical study, whether of experimental treatments,

targeted drug therapies or the effects of exercise on well-being after cancer treatment. Current studies are investigating chemotherapy drug combinations,

exercise and eating regimens, and pain reduction.

+ **TL-118 anti-angiogenic drug combination study.** In its experimental phase, this study adds drug combination TL-118 to standard gemcitabine treatment for patients with pancreatic cancer. As White Plains Hospital is the only United States location for this study, participation is a "win-win" for patients, Dr. Costin says.

"Patients receive standard treatment with this drug added," he says. "It is an exciting study because pancreatic cancer is tough to treat and patients have so few options."

+ **Kinesio tape for cancer-related pain.** In this upcoming study, White Plains has undertaken the first ever raw-state study of this non-medicinal, non-invasive therapy for pain in cancer patients. Made famous by Olympic athletes, kinesio tape is thought to enhance lymphatic circulation and reduce edema.

+ **Endocrine therapy with or without chemotherapy for breast cancer patients with a low risk of recurrence.** This study examines whether patients with HR-positive, HER-2 negative breast cancers — which are not likely to recur — need chemotherapy to reduce the risk of recurrence, or whether hormonal therapy works equally well. A threshold for chemotherapy recommendation is also sought.

Research studies constitute a community obligation for White Plains Hospital, Dr. Costin says. As patients speak about their participation, they raise awareness and encourage others to do likewise, elevating the standard of cancer care.

"Clinical studies are opportunities to not only help patients but also to make discoveries that will benefit the outside community in general," Dr. Costin says. "Our patients will expose other patients to innovative, interesting and exciting modalities. People should think about these aspects of research studies, as well as enhancing their own treatments. There are so many important ways we can help others, from medication studies to issues of quality of life and longevity."



Anney Mannancheril, MD, a member of White Plains Hospital Physician Associates Oncology and Hematology, works with Noemi Roman, office assistant, to schedule an appointment for her patient.

For Dr. Sadan, the decision whether or not to participate in a clinical trial should be made in consultation between the patient and physician. In some cases, standard care leads to such excellent outcomes that there is no need to consider other treatments. But when questions remain to be answered, research studies can provide an opportunity for patients to have access to exciting, experimental therapies and contribute to the community's increased understanding of cancer care.

"With each patient, it is a matter of personal choice. Some feel that they want to be part of a study, and some do not," Dr. Sadan

**"Every patient with cancer deserves a dedicated oncologist with a team of multidisciplinary specialists and support services around them; these include surgeons, radiologists, radiation therapy, pathology, genetic counseling, nutrition counseling and infectious disease specialists. Our patients know they are getting state-of-the-art treatment in a warm, friendly and supportive atmosphere. This will take them along their paths with a feeling of safety, security and trust that they are getting the best care every day, close to home. Each patient is surrounded by a team of providers, creating an extended family around them."**

— Sara Sadan, MD, founder of Oncology and Hematology and Director of Breast Cancer and Women's Medical Oncology at White Plains Hospital

says. "As physicians, we acknowledge these feelings and answer patients' questions. That being said, we encourage patients to consider participating in clinical studies for their benefit and for the benefit of our society to make progress in finding better solutions for cancer care."

### **Precision Medicine for Personalized Care**

At White Plains Hospital, personalized medicine, consisting of targeted therapies based on understanding of patient and/or tumor genetic makeup, is practiced whenever possible. As Dr. Costin says,

"The field is still young — a few hundred genetic abnormalities may cause cancer, but relatively few targeted treatments have been discovered."

"The pace of innovation to get the drugs for the remaining mutations is very fast," he says. "With the right patient data, oncologists may soon be able to place patients on a list and get a call saying, 'Your patient has genetic variant number so-and-so, and a therapy is ready for them.'"

Genetic screening to identify risk for certain cancers, such as breast cancer, may benefit patients who have a family history of cancer or belong to certain ethnic groups. The Cancer Genetics Program at White Plains Hospital's Dickstein Cancer Treatment Center offers patients access to cancer risk assessments. Discussions with genetic counselors help people with heightened risk understand this complex information and provide insights into their chances of developing cancer, screening options, medical treatments to prevent cancer and research studies for which they may be eligible.

For those diagnosed with cancer, personalized medicine offers the chance to tailor treatments to the specific characteristics of the tumor. Many of the open clinical studies at White Plains Hospital involve treatments targeting specific tumor mutations.

"It's important to understand the genetics of the tumor itself," Dr. Sadan says. "Today we have the tools to better identify which

Yael Zack, MD, a member of White Plains Hospital Physician Associates Oncology and Hematology, reviews a treatment plan with Ingrid Porter, the practice's pharmacist, in the office lab.





Subuhee Hussain, MD, and Afshan Malik, MD, members of White Plains Hospital Physician Associates Cancer and Blood Specialists of New York, confer about a difficult patient case.

patients will likely benefit from chemotherapy and which will likely benefit from hormonal manipulation alone. This is part of personalized medicine, wherein each

patient's case is analyzed to help guide their care based on the genetics of their cancer."

### Breast Cancer Care: A Center for Women's Health

A recent survey of 10,000 women showed that most have an inaccurate understanding of their breast cancer risk. At the most extreme, about 200 women believed their lifetime risk to be more than 90 percent and around 2,000 women guessed their lifetime risk at less than 1 percent.

As Director of Breast Cancer and Women's Medical Oncology, Dr. Sadan sees the screening mammogram, typically a focal point of women's health care, as "the foot in the door to all-around health" and patient education. The breast cancer screening and treatment model includes education about risk factors, healthy living and other disease screenings.

