Mary Lynne

Gynecologic Oncology Program
AT SMILOW CANCER HOSPITAL

To read Mary Lynne's story, go to yalecancercenter.org/maryllynne
The Gynecologic Oncology Program at Smilow Cancer Hospital brings together a team of clinicians whose focus is to care for women with gynecologic cancers. Patient appointments are in the dedicated Women’s Center on the first floor of the hospital. Physicians are board certified in obstetrics and gynecology, with a subspecialty of gynecologic oncology, which unites surgery, chemotherapy, and radiation therapy into the oncologic management of patients.

Women diagnosed with vulvar, vaginal, cervical, uterine, fallopian tube, or ovarian cancers are provided with exceptional care from Yale’s experienced team of gynecologic oncologists. In addition, the team also treats soft tissue tumors of the pelvis, gestational trophoblastic disease, as well as women with precancerous changes that have been identified in the vulva, vagina, and cervix, including dysplasia and carcinoma in situ, or premalignant changes of the endometrium, including adenomatous hyperplasia.

The physicians of the Gynecologic Oncology Program offer a wide spectrum of advanced strategies for the diagnosis and treatment of gynecologic cancers including colposcopy evaluation, conformal radiotherapy, and novel, targeted chemotherapies. The program is comprised of the Departments of Obstetrics, Gynecology & Reproductive Sciences, Radiation Oncology, Radiology and Biomedical Imaging, Genetics, Pathology, Pharmacy, and Social Work. A dedicated patient coordinator facilitates patient appointments and communication, coordinates services, and supports each patient and their family.

The expertise of the Gynecologic Oncology Program covers all of the components critical to managing the care of women with gynecological cancers: comprehensive evaluation and diagnosis, leading-edge treatment options, thorough follow-up, and psychosocial support. Women are welcome whether they are newly diagnosed or have already received extensive treatment.

Gynecologic oncology is one of the very few specialties where one can provide both surgical and medical treatment for patients with cancer. This allows us to develop a special, long-term relationship with our patients and their families, and gives us the opportunity to oversee all of their cancer care.

Dr. Peter Schwartz
SURGERY FOR PREVIOUSLY UNTREATED GYNECOLOGIC CANCER
The Gynecologic Oncology Program offers gynecologic, gastrointestinal, and urologic surgery for the management of previously untreated gynecologic cancers. These operations include radical hysterectomies for cervical cancer, cytoreductive surgery for ovarian cancer, radical vulvectomies for vulvar cancer, and total abdominal hysterectomies, bilateral salpingo-oophorectomies, and lymphadenectomies for the staging and treatment of endometrial (uterine) cancers.

Conventional laparoscopic and robotic surgery is available to women in need of surgery for uterine cancer, for removal of the uterus, tubes, and ovaries. The surgeries are also offered to women with invasive cervical cancer who require a radical hysterectomy. Laparoscopic surgery is currently under evaluation for women with ovarian cancer to determine whether optimum upfront surgical cytoreduction is possible, or if neoadjuvant chemotherapy should be used.

When possible, preservation of fertility in women with gynecologic cancers is always a priority. We have routinely preserved fertility in women with rare germ cell ovarian cancers. In addition, we perform radical trachelectomies in women with early stage cervical cancer who desire fertility preservation. For women with early stage, low-grade endometrial cancers, hormonal therapy is prescribed.

SURGERY FOR THE COMPLICATIONS OF GYNECOLOGIC MALIGNANCIES
Surgical expertise is available for complications resulting from gynecologic cancers or for progressive disease that include small and large bowel resections, colostomies, fistula repairs, and repair of pelvic support for the management of patients with gynecologic malignancies.

SURGERY FOR RECURRENT GYNECOLOGIC CANCER
Women with recurrent gynecologic cancer or whose cancer was previously not considered an option for surgery can schedule a consultation with the Gynecologic Oncology Program. Our surgeons are experts in the field and have the experience to operate when other surgeons may not consider surgery an option. Such operations include radical resection of recurrent ovarian cancer, radical hysterectomies and pelvic exenterations for recurrent cervical cancer, radical resections of pelvic and abdominal disease for recurrent endometrial cancer, and surgical resection of vulvar lesions following surgery or surgery, radiation, and chemotherapy for the management of vulvar cancer.

SURGERY FOR BENIGN GYNECOLOGIC DISEASE
The Gynecologic Oncology Program is routinely asked to provide surgical management for patients with benign gynecologic conditions, particularly those that had previously had unsuccessful or complicated gynecologic surgery. Such conditions include endometriosis, extensive uterine fibroids (leiomyomas), recurrent ovarian cysts, pelvic pain, and pelvic organ prolapse. Prophylactic surgery, including...
hysterectomy, bilateral salpingo-oophorectomy, or bilateral salpingectomy with ovarian conservation, is also available to women looking to prevent ovarian cancer occurrence.

NEW THERAPEUTIC OPTIONS
The Gynecologic Oncology Program provides a full spectrum of chemotherapeutic agents useful in the management of ovarian cancer, fallopian tube cancer, uterine cancer, mesenchymal tumors of the uterus, cervical cancer, vaginal cancer, and vulvar cancer. These chemotherapeutic agents may be used either for primary treatment or treatment of recurrent disease. Neoadjuvant chemotherapy, i.e., chemotherapy prescribed before surgical treatment, is often used for women with advanced ovarian cancer to reduce the size and impact of the cancer and its metastases and therefore minimize complications during surgery and improve recovery following the operation. Intraperitoneal chemotherapy, where chemotherapy is injected directly into the abdomen through a catheter, is also an option for ovarian cancer treatment.

