



# Weekly Conference Plans Care for Breast Cancer Patients

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ALTON, IL -- Breast cancer treatment is being streamlined at Alton Memorial Hospital.

Radiation oncologists, medical oncologists, surgeons, radiologists and pathologists are holding weekly conferences to discuss care plans for patients with breast cancer. The idea is to coordinate and expedite treatment with a high standard of care.

“Conferences like this have become an integral part of successful cancer care programs nationwide,” said Dr. Joel Simmons, radiation oncologist and the medical director of the AMH Cancer Care Center. “Getting all of the physicians involved along with our breast health navigator (Malea Watson) and the support staff is great teamwork. It allows us to develop a coordinated care plan for each patient.”

The multi-disciplinary breast conferences are held each Thursday morning at the hospital. Patients who have recently been diagnosed with breast cancer are discussed to come up with the best care plan for each one.

“Most of the time we are able to come up with a plan for a patient in one meeting,” Dr. Simmons said. “The advantage of holding these meetings weekly is the ability to come back the next week if we need more discussion on a case. We are managing the patients as a team, in real time, as opposed to the older retrospective tumor board approach.”

Dr. Mark Woodson, a medical oncologist at Alton Memorial, said he’s been encouraged by the response so far.

“The staff has been very enthusiastic,” he said. “The best thing about these conferences is we can get all the disciplines together and come up with a treatment plan very quickly. We might come up with the same plan doing it another way, but it would certainly take longer. And the patients want to get a plan and start their treatment quickly. Most of these are fresh cases, with some diagnosed just within the past week.”

Dr. Simmons is also on staff at Washington University/Siteman Cancer Center in St. Louis and attends weekly multi-disciplinary breast cancer conferences there. His experience in those conferences has helped develop the conferences at Alton Memorial.

Dr. Simmons and Dr. Woodson say that the team is reaching out to primary care physicians to make them aware of the weekly meetings. Those physicians are also invited to attend if they have a patient facing a cancer diagnosis.

“This collaboration will help navigate patients through their diagnostic testing and planned treatment efficiently,” said Watson. “We want to provide excellent care close to home.”





**Woodson**

**Dr. Simmons**

**Dr.**