"Women take their knowledge into their family lives and educate younger generations about topics including smoking cessation, alcohol use, obesity control and physical activity," Dr. Sadan says. "Women also learn how important it is to understand their genetics and family history and begin educating themselves about their ethnic background and family risks."

For those who receive a diagnosis, though, the focus shifts.

"When you are the patient, your first priority is your treatment needs," Dr. Sadan says. "Patients have told me the experience of being diagnosed is like an atomic bomb has gone off inside of them."

Most women with a new diagnosis of breast cancer are cured. The difficulty is in identifying those who will need closer monitoring and treatments. Surrounded by caring physicians, nurses and other technicians, these patients will have access to a host of advanced modalities,

## SARA SADAN, MD

**A FAMILIAR FACE** in medical oncology in White Plains for many years, Dr. Sadan has deep experience in breast and other women's cancers. Her philosophy of care embraces attention to the whole patient, including general health and well-being, advanced personalized treatments, and survivorship.

- + **Administrative posts:** Founder of Oncology and Hematology (now part of White Plains Hospital Physician Associates); Director of Breast Cancer and Women's Medical Oncology, White Plains Hospital
- + **Medical school:** The Hadassah Medical School, Israel
- + **Internship:** St. Luke's-Roosevelt Hospital Center
- + **Fellowships:** Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center (endocrine biochemistry, cutaneous cell biology, medical oncology and hematology)
- + **Clinical and research interests:** Breast cancer, ovarian cancer, uterine cancer, lung cancer, colorectal cancer

As Director of Clinical Research at Dickstein Cancer Treatment Center, Julie Monroe, MD, is extremely active in cancer research studies. Here, she reviews data from a recent trial.





The physicians of White Plains Hospital Physician Associates Cancer and Blood Specialists of New York (L-R): Carol Lederman, MD; Afshan Malik, MD; Dan Costin, MD, FACP; Karen Green, MD; Subuhee Hussain, MD; and Julie Monroe, MD

including genetic counseling, personalized therapies and clinical trials. Advanced interventional radiology and minimally invasive surgery are available, and women benefit from the Cancer Genetics Program at Dickstein Cancer Treatment Center to guide their treatment decisions and assess their ongoing risks and those of their family members. Programs such as Reach to Recovery and Look Good... Feel Better promote social, emotional and aesthetic support.

Transition from acute to chronic care can be difficult, but physicians with Women's Medical Oncology are prepared to stay with patients for a lifetime, Dr. Sadan says.

"Cancer is a chronic disease most of the time," Dr. Sadan says. "Once you are diagnosed with cancer, the best person to follow you is your oncologist. New information is always coming in that physicians in other specialties will have difficulty staying up to date with. For example, we recently learned that tamoxifen was more effective when taken for 10 years, rather than five years. An oncologist would be most likely to keep current on such research."

After acute diagnosis and treatment, patient-oncologist conversations can include not only recommendations for reducing the recurrence of cancer, but also healthier living and life-changing modalities to improve quality-of-life and cancer-related outcomes.

"What patients take from their traumatic experience is life modification,"

Dr. Sadan says. "They learn about the threat and use their experience as a weapon to reduce the risk of cancer in their families and neighborhoods."

### Survivorship and Beyond

In addition to follow up to make sure cancer does not return, survivorship care at White Plains offers multiple opportunities for people who have experienced cancer to celebrate their ongoing lives and to give back to the community. Among these are National Cancer Survivors' Day and Reach to Recovery, which pairs cancer survivors with people newly diagnosed with cancer. Many other survivors volunteer in local physicians' offices or the Cancer Center at White Plains Hospital.

Survivorship isn't just for people whose cancer is in remission. White Plains Hospital offers multiple opportunities for people with recurrent or metastatic cancer. Systemic and local therapies available include radiation, hormonal and chemotherapies.

Programs focused on diet and exercise offer another approach to living well with this chronic condition. A research study at White Plains Hospital is actually seeking to demonstrate a correlation between specific, measurable, intense exercise programs and patient well-being after an initial cancer diagnosis.

"Cancer patients are living longer, and while treatments are generally very effective, we can achieve greater longevity and

## PARTNERS IN CARE

### WHITE PLAINS HOSPITAL PHYSICIAN ASSOCIATES

#### Oncology and Hematology

- + Sara Sadan, MD
- + Anney Mannancheril, MD
- + Joshua Raff, MD
- + Yael Sadan Zack, MD
- + Swati Sehgal, MD
- + Sandra Aufiero, RN, MSN, FNP-BC
- + Annie Borofsky, RN, MSN, NP-BC

### WHITE PLAINS HOSPITAL PHYSICIAN ASSOCIATES

#### Cancer and Blood Specialists of New York

- + Dan Costin, MD, FACP
- + Karen Green, MD
- + Subuhee Hussain, MD
- + Heather Kramer, MSRN, NP
- + Carol Lederman, MD
- + Afshan Malik, MD
- + Julie Monroe, MD

potentially greater benefits if we keep our patients moving," Dr. Costin says. "It is better for people to stay active so they will not have to take pain medications or be restricted to the home. All these things can impact survival and longevity."

For patients in advanced illnesses seeking symptom relief, as well as for those with limited life expectancies, White Plains Hospital partners with Hospice & Palliative Care of Westchester. Patients may remain in hospital or return home, cared for by a team including spiritual care professionals, nurses and social workers.

However, White Plains Hospital physicians are committed to finding treatments even for those patients with advanced-stage cancer. For example, Dr. Sadan and her team recently treated a patient using a three-drug combination with excellent clinical outcome.

"We used an aggressive combination of medications and fought intensely for the medication to be covered," Dr. Sadan says. "Sometimes all it takes is being the right person at the right time to help someone."

*To learn more, visit [wphospital.org](http://wphospital.org) and select "Cancer Program."* ■