

Improving Access to Specialized Care through VA National TeleOncology

National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine
Advancing Diagnostic Excellence in Rural Areas:
Transforming Diagnosis through Innovative Rural Health Care Models

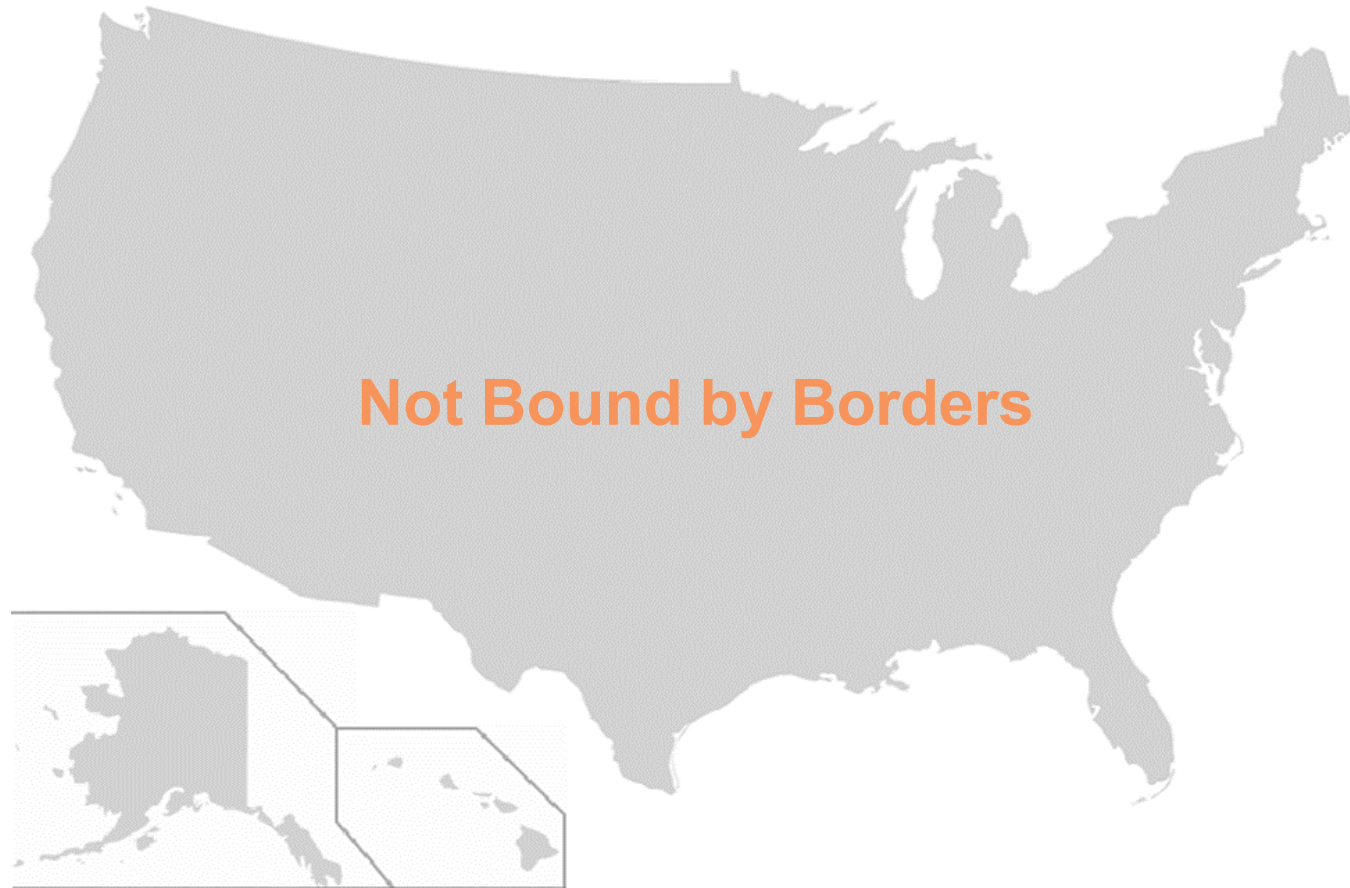
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VA National TeleOncology

Enable every Veteran with cancer to have access to world-class hematology and oncology care, regardless of their geographic location.



