

# ESSENTIA HEALTH CANCER CENTER

St. Joseph's Medical Center  
Brainerd, Minnesota

2018 ANNUAL REPORT  
FEATURING CANCER SCREENINGS



Essentia Health

# CANCER CARE LIKE NOWHERE ELSE

Providing high quality cancer care in a personalized manner in your community hospital is our goal. Sometimes a patient interacts with some of the team, but does not realize all of the other people who they may not meet face to face that also assist with his or her care. Other times, the patient fully realizes how many healthcare workers make up their team and this is not apparent to friends and family or even other healthcare workers.

Great care is the result of many small things, and sometimes large things, coordinated well and orchestrated into a plan customized for each patient.

I am so very proud of each and every member of the cancer care team and am delighted to be able to share some of their stories with you with this report. We strive to make Essentia Health the place where you receive cancer care like nowhere else.

**Dianne Kendall MD,**  
Chair of Cancer Committee, Pathologist

## Recognized cancer care

We're proud of the work we've done and our continued accreditation from the American College of Surgeons Commission on Cancer (CoC) affirms that work. CoC Accreditation is the Hallmark of Excellence and awarded to cancer care programs that have made a commitment to providing high quality, comprehensive, multidisciplinary patient-centered care as demonstrated through compliance with the CoC Accreditation Standards.



## THE CANCER CENTER MULTIDISCIPLINARY TEAM

The Cancer Center multidisciplinary team includes oncology and hematology physicians and a nurse practitioner, specialized surgeons, radiologists and pathologists, dietitians, specialized nurses and therapists, patient navigators, a social worker and clinical research nurse, as well as 26 team members specifically trained to support survivors. These cancer experts are deeply committed to caring for cancer patients every step of the way with the latest technology, treatments and the most current cancer clinical trials.

The Essentia Health–St. Joseph’s Medical Center cancer team has demonstrated a commitment to delivering the highest level of cancer care to patients and families. Essentia Health offers cancer clinical trials through funding from the National Cancer Institute’s Community Oncology Research Program. In addition, the breast cancer program received accreditation from the National Accreditation Program for Breast Centers.



**Laura Joque, MD**  
Hematologist/Oncologist



**Aby Philip, MBBS**  
Hematologist/Oncologist



**Krishna Kolandaivel, MD**  
Hematologist/Oncologist



**Jessica Hinkley, DNP**  
Oncology Nurse Practitioner



**Jessica Nybakken, CNP**  
Oncology Nurse Practitioner



**Erin Kennedy, RN, OCN**  
Clinical Patient Navigator



**Amy Renner, RN, OCN**  
Clinical Patient Navigator



**Caitlin Altrichter, RN, OCN**  
Clinical Research Nurse

## EARLY DETECTION SAVES LIVES

Denise Aune switched to 3-D mammograms two years ago and she's glad she did. Her annual screening test last February detected a small mass in her left breast and led to an early diagnosis of breast cancer.

"Get a 3-D mammogram even if you have to pay the \$90 that your insurance won't," advises the 52-year-old Pequot Lakes woman. "It's well worth it."

Denise decided to switch to a 3-D mammogram because she has dense breast tissue and the newest technology provides more detailed images from multiple angles. Last Feb. 8, she came in for her annual screening mammogram and got a call the next day asking her to return for an ultrasound. Her husband, Brian, reassured her that she'd been called back before and everything had been fine. But this time, the ultrasound led to a biopsy and a diagnosis of breast cancer.

Denise took her husband and her daughter, Courtney, to her first appointment with Dr. Aby Philip, a hematologist/oncologist at the Essentia Health Cancer Center in St. Joseph's Medical Center. Dr. Philip explained her diagnosis and outlined her treatment options. "Dr. Philip asked me what I'd like to do," Denise recalls. "I'd done my research and told him what I wanted. He said, 'That's exactly what I would recommend.' He gave me a choice and then reassured me."

