

## **PRINT-Fast-Tracking Hope: Rapid Access at the OSF Cancer Institute**

When someone learns they have cancer, they want answers right away. At the newly opened [OSF HealthCare Cancer Institute](#) in Peoria, Illinois, a rapid access system has been developed to get them connected immediately to treatment and support services.

The comprehensive OSF Cancer Institute opened in February of 2024 as the main hub of an integrated cancer network across OSF HealthCare, with patients receiving care near home when possible. With the capacity to treat nearly 4,000 cancer patients each year, it's important each of them gets started on their diagnostic and treatment journey as quickly as possible. When it comes to cancer, no one wants to waste time.

Sarah Ince, RN, MSN, director of Contact Center operations at [OSF OnCall](#), the digital health arm of OSF HealthCare says oncology leaders who have witnessed challenges for individuals with cancer have provided valuable input in the collaborative process to design a seamless entry point. Together with select members from an [OSF Innovation](#) performance improvement team, health IT and others across the OSF Ministry, the team started with benchmarking with the best of the best cancer institutes across the country.

Ince says the new rapid access model provides a central point of contact for the patient.

"They're seeking care, they're confused, they're anxious, they've maybe just received a cancer diagnosis." Ince explains. "So being able to get our patients to us quickly and effectively. So being able to give them different means – a portal, a phone call, that one central phone number to get to us, to allow patients to get where they need."

In some cases, patients are waiting for a referral from their primary care provider or an emergency department doctor, and they want to know where that stands. In some cases, patients received a diagnosis but don't know next steps.

Amanda Luczkowiak, (pronounced luh-KOH-ee-ack) RN, a manager of Contact Center operations at OSF OnCall, says patients can call (844) OSF-HOPE or (844) 673-4467 to be connected immediately with an intake coordinator who can check on the status of that referral, and then also reach out to the support services and cancer navigators who can help with scheduling appointments.

*"It's really special, and the patients feel very supported."*-Amanda Luczkowiak

"And they feel like, oh my gosh, it started. The journey now has started. I have this person that I've spoken to, I've told them all the things I need to tell them, and they're going to take it from there."

Access coordinators have a background in oncology services. They make a virtual appointment to learn more about the patient's story and medical history, then they gather all records that could be relevant to the patient's diagnosis and treatment plan.

"So, if we have a patient who is in Florida X amount of months a year, they might have had imaging done there, they might have had treatment there. We're gathering all that information, so the providers are really excited that the first time they see that patient – that first visit, everything is there."

The easy transition to cancer care and support is something Ince says is personal for her.

“For me, my dad has stage four kidney cancer that's metastasized, and a patient in the community, and this is just what I needed a few years ago. So I really feel connected to this journey through my diagnostic imaging scheduling, that journey and now to the Cancer Institute, I feel blessed to be part of this role.”

The rapid access model has now been in place for about five months, and it will continue to expand to include working with referrals from providers outside of OSF HealthCare. Ince says there have also been preliminary discussions of how this model could be applied to other major medical care offered