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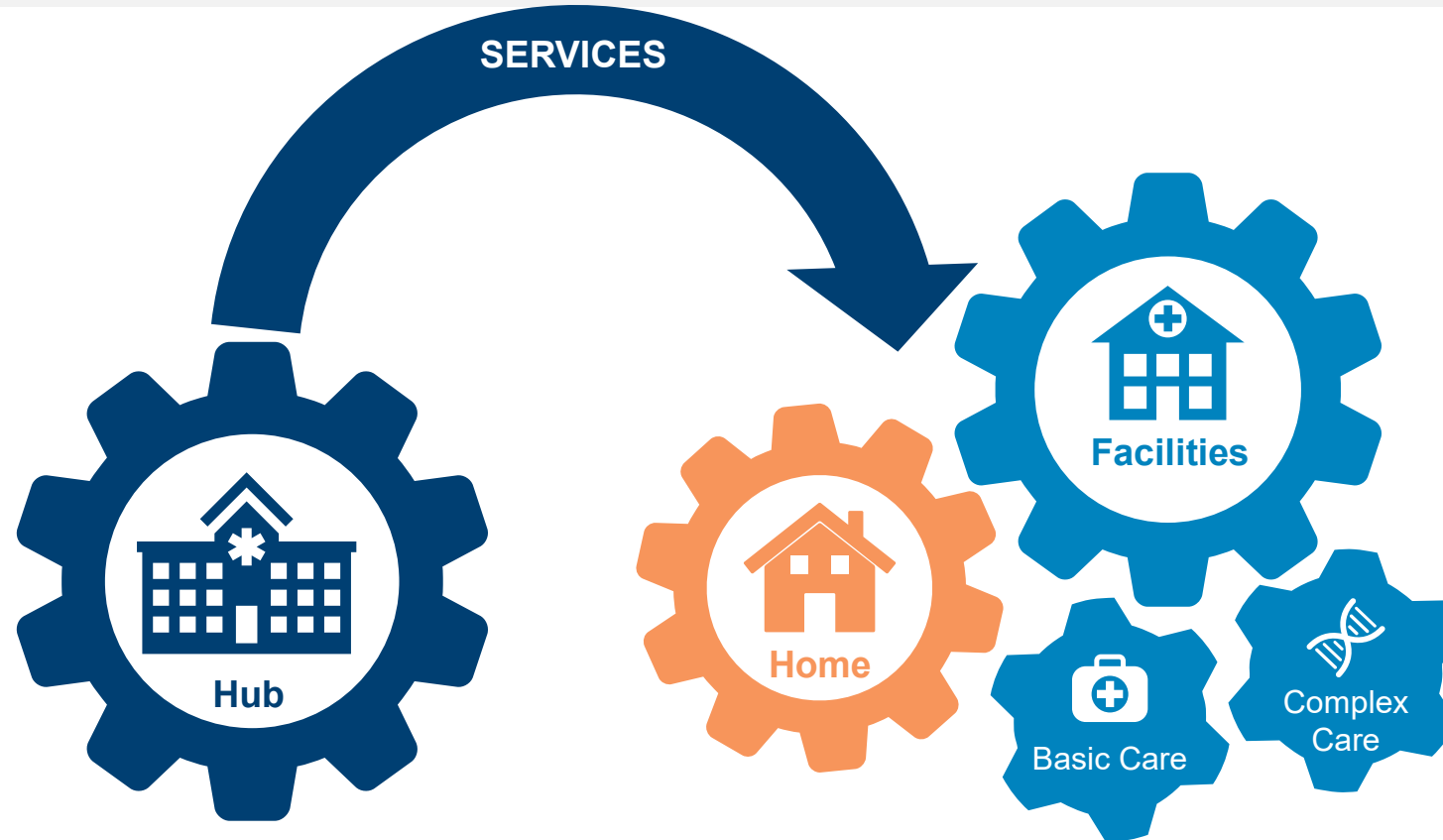
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Hub and Spoke TeleOncology Model

TeleOncology provides Veterans and their local VA facilities with access to the highest quality cancer care, no matter where they are.