Before the appointment, Courtney had told her mother that she didn't need to stick with Essentia Health if she didn't like the doctor or the treatment plan. "We met with Dr. Philip and I

looked at my husband and my daughter and said, 'I think we're on the right path' and they agreed," she recalls.

**"Get a 3-D mammogram even if you have to pay the \$90 that your insurance won't. It's well worth it."**

Denise says she trusted Dr. Philip's experience and medical knowledge. "I felt comfortable asking him questions and he gave me the right to my own options," she says, explaining she had discussed treatment plans with her gynecologist, Dr. Pamela Rice, and had done her own research.

The first step was a lumpectomy. Dr. Troy Duininck outlined the surgery, taking time to answer her questions. The March 1 operation removed a 1.9-centimeter mass and lymph nodes for testing. The cancer had spread to one of three lymph nodes, which made her diagnosis Stage II breast cancer.

Denise began four rounds of chemotherapy in early April that were followed by radiation treatments. Her son, Travis, sometimes accompanied her. She says she came to rely on her patient navigators, Erin Kennedy and Amy Renner, as well as Nurse Practitioner Jessica Nybakken. Denise found them willing to take any call, listen to any concern and answer any question.

Denise says she had few side effects from her treatments, other than fatigue and hair loss. She learned to pace herself after an infusion so she could return to her work with an internet company. She didn't have nausea but developed a hankering for fish sticks. "Those nice flaky fish sticks," she recalls with a laugh. "I bought some recently and now I can't eat them."

Occupational Therapist Pam Miller has helped Denise treat swelling in her left arm caused by lymphedema. "I feel like I've known her forever," Denise says. "She's a breast cancer survivor, too, so she knows and tells me what to expect."

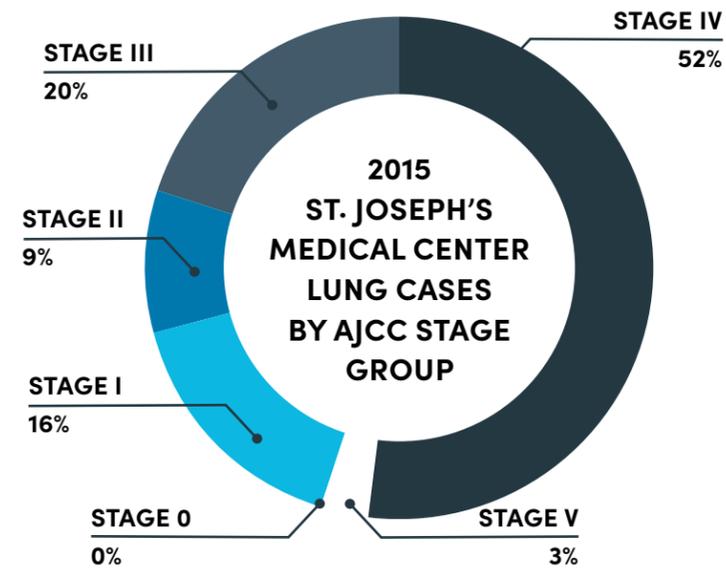
Denise finished her radiation treatments on Aug. 20 and her granddaughter Presleigh came to help her celebrate. "It was bittersweet because it felt like family," she says of the Cancer Center staff. "They are so comforting and caring."



