



## Bringing the advantages of cancer treatment to the community

### 2019/2020 Highlights

In an era where new treatments for cancer are rapidly expanding, Metro-Minnesota Community Oncology Research Consortium (MMCORC) offers two unique features:

- Our broad network allows us to obtain high-quality, scientifically validated information for patients and their providers
- Because we operate in local hospitals and clinics, patients have access to cutting edge treatment and prevention trials in their own communities

Our consortium provides trials to 23 community hospitals in Minnesota and Wisconsin. Since 1983, with the support of National Cancer Institute (NCI), we have enrolled thousands of patients on clinical trials—providing vital knowledge on a broad range of topics. From the best use of mammography to the impact of early use of immune therapy in the treatment of lung cancer — we are studying ways to improve lives.

In 2019, we were awarded a six-year grant from NCI to continue offering more than 100 clinical trials to our members. Our network was recognized by NCI as a high-performing research consortium, a designation we have received several times. In the future, we look forward to continuing enrollment on high-impact trials like these:

- The NCI TMIST and FORTE trials, which help determine how best to screen for breast and colon cancer
- Cancer treatment trials examining immune-based strategies and other targeted therapies designed to maximize effectiveness and minimize adverse effects in the treatment of cancer.

I hope you enjoy these highlights of our work from the past year.

**Daniel Anderson, MD**  
MMCORC Principal Investigator

### MMCORC by the Numbers

- **493** patients enrolled onto national oncology clinical trials
- **136** enrollments to cancer care delivery clinical trials
- **159** local providers were rostered to enroll onto an NCI-sponsored trial
- **111** physician investigators enrolled a patient onto an MMCORC trial
- **133** federal and industry-sponsored cancer clinical trials available to patients within their communities
- **23** hospital and clinic consortium members
- **50** rural participants
- **38** adolescent and young adult (AYA) participants
- **348** older adult participants
- **6** additional years of NCI NCORP federal funding awarded
- **15%** of patients enrolled onto national oncology clinical trials throughout our consortium were identified as racial and ethnic minorities



## Improving the cancer care experience

Cancer Care Delivery Research addresses the cancer care experience of patients and caregivers, their providers and cancer center administration.

Over the past year, research topics included the financial burden of cancer treatment, smoking cessation within oncology and a telehealth approach to treat distress for rural cancer survivors.

Together, MMCORC members enrolled 77 patients, 56 providers and three practices to these studies.

Looking ahead, our programming will work to incorporate the needs of diverse populations (young adults, the elderly, racial and ethnic minorities, sexual and gender minorities, and rural residents) into cancer studies and take steps to increase participation of these groups.

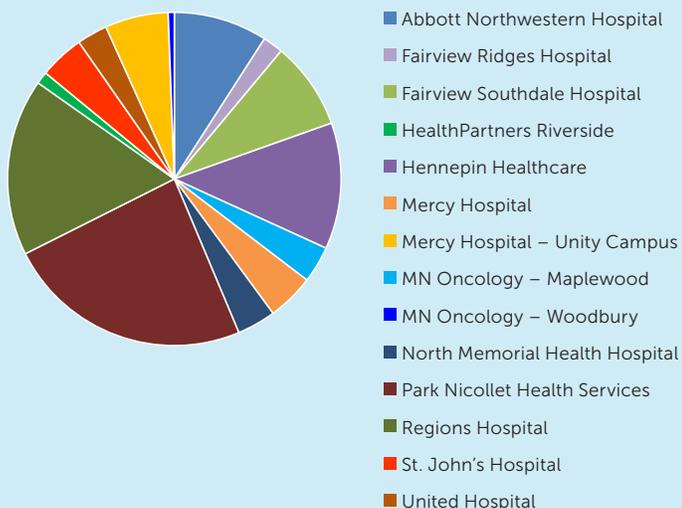
## Staying connected during a pandemic

COVID-19 affected our research program in ways we couldn't have imagined. Along with challenges, however, came opportunities. MMCORC identified several strategies to ensure critical studies continued.