Hub Site

- Physician Oncologists (Disease specific, from multiple NCI-affiliated VAMCs)
- Registered Nurse Care Coordinators
- APPs
- Oncology Clinical Pharmacy Practitioners
- Genetic Counselors
- Clinical Trial Navigators



Local Clinic/ Infusion Site: (may or may not have)

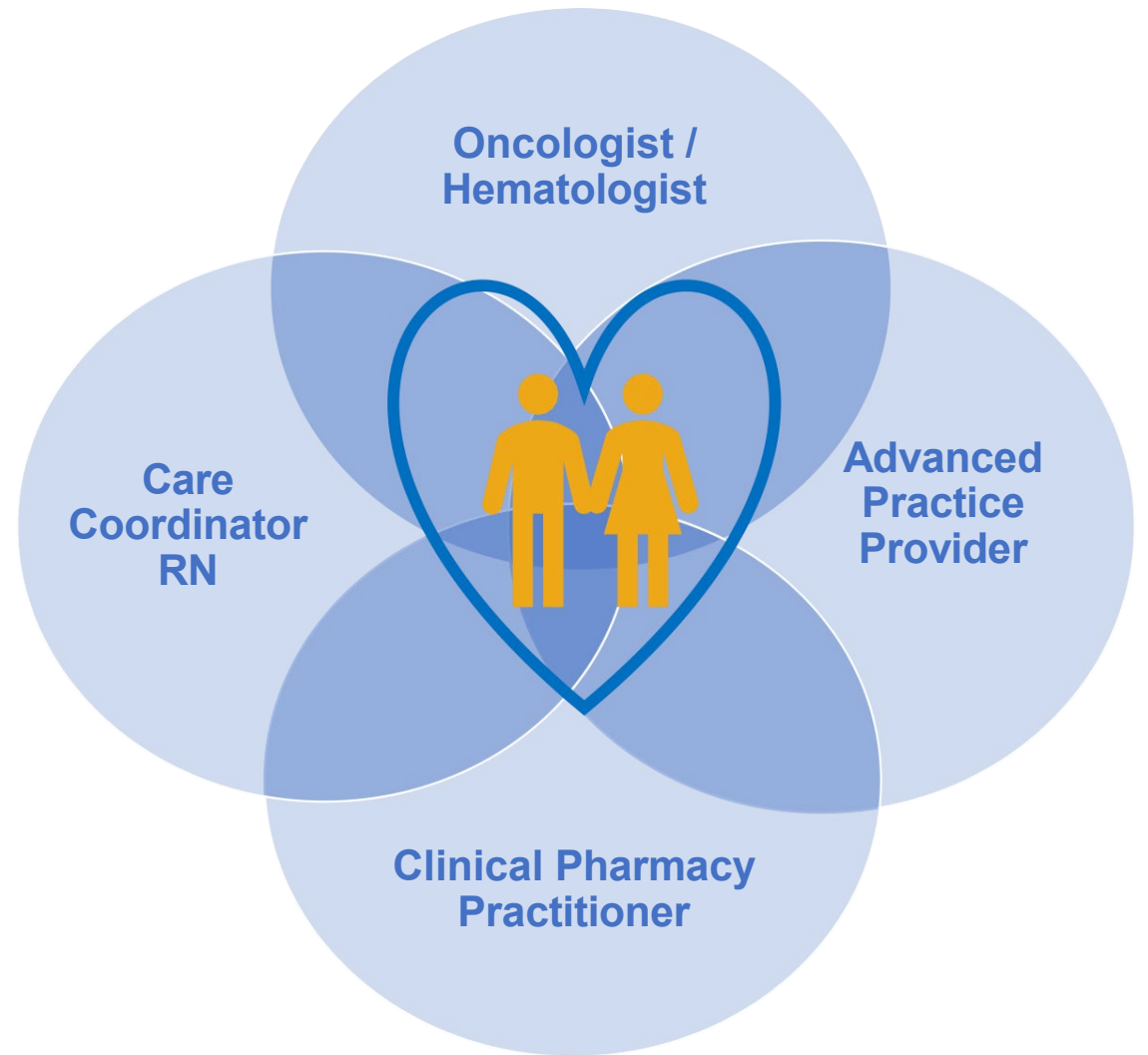
- Providers
- Registered Nurses
- APPs
- On-Site Pharmacy

