

# Operation Cancer Warrior Surveillance Project

The diagnosis of cancer can be a life altering moment for many patients. Beating cancer involves not only surviving the initial treatments but remaining vigilant for recurrence for at least five years. Depending on the type of cancer and the frequency of doctor visits, labs and scans vary, not only by the cancer subtype, but also by year.

Cancers can affect the entire spectrum of Defense Health Agency beneficiaries including, young, “healthy,” active duty service members. In this patient population specifically, and relating to some of the more common cancers, such as breast cancer or melanoma, it can be challenging to recognize that cancer survivorship is dependent on a longitudinal surveillance plan.

Instead, the more common perception is that their cancer care is an isolated episode and they can be cured after initial treatment. In addition, these active duty patients are often moving to various installations with different military treatment facilities (with different cancer capabilities and treatment teams) and are solely responsible for establishing their own surveillance. Adhering to the National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN) guidelines is a daunting task for a service member who is constantly dealing with the challenges of career progression, deployments, field exercises, and lack of continuity of care.

Recognizing the critical importance of follow-up planning on improving survival for cancer patients, the Commission on Cancer, the accreditation body of the American College of Surgeons, began requiring institutions to provide a survivorship plan to patients starting in January 2015. However, at present, the Military Healthcare System is struggling to provide adequate and uniform follow-up for cancer patients at the enterprise level.

To address this issue, LTC Vance Sohn, at Madigan Army Medical Center (MAMC) wanted to create a means to reach these patients and keep them on track with the appropriate follow up over time, regardless of their current duty station. Using funding provided by TATRC’s AMEDD Advanced Medical Technology Initiative (AAMTI) program, he partnered with TATRC’s Mobile Health Innovation Center (mHIC) to design and implement a pilot project focused on providing alerts to patients on the steps they need to take to follow their cancer survivorship plans, as defined by their oncology team for the long term. This pilot study is called the Operation Cancer Warrior Surveillance Project.

LTC Sohn stated, “Cancer surveillance is challenging in any health care system, but definitely for our military population. With the generous support of AAMTI, my goal is to enable our cancer survivors to not only adhere to cancer surveillance, but also, give them the freedom to continue to contribute to the military in meaningful ways. Since everyone has a smart phone, I wanted to use this technology to help Soldiers excel in their jobs while they battle cancer!”

The Operation Cancer Warrior Surveillance Project allows the oncology team to develop a customized survivorship plan for each of their patients at MAMC, which will then provide long term (up to 5 years) text message and email alerts to these patients, as required. These alerts will help to remind patients of the need for follow-up exams and testing, even if they are no longer assigned to a duty station serviced by MAMC.

“The mHIC team is honored and privileged to be part of the team that can help patients stay on track of monitoring their health as a part of long term cancer survivorship,” said Jeanette Little, Lab Manager of TATRC’s mHIC.

Each patient profile is based on the national standards determined to best suit the patient’s condition, usually following the NCCN or American Society of Clinical Oncology guidelines.

Presently, the profiles and alerts are being finalized for four clinical conditions (e.g. breast; colon; lung; and prostate cancers). These will be piloted by focus groups of cancer survivors at MAMC prior to being implemented later this calendar year.



**The goal is using email and texts alerts to help the Soldier keep up with follow-up care no matter where they are in their military career.**