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Saint Mary's Breast Surgeon Helping Cancer Patients in Paradise
Caribbean Among the Highest in the World for Breast Cancer

WATERBURY, Conn. (November 8, 2018) Saint Mary's Hospital breast surgeon, Dr. Nicole Sookhan, played an integral role in developing cancer guidelines for treatment of cancer patients in the Caribbean.

When treating cancer patients, physicians around the world turn to the National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN) guidelines as a standard for clinical decision-making. The NCCN Harmonized Guidelines were created as part of a collaborative effort to combat increasing cancer rates and unique care circumstances.

According to the NCCN, the Caribbean ranks among the highest in the world for cancer prevalence. It is the second leading cause of death after trauma, with breast cancer currently twice that of the United States. The Caribbean's limited health care resources also challenge cancer care providers.

Dr. Nicole Sookhan, a native of Trinidad and Tobago, is a breast surgeon with Trinity Health Of New England Medical Group at Saint Mary's Hospital. The Caribbean Association of Oncology and Hematology (CAOH) approached her for help in their battle with this disease by aiding in the creation of NCCN Harmonized Cancer guidelines for the region.

Over the course of three years, Dr. Sookhan has been helping the Caribbean develop their breast care program. In the last 6 months, she worked with NCCN Guidelines panel members and local oncologists to adapt existing NCCN guidelines and framework to better reflect the diverse needs and resources in the Caribbean.

"We look at everything from when a patient gets diagnosed, how they are worked up, what types of biopsies are performed and what chemotherapy medications were available for

treatment,” says Dr. Sookhan. The Harmonized Guidelines evaluate breast cancer management and adapt it to the region’s limited resources.

Dr. Sookhan recently received an email from a physician in Guyana who thanked her for helping create these guidelines saying that it would be incredibly helpful to him in improving patient care. “Why should someone in the Caribbean not have optimal cancer care with limited resources,” says Dr. Sookhan.

About Saint Mary’s Hospital

Saint Mary’s Hospital is a Catholic, not-for-profit, acute care, community teaching hospital that has served Greater Waterbury since 1909. In 2016, Saint Mary’s Hospital became part of Trinity Health Of New England, an integrated health care delivery system that is a member of Trinity Health, Livonia, Michigan, one of the largest multi-institutional Catholic health care delivery systems in the nation serving communities in 22 states. Licensed for 347 beds, Saint Mary’s is designated as a Level II Trauma Center, offers award-winning cardiac and stroke care and houses the region’s only pediatric emergency care unit. As the leading provider of surgical services in Greater Waterbury, Saint Mary’s was the first to introduce the daVinci® Robotic Surgery System. The hospital’s satellites and affiliates extend from Waterbury to Wolcott, Cheshire, Naugatuck, Southbury, Prospect and Watertown. Visit stmh.org for more information and follow us on Facebook at SaintMarysHospitalCT, Instagram and Twitter at @SaintMarysCT.