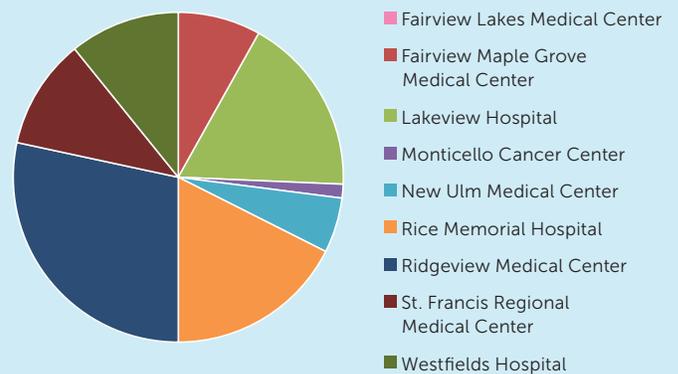
Remote consenting was significant as it allowed us to continue enrolling patients on trials even as face-to-face visits were suspended. And mailing of investigational drugs to participants eliminated the need for clinic visits — reducing risks. We also connected with patients remotely. Using phone or video, we were able to conduct study visits in a safe and effective way.

We have learned that flexibility and adaptability are key, as is close partnership with our consortium health systems. Moving forward, we will prepare for a restart of full hospital and clinic patient loads while we build on the lessons learned from the pandemic.

MMCORC Accrual by Site – Main Members



MMCORC Accrual by Site – Affiliate Members



## Access to clinical trials close to home

Federal guidelines say that anything longer than a 30-minute drive to receive health care is considered an excessive commute. Patients from rural areas don't have the same access to participate in a clinical trial for their disease.

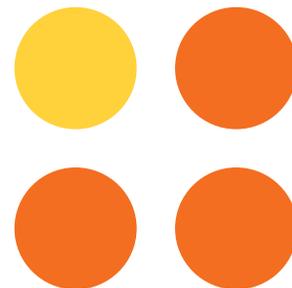
We work to mitigate these consequences for patients by serving as a liaison between federal or industry trials, the cancer care physician and the patient, while also raising clinical trial awareness within local health care systems. This brings opportunities to patients and helps build infrastructure for a sustainable research model in the rural oncology clinic.

MMCORC has 10 Minnesota and one Western Wisconsin rural affiliate sites that work together with cancer care physicians to target underserved and low-income populations. This creates access to clinical trials for patients close to home.

MMCORC partnered with the Minnesota Cancer Clinical Trial Network (MNCCTN). This cancer clinical trials network has locations across Minnesota. It is funded by the Minnesota Legislature as part of the University of Minnesota's overall MnDRIVE Strategic Investment Request. Led by the Masonic Cancer Center, University of Minnesota, MNCCTN partner organizations provide greater access to cancer clinical trials in prevention and treatment for all Minnesotans.

We continue to build our affiliate program to deliver options for cancer research for rural residents and families, to advance health equity, and to enhance the vitality of rural communities.

Looking ahead: Our funding increased 10% for grant year seven. That's great news for our consortium and the patients we serve.



## Clinical trials lead to precision medicine

By participating in clinical trials, we not only answer important scientific questions, we offer patients treatment options and hope. We partner with federal agencies and pharmaceutical companies in several studies focused on tailored treatment. A few are highlighted here.

PALLAS, an early-stage breast cancer trial, is now in its final stages. While MMCORC was able to offer participation to nearly 150 patients across the metro area, the most recent interim analysis showed no benefit of the drug, palbociclib, in this population. The drug has been approved for metastatic patients; however, more research will be done to determine if a subset of patients did benefit, or if other groups should receive this drug. This information will allow physicians to better tailor treatment for early-stage breast cancer patients.