# THE POWER OF LOW DOSE CT LUNG SCREENING

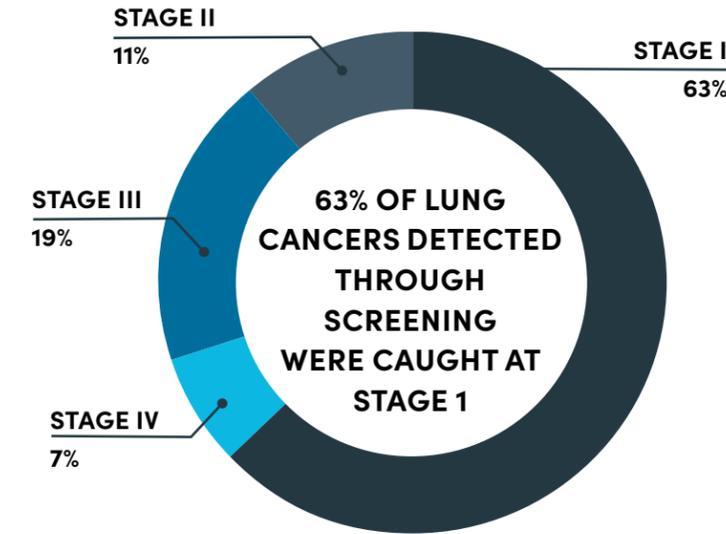
Health Behavior Category	Health Behavior Measure	Cass County	Crow Wing County	Morrison County	Minnesota	National Benchmark
Tobacco Use	Adult Smoking, % of adults that report smoking ≥ 100 cigarettes and currently smoking, 2004-2010	20% (15-27%)	18% (14-23%)	24% (17-33%)	18%	14%

Lung cancer is the #1 cancer killer in the United States, with 90% of all lung cancers linked to cigarette smoking. Our community ranks higher than the national benchmark for the % of adults who currently smoke and reported smoking > 100 cigarettes.



In 2013, 2014, and 2015 lung cancer was the second leading cancer diagnosed at St. Joseph's Medical Center with more than 50% of these cases diagnosed at a late stage. (Stage IV).

In the summer of 2015, based on the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force recommendation, Essentia Health began screening patients between the ages of 55-77 who are current smokers with a 30 pack per year history, or those with a similar pack history who have quit smoking within the last 15 years. The screening was performed using low dose CT. Screening patients with low dose CT allows us to catch cancers at a much earlier stage when cancer is most treatable. In the past year, Essentia Health St. Joseph's Medical Center has screened over 750 community members. We have seen a dramatic shift in the stage at which cancers are detected. We are catching cancers at an earlier stage. Since the onset of our program we have detected 27 cancers and 63% of all lung cancers were diagnosed at Stage 1, as opposed to 2015 where only 16% of all lung cancers were caught at stage 1. Through this program, we are making a healthy difference in the patients we are blessed to serve.



## Early detection helped Ramona survive not one, but two cancers

Like most people diagnosed with lung cancer, the tumor in Ramona's left lung was discovered when she had an X-ray for another condition.



Until recently, there was no screening test for lung cancer. Low-dose CT scans are now being offered for people ages 55-77 who are long-time smokers and therefore at high risk for developing lung cancer.

# KNOW LUNG CANCER

## KNOW THE FACTS

Lung cancer is the #1 cancer killer in the United States

**90%**

of lung cancer is linked to cigarette smoking.

**2/5**

Adults who don't smoke and 1/2 of children are exposed to secondhand smoke.

## KNOW THE RISK FACTORS



Cigarette Smoking



Secondhand Smoke



Radon Exposure



Workplace Exposure



Air pollution

## KNOW THE SYMPTOMS

Most people with lung cancer don't have symptoms until the cancer is advanced

- Coughing that gets worse or doesn't go away
- Coughing up blood
- Chest pain
- Feeling very tired all the time
- Shortness of breath or wheezing
- Weight loss with no known cause

## KNOW WHEN TO SCREEN

Current smoker or quit in the last 15 years AND between the ages of 55-77 AND smoked 30 pack years or more.

**Talk to your doctor about screening and ways to reduce your lung cancer risk**



## GENETICS IN ONCOLOGY



**Aby Philip, MBBS**  
Hematologist/Oncologist

Genetics is the field of science that looks at how traits are passed down from parents to their children through genes. Genes are pieces of DNA inside our cells that instruct cells how to make proteins the body needs. DNA is the 'blueprint' in each cell. Mutations are abnormal changes in genes. Certain mutations cause cells to grow out of control, which can lead to cancer.

It is now known that cancer is a disease that is caused by progressive accumulations of mutations in critical genes that control cell growth and differentiation. Mutations could be inherited or acquired. About 5-10% of all cancers are thought to be strongly related to an inherited gene mutation. Acquired

mutations are related to mostly lifestyle choices such as smoking, exposures to chemicals etc.

