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## **Bridgeport Hospital earns first-in-Connecticut certification in rehabilitation care for cancer survivors**

Bridgeport Hospital's Ahlbin Rehabilitation Centers and Norma F. Pfriem Cancer Institute have been certified by the Sandie Taubin STAR® Cancer Survivorship Training and Rehab Program for providing excellent rehabilitation services to cancer survivors who experience side effects from treatments, medications and surgeries. This is the first STAR-certified program in Connecticut.

The STAR Program was made available to staff from Ahlbin Centers and The Norma F. Pfriem Cancer Institute through a generous gift from Howard Taubin, MD, in memory of his wife, Sandie.

"The effects of cancer treatments can affect the bones, joints, muscles, nervous system, lymphatic system, heart or lungs," says Bridgeport Hospital Chief of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Lisa Webb, MD. "This impact on the body may in turn limit mobility and mental ability, making it difficult for patients to care for themselves. Cancer rehabilitation during and after treatment can enhance the body's recovery and contribute to a better quality of life."

To receive certification, Ahlbin Centers and The Norma F. Pfriem Cancer Institute implemented the STAR Program model of cancer rehabilitation care, including evaluation and treatment protocols and rehabilitation training. These services are covered by health insurance and are offered to patients by a healthcare staff that is specially trained to work with cancer survivors.

"Sandie Taubin STAR Program certification has affirmed our ability as caregivers to provide the very best therapy to cancer survivors," says Ahlbin Centers Physical Therapy Supervisor Vikki Winks, one of the 21 Bridgeport Hospital staff members who have completed individual STAR Program training. "We are committed to helping our patients recover as fully as possible to achieve a better quality of life."

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Specialty caregivers from Ahlbin Centers and The Norma F. Pfriem Cancer Institute—including physicians, physical and occupational therapists, speech pathologists, nurses, social workers and dietitians—work with each patient on a personalized rehabilitation plan to increase strength and energy, alleviate pain and improve daily function and quality of life.

Bridgeport Hospital’s cancer rehabilitation therapy includes:

- Exercises to build strength and flexibility
- Scar management to increase range of motion
- Incontinence therapy and treatment of pelvic pain
- Lymphedema (swelling) therapy, prevention and education
- Techniques to relieve painful joints and tissues due to surgery, scars or radiation
- Balance techniques to reduce the risk of falls
- Aquatic therapy
- Speech, cognitive and swallowing therapy

STAR Program Certification was developed by Massachusetts-based Oncology Rehab Partners, founded by Julie Silver, MD, assistant professor at Harvard Medical School and herself a cancer survivor.

“Bridgeport Hospital is the first STAR Program in Connecticut and has embraced cancer rehabilitation as a critical part of cancer care,” Dr. Silver says. “The Sandie Taubin STAR Program will help cancer survivors function at a higher level.”

Ahlbin Centers provides inpatient rehabilitation services at Bridgeport Hospital and outpatient services in Bridgeport, Shelton, Southport, Stratford and Trumbull. Services include physical, occupational and speech therapy as well as early childhood and geriatric programs.

The Norma F. Pfriem Cancer Institute at Bridgeport Hospital provides care to more than 1,000 newly diagnosed cancer patients each year, a greater number than any other hospital in Fairfield County. The hospital is a member of the Yale-New Haven Cancer Network, an alliance of hospitals across Connecticut that provides access to the latest breakthroughs and delivers an unparalleled level of expertise in cancer, prevention, diagnosis and treatment.

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Bridgeport Hospital is a member of Yale New Haven Health System (YNHHS), the largest and most comprehensive integrated health care delivery system in Connecticut. Yale New Haven Health System is recognized for advanced clinical care, quality, service, cost effectiveness and commitment to improving the health status of the populations it serves. Yale New Haven Health System’s service area covers portions of eastern New York, the state of Connecticut and southwestern Rhode Island. Yale New Haven Health System is committed to making the best health care easier to use.