High Volume, Top Quality, and Rigorous Research: Jefferson Sets New Standards in Pancreatic Cancer Care

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Each year, Jefferson surgeons perform over 200 pancreatic resections, including more than 130 “Whipple procedures”—making the hospital #1 in surgical volume for pancreatic cancer and related diseases in the tristate region of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware.

“While we are very proud of what we have achieved, there are always opportunities for improvement,” says Charles J. Yeo, MD, FACS, Samuel D. Gross Professor and Chair of Surgery, who has personally performed more than 1,400 Whipple procedures and treated thousands of patients with pancreatic cancer and related diseases. Beyond the impressive numbers, the Jefferson Pancreas, Biliary and Related Cancer Center offers much more: multidisciplinary diagnosis and treatment, groundbreaking clinical research, and active involvement in community events—such as Amy’s Ride/Run/Walk in Quakertown (May 20) and Pancreatic Cancer Action Network’s PurpleStride (November 4).

New Multidisciplinary Pancreatic Cancer Clinic
When pancreatic cancer is suspected, many patients and their families feel overwhelmed. In addition to the emotional impact, patients may have to schedule several appointments to see primary doctors and gastroenterologists, as well as surgeons, medical oncologists and radiation oncologists. At our Multidisciplinary Pancreatic Cancer Clinic, all relevant clinicians gather each Monday afternoon to review cases and see patients—providing the convenience of multiple appointments during a single visit.

Development of a National Cancer Institute Funded Research Program
Since his recruitment in 2006, Jonathan Brody, PhD, Vice Chair for Research in the Department of Surgery, has been building a world-class pancreatic cancer research program. Dr. Brody specializes in studying the molecular basis of cancer development and progression, targeted therapy and personalized medicine. As a translational researcher, he steers the research trajectory of the Brody Laboratory while serving as an advisor/collaborator to all levels of trainees as well as our practicing surgeons, including Drs. Harish Lavu and Jordan Winter.

Ongoing Clinical Trials
Harish Lavu, MD, FACS, is leading the Whipple Accelerated Recovery Pathway (WARP) trial aimed at supporting faster recovery from pancreatic surgery. In 2007, the team conducted a similar study that established the seven-day “Critical Pathway” standard at Jefferson. The WARP trial—in initiated in late 2015 and with nearly 70 patients enrolled to date—is testing a five-day pathway. The protocol incorporates in-hospital physical therapy, specific dietary recommendations and rigorous monitoring following discharge. Meanwhile, Jordan M. Winter, MD, FACS, is tackling a perennial patient query: “Can pancreatic surgery make the cancer ‘spread’?” To explore this topic, Dr. Winter is leading the Water or Saline at High Volumes (WASH) trial that is testing the use of 10 liters of plain water or salt water for abdominal washing immediately following removal of the tumor. Current practice uses just one or two liters of saline at the conclusion of the procedure. The study, started in April 2016 with more than 100 patients enrolled to date, aims to expand to other sites and enroll 800 patients. For more information, go to Jefferson.edu/Pancreas.