Today, we use our knowledge of genetics to guide the treatment of several malignancies as well as to evaluate the risk of cancer occurrence in individuals. Many cancer centers today offer an assessment of risk for genetic cancer and genetic testing in appropriate individuals.

Here at Essentia Health St. Joseph's Cancer Center, we offer genetic counseling and testing for our patients. This is conducted via telehealth through a genetics counselor based at the Essentia Health Duluth campus. We conduct genetic testing through Ambry Genetics, thanks to financial support from the St. Joseph's Foundation. The genetic counselor evaluates the individual's personal and family history of cancer and gives a recommendation for genetic testing as appropriate. The best

person to test first is usually the person with cancer. Once a mutation has been identified, other members of the family can also be tested for the same. The genetic counselor also gives recommendations regarding the follow-up and potential interventions for individuals who have genetic mutations. Individuals with genetic mutations can be followed more closely to detect recurrence of cancer early. There are medical and surgical interventions that could be utilized to decrease the risk in these patients.

The field of genetics in oncology is constantly evolving as we gain greater understanding of the various mutations and their role in carcinogenesis.

## Cervical Cancer Screening Event: SAGE

Essentia Health partners with the Minnesota Department of Health Sage Screening Program to provide free cancer screenings to women who qualify within income guidelines. The Sage program is designed for people for whom cost is a barrier to getting important cancer screenings, including pap smears, mammograms, and colonoscopies.

To bring awareness to the importance of screenings and to encourage use of the program, Essentia Health holds an annual Sage screening event. That event occurred on January 24, 2018 during Cervical Health Awareness Month.

During the event, 10 patients were screened for cervical cancer, with 9 of the patients showing normal pap/cotesting results. One

of the patients had a normal pap/HPV positive result. This patient then did have a colposcopy done through the SAGE program with biopsies showing LGSIL (low-grade dysplasia-no cancer). She will have a follow up pap smear and HPV testing again in 1 year.

Of the 10 patients who came to the event, four of them were also due for breast cancer screenings. All four had clinical breast exams done during the pap event, and their mammograms done within 1 week of the event through the SAGE program. All showed normal mammography results. One patient was due for a mammography in March. Her clinical breast exam was also done during the event and her mammogram scheduled for March through the SAGE program and showed normal results.

Of the 10 patients who came to the event, five of them were also due for colorectal cancer screening. All agreed to talk to SAGE Scopes staff about colorectal screening. Two were found to not qualify for the SAGE Scopes program. Two have had messages left from SAGE Scopes staff to call back to discuss further but have not called back yet. One was scheduled for a SAGE scopes covered colonoscopy, which showed five 3 to 7 mm polyps in the rectum, in the sigmoid colon, in the proximal transverse colon and in the proximal ascending colon, removed with a cold snare. Pathology of these showed adenomas. Plan is repeat colonoscopy in 3 years.

By partnering with Sage, Essentia can help get important cancer screenings done for patients who may not have otherwise been screened.



## CANCER REHABILITATION

Cancer patients have unique needs with symptoms caused by chemo that are not seen in other specialties. Ensuring patients have access to oncology rehabilitation services is an important part of the care we offer.

Our care includes a Cancer Rehabilitation team consisting of specially trained Occupational, Speech and Physical Therapists. We can treat a wide variety of cancer related side effects such as lymphedema, fatigue, balance and cognitive issues, and swallowing and speech concerns.

Whether you have had your cancer surgery or treatment in the Brainerd Lakes area or with a care team somewhere else, our staff is able to assist you in getting back to life. The symptoms you may experience after the cancer do not have to be your new normal. Physical Speech and Occupational Therapists are trained to work with you to improve your cancer-related symptoms.

Difficulty with swallowing, speech or cognition can be common symptoms related to cancer or its treatment. Our Speech Therapists are specially trained to assess and treat these issues.