Through research, patients with ovarian cancer can help develop new therapies for their disease and expand options for future patients. This is especially important for cancers with genetic components that can affect whole families. One such study, ATHENA, looks at two new drugs, nivolumab and rucaparib, for newly diagnosed patients with various gynecologic cancers. We enrolled about 30 patients on this trial and continue to offer participants these drugs as part of their standard chemotherapy care.

Strata Oncology, a designated NGS (next generation sequencing) lab since 2018, offered free NGS testing to nearly 1,000 patients in grant year six. The testing identified hundreds of clinical trials and approved treatment options for patients — allowing physicians to tailor treatment for their patients, maximizing benefit and minimizing side effects. By expanding this collaboration, we can offer opportunities for more trials to more patients.

## TMIST study seeks to improve screening mammography

Is 3D mammography better than 2D at finding breast cancers that are more likely to spread and lead to death? Answering that question can save lives. That's why we are participating in the NCI-funded Tomosynthesis Mammographic Imaging Screening Trial (TMIST) study. The results will inform decisions about screening mammography. We enrolled 119 participants this grant year, even with a two-month pause due to COVID-19, supporting the national goal of around 165,000 participants.

## Consortium member sites

Abbott Northwestern Hospital  
Cambridge Medical Center  
Fairview Lakes Medical Center  
Fairview Maple Grove Medical Center  
Fairview Southdale Hospital  
Hennepin Healthcare  
Lakeview Hospital  
Mercy Hospital  
Mercy Hospital – Unity Campus  
MN Oncology – Burnsville  
MN Oncology – Maplewood  
MN Oncology – Woodbury  
Monticello Cancer Center  
New Ulm Medical Center  
North Memorial Health Hospital  
Park Nicollet Health Services  
Regions Hospital  
Rice Memorial Hospital  
Ridgeview Medical Center  
St. Francis Regional Medical Center  
St. John's Hospital  
United Hospital  
Westfields Hospital

## Leadership

MMCORC leadership includes multiple principal investigators. The contact principal investigator is Daniel Anderson, MD, and the co-principal investigators are Richard Peterson, MD, and David King, MD. They are invested in our program and have contributed their knowledge, expertise and passion for clinical research within our local community and nationally. Our Administrative Director, Michele Lacy, BSN, RN, OCN, oversees the federal grant and staffing, serving each of our consortium member hospitals and clinics.

## Awards and recognition

MMCORC received a Platinum level "Exceptional Achievement in NCI Treatment and Cancer Control Accrual" award from NCI in 2019. Additional national awards received by MMCORC:

- Platinum award for exceptional accrual on CCDR protocol S1417CD – Implementation of a Prospective Financial Impact Assessment Tool in Patients with Metastatic Colorectal Cancer
- Platinum award for exceptional accrual – Anthony Severt, MD (Hennepin Healthcare Radiology)
- Gold award for excellence in accrual on ECOG-ACRIN TMIST – Tomosynthesis Mammographic Imaging Screening Trial
- Silver award for excellence in accrual – Astrid Garino, MD (Mercy Hospital)
- Silver award for excellence in accrual – David King, MD (Mercy Hospital – Unity Campus)
- Silver award for excellence in accrual – Priya Kumar (Lakeview Hospital)
- Silver award for excellence in accrual – Kiran Lassi, MD (Mercy Hospital)
- Silver award for excellence in accrual – Michaela Tsai, MD (Abbott Northwestern Hospital)
- Outstanding NCORP Administrator of the Year Award – Michele Lacy

Michele Lacy was invited to serve as a member of the Research Community Forum Steering Group within American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO).

## Bringing the advantages of cancer treatment to the community

We provide patients the opportunity to enroll in high quality clinical trials for the treatment or prevention of cancer in their own community – while being treated by a local physician. Our dedicated and experienced medical professionals conduct clinical trials with compassion and respect for our participants while offering cutting-edge treatment options.

## Contact information

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