In addition, clinical trials offering the latest treatment combinations and new therapies are available for our patients through Yale Cancer Center, a comprehensive cancer center designated by the National Cancer Institute, with the NRG Cooperative Group, and through investigator initiated research trials. Clinical trials for both
previously untreated gynecologic malignancies as well as for the management of recurrent gynecologic malignancies that may have initially failed to respond to chemotherapy or other treatment modalities are options for patients. New trials are available using PARP inhibitors, targeted therapies, and immunotherapies for the treatment of gynecological cancers, and recurrent cancers.

"Be your own best advocate. Listen to that little voice inside you. Especially when you know you have choices. Ask questions. And don’t allow yourself to be rushed into making a decision."

Mary Lynne Barber

RADIATION ONCOLOGY
Radiation oncologists with gynecologic expertise collaborate with the gynecologic oncologists at Smilow Cancer Hospital to provide both brachytherapy and external beam radiation therapy for the management of a spectrum of gynecologic cancers including cervical, vaginal, vulvar, and ovarian cancer. Patients treated at Smilow have access to the latest, most precise technologies including image-guided intensity-modulated radiation therapy and high-dose-rate brachytherapy.

RADIOLOGY
The Yale Department of Radiology and Biomedical Imaging employs state-of-the-art CT, MRI, and ultrasound exams to better diagnose and stage gynecologic disease and assist with treatment decisions. They have extensive experience in imaging of gynecologic oncology and are dedicated to providing the best patient care possible. They routinely consult with the physicians in the Gynecologic Oncology Program and review all available imaging to ensure that the best diagnosis is made, which will translate to the most appropriate treatment for your disease.

PATHOLOGY
The Gynecologic Pathology team is a fundamental component in the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of diseases of the female genital organs at Smilow Cancer Hospital. In this highly specialized practice setting, our gynecological pathologists have extensive diagnostic experience and a passion for patient care. In the era of precision medicine, in addition to tissue diagnosis, team members actively participate in the real-time decision making process for patient management, including daily intraoperative consultations, weekly tumor board conferences, and many ongoing clinical trial programs.
COLPOSCOPY PROGRAM

We offer a full service colposcopy program for the evaluation of women with abnormal Pap smear results and for patients with possible recurrences of premalignant or malignant disease in the lower reproductive tract using the colposcopic evaluation approach. We also offer laser, LEEP, and cold knife conizations for cervical cancer and have applied these techniques for vulvar and vaginal cancer in selected patients.

PATIENT SUPPORT SERVICES

Smilow Cancer Hospital places great emphasis on taking care of all of our patients’ needs with the best medical care available and a network of supportive care services. Advanced practice nurses with dedicated knowledge and skills related to the treatment of gynecological cancers are available to care for women through the continuum of their treatment.

Patients and their families have access to social workers to provide psychosocial support during their treatment. Social workers help our patients find resources, internally as well as in the larger community, to cope with the effect that cancer has on their lives. Whether a woman’s challenges are practical, emotional, social or spiritual, our social workers assist them, and their families, in addressing these concerns. Other available resources for our patients and/or families include pastoral support, nutritional counseling, physical therapy, palliative care, integrative medicine, and complementary therapies.

SEXUALITY, INTIMACY, AND MENOPAUSE

Many patients have questions or follow-up concerns related to sexuality, intimacy, and menopause, either because their treatment has induced premature symptoms or because of the side effects of their treatment. Our team provides dedicated resources to address the needs of our patients during treatment or following through the Sexuality, Intimacy, and Menopause (SIMs) Clinic, led by Dr. Elena Ratner. Dr. Ratner and her colleagues help manage our patients’ symptoms and address any concerns that arise.

DISCOVERY TO CURE

The Discovery to Cure program began in 2002 to provide women with new methods for the prevention, early detection, and treatment of gynecologic cancers. The direct connection between our research labs and clinical patient care at Smilow Cancer Hospital makes Discovery to Cure the leading center for women’s reproductive cancer research and treatment. Researchers and clinicians in the Discovery to Cure program are at the forefront of discovering new treatment options for women with reproductive cancers.
I can’t say enough about Smilow Cancer Hospital. The environment is so warm. Everybody, the doctors, nurses, support staff, all made me feel like I was part of the team. They gave me such special care, especially with side effects or when I had complications.

Liz Nelson
HOW TO MAKE AN APPOINTMENT
For more information or to schedule an appointment with a member of the Gynecologic Oncology Program, please contact our patient intake coordinators at (203) 200-4176. They will provide you with assistance during your diagnosis, treatment, and recovery and our nurse coordinator can help answer questions that you may have. Our goal is to ensure that each of our patients has an outstanding and positive cancer care experience.

When you call, a patient intake coordinator will help to arrange your appointments so that you will see all of the specialists needed during an initial visit.

WHAT TO BRING TO YOUR FIRST APPOINTMENT
For your first visit, our intake specialist will work with you and your doctors to obtain all available imaging films and reports, pathology reports, slices, doctor’s referral notes, and the results of any other pertinent tests or consultations.

p: (203) 200-4176
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