Individualized Services

	Full-Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Supports programs without hematology/oncology service• May provide supervision of facility Advanced Practice Practitioners
	Sub-Specialty Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Supports programs with general hematology/oncology service by providing specialized care
	Gap Coverage	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Coverage for planned leave of facility providers, advanced practice practitioners, or clinical pharmacists

Full-Service Disease Specific Teams

- Hematology: Classical “Benign” and Malignant
- Thoracic/Head & Neck
- Genitourinary
- Gastrointestinal
- Breast
- Rare Cancers
 - Melanoma
 - Neurological
 - Gynecologic
 - Sarcoma



Clinical Services: Oncology and Hematology

ASYNCHRONOUS (E-CONSULT)

- Second opinion (disease-specific)
- Classical “Benign” hematology
- Clinical pharmacy practitioner services
 - Treatment plan review
 - Drug information consults
- Breast and Gynecologic Oncology System of Excellence (BGSOE) Care Coordination services

SYNCHRONOUS

- Continuity of care
 - With/without antineoplastic therapy ordering for telechemotherapy
 - Care coordination (“gap coverage”)
- Clinical pharmacy services
- Second opinion (disease-specific)
- Comprehensive Genetics Services (CGS)
- Breast and Gynecologic Oncology System of Excellence (BGSOE)



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Patient Care & Access

VA NTO Impact

115,268+ encounters completed through NTO

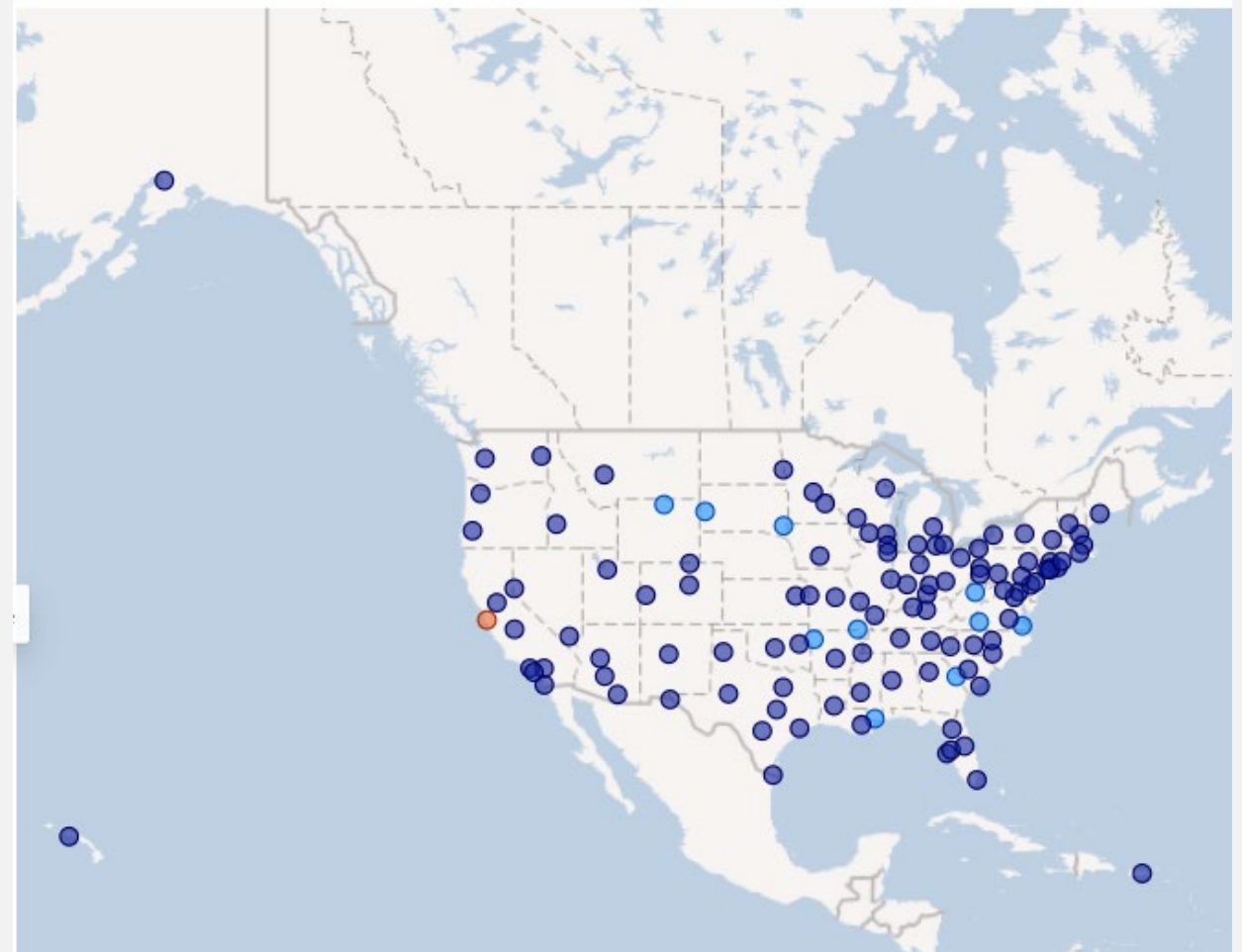
27,998+ Veterans have received care through NTO