Our Occupational Therapists are trained to address lymphedema (swelling that is seen after lymph nodes are removed). They can provide care to treat the swelling that occurs in the head and neck, arms or the legs.

Some of the most common symptoms seen with cancer treatment are fatigue and balance problems. Physical Therapy can help to reduce those symptoms by working on strength and endurance.

If you or someone you know is having problems getting back to daily life activities after cancer, contact our Rehabilitation Department to schedule an appointment with one of our specialists.

## CLINICAL TRIALS



**Bret Friday, MD**  
Hematologist/Oncologist

Essentia Health cancer patients benefit from a generous partnership with the University of Minnesota.

Nearly half of all Minnesotans will be diagnosed with a potentially life-threatening cancer during their lifetime. Essentia Health patients will soon have better access to new cancer treatments and enhanced care thanks to a new state-funded partnership between University of Minnesota and the state's major

health systems, including Essentia Health.

As part of the Minnesota Discovery Research and Innovation (MnDRIVE) partnership with the State of Minnesota, the University is launching the Minnesota Cancer Clinical Trials Network (MNCCTN) with multiple locations across the state. Led by the Masonic Cancer Center, University of Minnesota, the goal of the MNCCTN is to improve cancer outcomes for all Minnesotans through greater access to cancer clinical trials in prevention, treatment, and survivorship. The partnership will provide Essentia \$500,000 to support expanding access to clinical trials.

Cancer patients in northern Minnesota have already benefited from access to clinical trials at Essentia Health's Cancer Centers in Duluth, Brainerd and Fargo. "The State's cancer research network will augment the work we are currently doing at Essentia's cancer

clinical trial program to provide our patients greater access to the ground-breaking research from institutions in Minnesota," says Dr. Bret Friday, a hematologist/oncologist at Essentia Health's Cancer Center in Duluth.

56 percent of Minnesotans have fewer options for treatment because they live more than 30 miles from a hospital or clinic that offers access to clinical trials. By bringing cancer clinical trials to those living in Greater Minnesota, the MNCCTN will increase access to potentially lifesaving and life-changing therapies and treatments, strengthen healthcare systems, create more equitable access to care, and could improve cancer outcomes throughout the state.

"Our long-term goal is that every cancer patient in northern Minnesota has access to clinical trials close to home," says Dr. Friday. With the inception of the State's cancer research network, Essentia has expanded access to cancer trials at multiple clinics, including Virginia, Hibbing, Deer River, Detroit Lakes, Park Rapids, and Fosston. Additional centers will be added in the future. The cancer network is currently funded for two years.

The Essentia Health Community Cancer Research Program has been a national leader in clinical trials research for more than 35 years. Communities within the Essentia Health catchment area have access to state-of-the-art cancer care through participation in National Cancer Institute (NCI) supported clinical trials as part their program. For more information about EHCCRP clinical trials visit: <http://www.cancerhelpessentiahealth.org>



# CANCER SCREENING GUIDELINES

Knowing your family history is key and can help determine at what age some screenings should start

## Colon and Rectal Screening

Most people should start at age 50. Ask your doctor when you should start and what test is best for you. You may need to start sooner if you have risk factors such as:

- You are African American
- Someone in your immediate family has had colon cancer

## Lung Cancer

You should consider being screened with a low-dose CT scan if you have all three of these risk factors:

- You are 55-77 years old
- You are a current smoker or a former smoker who quit less than 15 years ago
- You have a smoking history of at least 30 pack-years (This means 1 pack a day for 30 years or 2 packs a day for 15 years)

## Skin Cancer

Know the melanoma ABCDE's:

- **Asymmetry:** One half is unlike the other
- **Border:** Irregular, scalloped or poorly defined border
- **Color:** Varied from one area to another, shades of tan & brown, black: sometimes white, red or blue
- **Diameter:** Melanoma's are usually greater than 6mm (pencil eraser), but can be smaller
- **Evolving:** A mole or skin lesion that looks different from the rest or is changing shape or color

