

Tobacco Cessation Program

Tobacco use is the leading preventable cause of premature death in the United States, causing an estimated 435,000 deaths each year. Tobacco use is most obviously linked to lung cancer, but additionally is known to contribute significantly to the risk for many other cancers, including head and neck, pancreatic, bladder, kidney, stomach and uterine.

While there is significant evidence that continued tobacco use after the diagnosis of cancer decreases survival, reduces treatment efficacy, and increases treatment toxicity and the risk for recurrence, many cancer patients continue to smoke after diagnosis.

In an effort to help cancer patients and their families successfully tackle the battle against tobacco addiction, Kellogg Cancer Center implemented a comprehensive smoking cessation program in 2011. Oncology pharmacist Shannon Gavin completed intensive training at Mayo Clinic to become a certified Tobacco Treatment Specialist and helped develop the program for Kellogg, which utilizes NorthShore's advanced Electronic Medical Record (EMR) system to document patient information and collect data for ongoing research.

Clinical practice guidelines for treating tobacco use and dependence recommend using the time of cancer diagnosis as a “teachable moment” for tobacco cessation. The combination of support from a trained professional and the use of tobacco cessation medications increases the chances of quitting successfully.

Our program is innovative in that it is integrated into the care provided at Kellogg Cancer Center, is pharmacist-driven and addresses both the behavioral and physiological components. The specially trained oncology pharmacists' role has grown from drug dispensing to education and management of a chronic disease.

Although it is too early to document long-term results, the new tobacco cessation program is showing promising results and clearly supports the mission of the Kellogg Cancer Center to provide the highest level of care possible while supporting continued research and prevention efforts.