9,011+ Provider-to-provider e-consults completed through NTO

41.6% Rural Veterans

87.7% VA health care systems actively partnering with NTO

Locations



Partnering with 122/139 (87.7%) VA sites

Aggregate FY20-9/29/2025.



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Comprehensive Services: Virtual



Specialized management and treatment at rural and non-rural areas

Clinical Hematology/ Oncology Services including TeleChemotherapy



Infusional treatment beyond the hospital and beyond the oncology clinic

Close to Me Cancer Care



Coordinated care for breast cancer and gynecologic malignancies

Breast and Gynecologic Oncology System of Excellence



Standard of care *and* Streamlined Genetic Testing and Counseling

Comprehensive Genetics Service – Cancer Genetics, Medical Genetics



Navigated access to clinical trials

Cancer Clinical Research Services including Decentralized Clinical Trials



Multidisciplinary consensus

National Virtual Tumor Board



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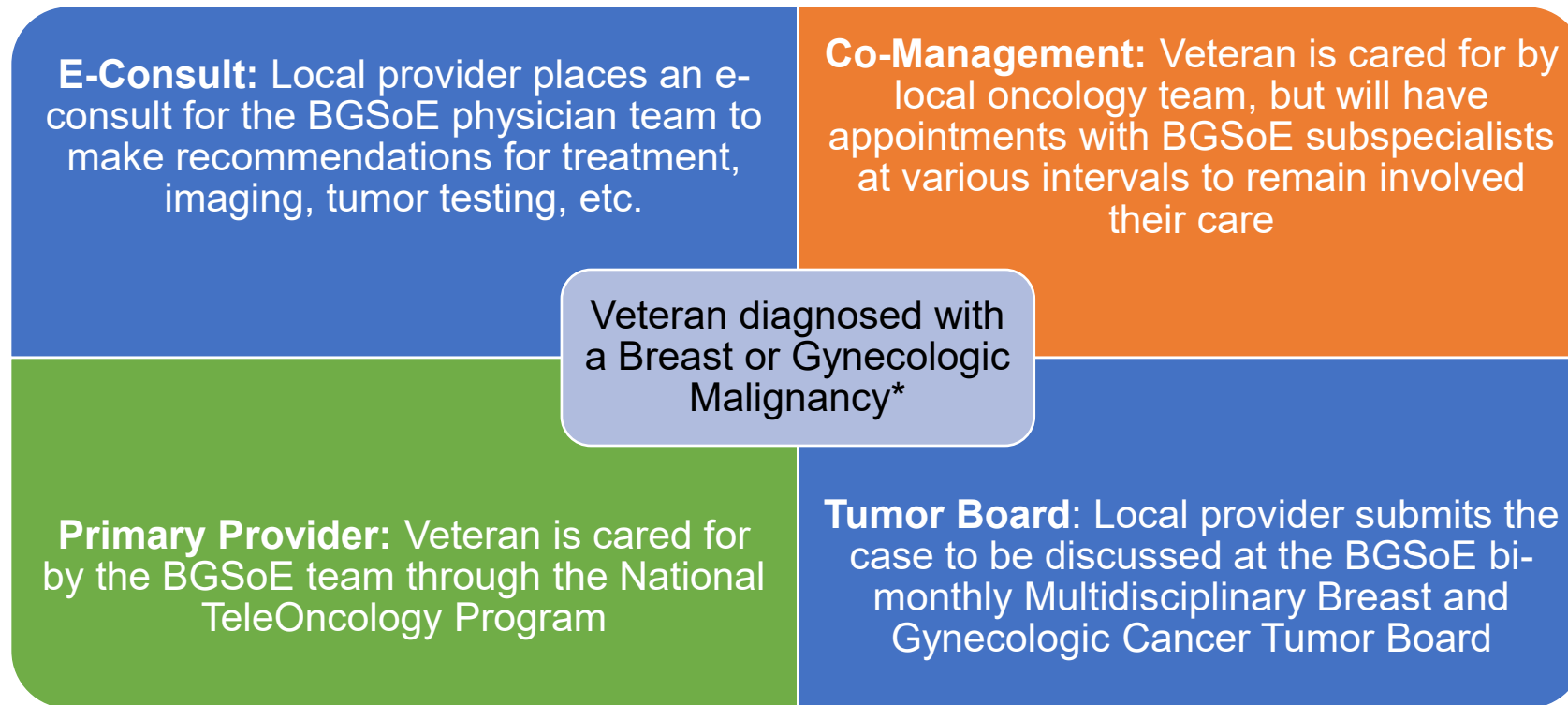