## Breast Cancer Screening

- 40 and older: annual mammogram and clinical breast exam
- Some individuals have a higher risk of developing breast cancer. The ideal screening routine for these women is best determined individually with a physician

## Cervical Cancer Screening

- Women age 21 to 29 years with Pap test every 3 years
- Women between 30-65 years, screen with a combination of HPV and Pap test every 5 years
- Women in menopause should report any unexpected bleeding to their doctor

## Prostate Cancer

- Starting at age 45, men should talk to a health care provider about the pros and cons of testing so they can decide if testing is the right choice for them
- If you are African American or have a father or brother who had prostate cancer before age 65, you should have this talk with your health care provider starting at age 45

## Tips for Reducing Your Cancer Risk

What is known about cancer prevention is still evolving. However, it's well-accepted that your chances of developing cancer are affected by the lifestyle choices you make. So if you're concerned about cancer prevention, take comfort in the fact that some simple lifestyle changes can make a big difference.

### Consider these cancer prevention tips:

- Avoid tobacco
- Eat a healthy diet
- Maintain a healthy weight and be physically active
- Protect yourself from the sun
- Get immunized
- Get regular medical care

## CANCER IMMUNOTHERAPY UPDATE



**Ersin Selcuk Unal, MD, PhD**  
Hematologist/Oncologist

Today, we are using immunotherapy agents to treat a vast majority of tumors including, but not limited to, malignant melanoma and cancers of the lung, kidney, bladder, colon, head & neck and breast. In carefully selected patients, intravenous administration of these drugs result in long-term, durable disease remission rates. Unlike conventional chemotherapy regimens, a unique feature of immunotherapy is the continued tumor killing effect even

though the treatment is discontinued.

Immunotherapy uses certain parts of a person's immune system to fight cancer. Some tumor cells resist, or escape, the innate response of the immune system and continue growing, which may result in metastasis. This occurs through a process called immune evasion. Hence, multiple treatment methods were developed to increase the power of the immune system to fight against and eliminate cancer in the field of cancer immunotherapy. Continued scientific and technological innovations have resulted in major breakthroughs in recent years. This is mainly due to the demonstration of the interacting molecules on immune cells and cancer cells resulting in inhibition of T-cell function. The most studied molecules involved in the evasion process are either expressed by the T-cells, such

as CTLA-4 (cytotoxic T-lymphocyte-associated protein 4) and PD-1 (Programmed Death 1) or the tumor cells, such as PD-L1 (Programmed Death Ligand 1). The inhibition of the immune system by the tumor cells are blocked by currently used immunotherapy drugs, which are antibody molecules against CTLA-4, PD1 or PD-L1. In this treatment method, a person's own immune system cells are stimulated to attack the cancer cells by removing the brakes placed on them by the tumor cells.