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Breast and Gynecologic Oncology System of Excellence

Breast and Gynecologic Oncology System of Excellence (BGSoE) recognizes that each patient, provider, and VA healthcare system is unique and has distinct needs.

BGSoE works with the Veteran to navigate services and personalize management:



*Pre-malignant and high-risk patients included

Comprehensive Genetics Service (CGS)

Mission: Provide world-class cancer genetic counseling that is accessible to all Veterans.



- Assess for hereditary cancer conditions and personalized cancer risks
- Facilitate germline genetic testing when appropriate and aid in result interpretation
- Inform personalized cancer treatment decisions and surveillance options
- Assist patients in navigating emotional and logistical implications of genetic information
- Provide resources and collaboration with varied providers, including educational opportunities



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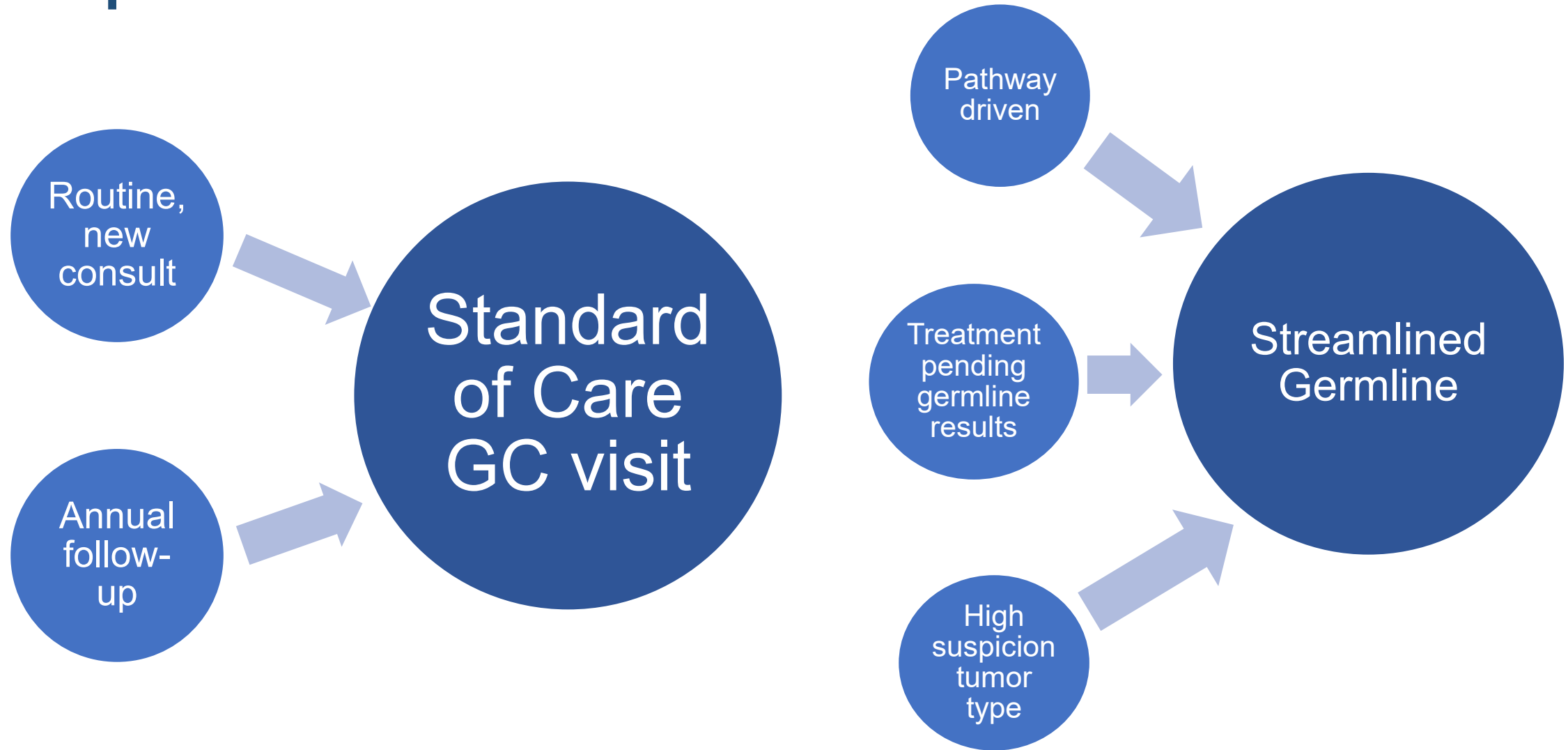
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Comprehensive Genetics Services



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Cancer Clinical Research Services Overview



- Uses telemedicine and remote research activities
- Supports enrollment of Veterans in clinical trials that may not be open at their VA health care systems.
- May have **all** research components completed remotely or may be a **partnership** between remote and on-site staff for components that require in-person intervention.
- Allows for a **single IRB** to approve research occurring with Veterans served at another VA health care system.
- Increases access to clinical trials for Veterans.



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Clinical Cancer Research Services Model



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Clinical Cancer Research Services: Implementation



- CCRS is a **centralized research team** supporting the activation and execution of clinical research trials.
- Ability to enroll Veterans to clinical trials remotely and perform research activities remotely.
- Studies may be observational only or require interventions, requiring collaboration between CCRS and on-site staff.



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National Virtual Tumor Board



- NTO's Virtual Tumor Board (VTB) demonstrates a national approach to leveraging nationwide hematologic and oncologic multidisciplinary expertise to support patients receiving cancer care at VA health care systems across the US.
- VTB can also be used at sites that don't have their own.
- Current VTBs
 - Hematologic Malignancies
 - Breast/Gynecologic Cancer
 - Thoracic Tumors
 - Central Nervous System (CNS) Tumors
 - Cutaneous Malignancies
 - Soon: Genitourinary, Gastrointestinal



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Close to Me Cancer Care

Bringing Anti-Cancer Therapy Services Closer to Veterans

The Challenge

Infusion and injection treatments are typically offered solely at VA health care systems*, which leads Veterans to...



Travel long distances



Experience long wait times on day of treatment



Assume cost of gas, tolls, lost wages

*VA Medical Centers

The Solution

Providing anti-cancer therapy services at CBOCs** to increase access to care, and...



Reduce travel times



Improve VA care continuity



Provide Veteran-centric care



Encourage high-level treatment adherence

**Community-Based Outpatient Clinics

Close to Me allows VA clinicians to travel and provide Veterans with the full continuum of cancer care at nearby community-based outpatient clinics and at home.



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Value of *Close to Me*

Provide Veteran-Centric Care

Close to Me focuses on providing Veteran-Centric care, by putting the patient at the forefront of innovative solutions. This in turn reduces out of pocket costs and improves quality of life for Veterans.

Advance Infusion Best Practices

Close to Me develops clinical and strategic recommendations for innovative treatment services to ensure quality care is delivered to Veterans in a safe and effective manner.