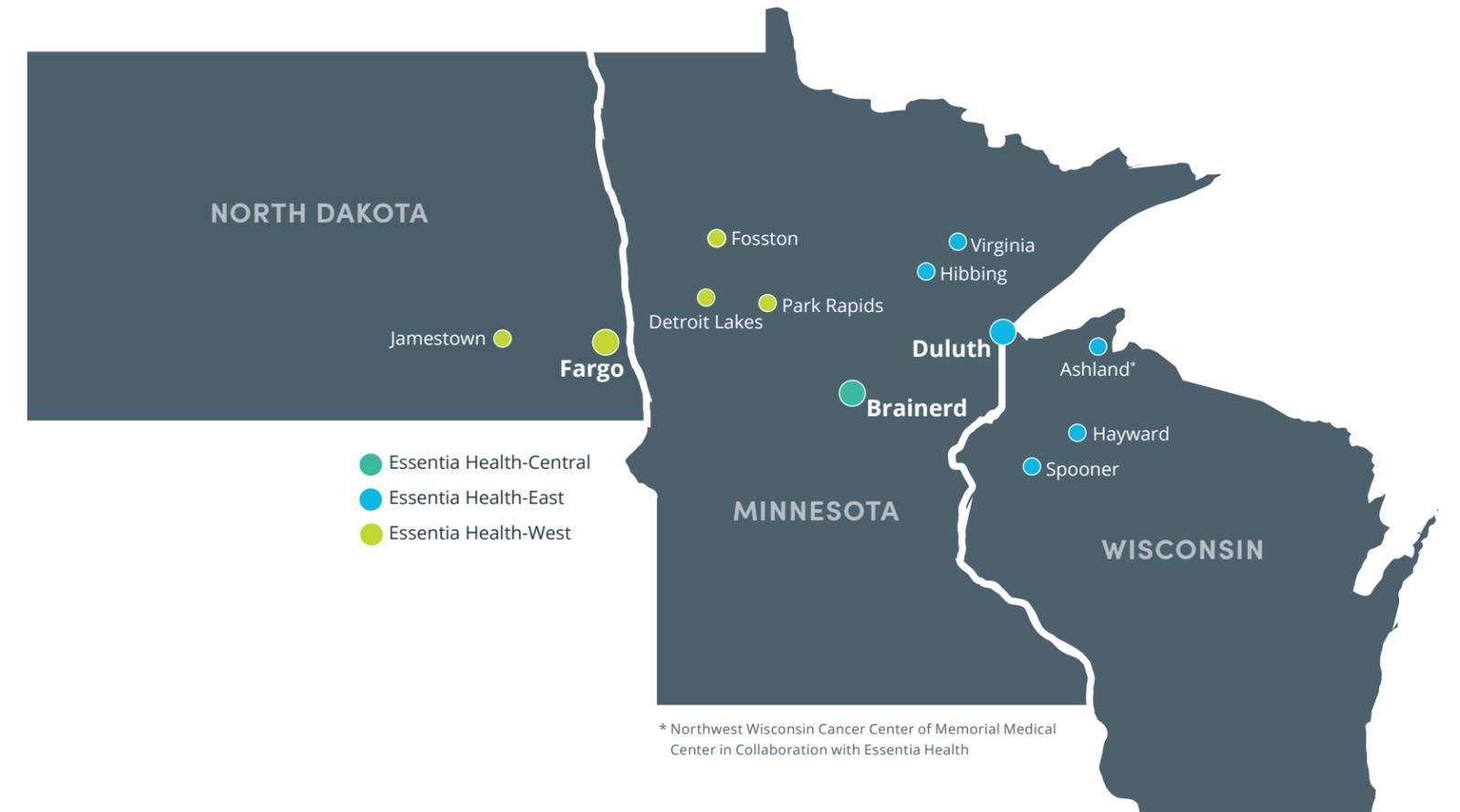
Although immunotherapy agents are generally better tolerated than cytotoxic chemotherapy, they do have specific side effect profiles. As expected, the side effect profile of immunotherapy agents occurs mainly due to the increased activity of T-cells. Patients require close clinical and laboratory follow-up during the treatment course since the off-target accelerated inflammatory reaction(s) triggered by immunotherapy may affect normal human tissues such as the lungs, gastrointestinal tract, endocrine organs and skin.

An extensive amount of research is ongoing in the field of immunotherapy and hundreds of clinical trials are in progress. There is a significant need for the development of more accurate biomarkers/predictive factors and the establishment of the optimal use of immunotherapy/chemotherapy combinations. Hopefully, these studies will improve current treatment protocols and further increase high quality, cancer-free lives with loved ones.

## CANCER CARE AT ESSENTIA HEALTH

The Essentia Health Cancer Center offers a comprehensive cancer care program throughout Northwestern Wisconsin, Northern Minnesota and Eastern North Dakota. From diagnosis to treatment and after-care, our teams listen to you and offer you personalized, state-of-the art care.

Our cancer care teams work together across all of Essentia Health on ways to offer additional treatments, services and resources to our patients and their caregivers, such as Psychosocial Distress Screening, Nurse Navigators and the expansion of our clinical trials.





**Essentia Health**

**Essentia Health Cancer Center at St. Joseph's Medical Center**

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