Encourage Treatment Adherence

Close to Me incorporates a robust policy to prevent appointment no-shows and reduce drug wastage. The service has reported 98.7% treatment adherence.

Reduce Veteran Travel Time

Close to Me helps to reduce Veteran travel time for VA care, with a cap of 60 minutes of travel to reach a CBOC with available oncology infusion services.

Improve VA Care Continuity

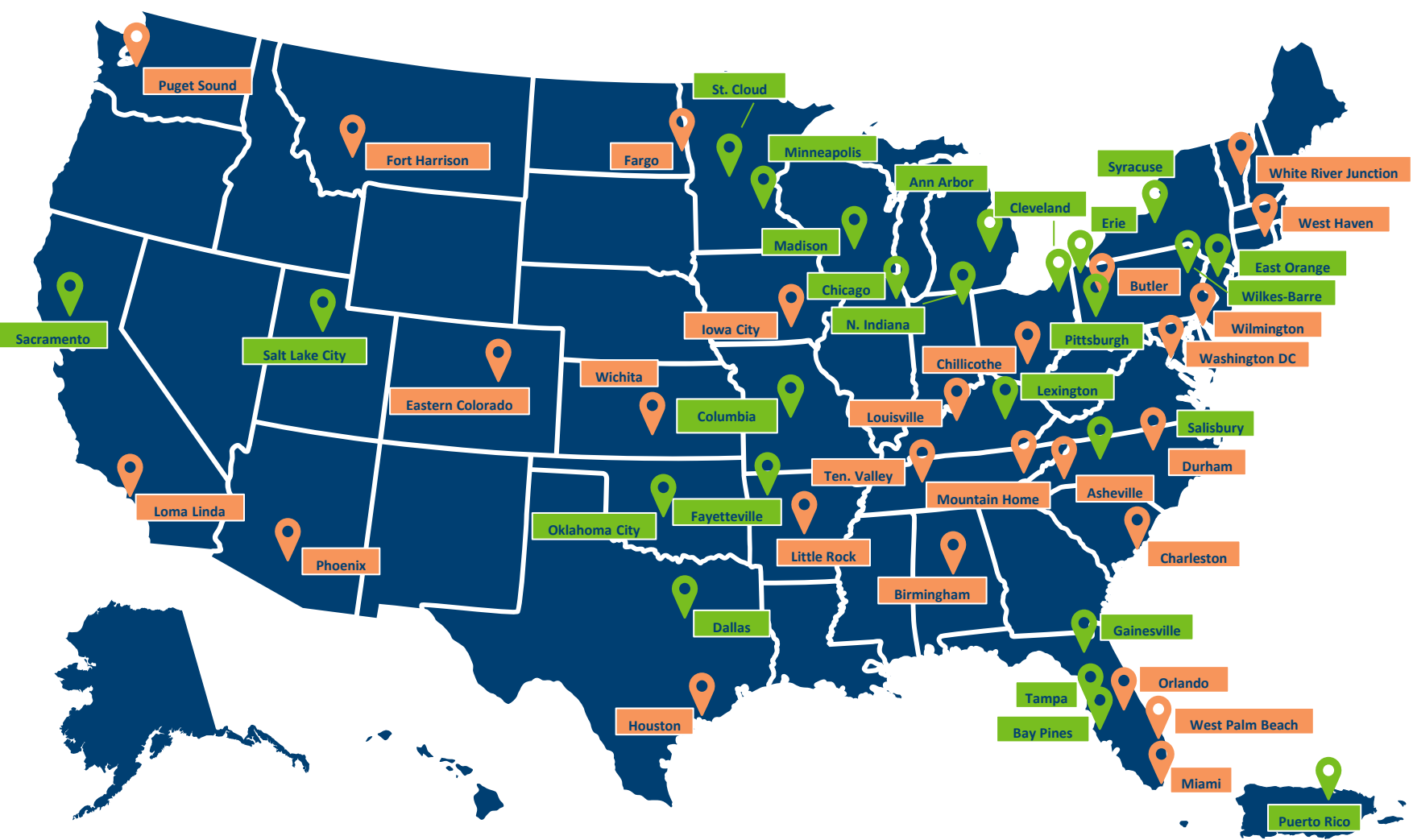
Since 2021, *Close to Me* has enrolled 4,200 patients and completed 17,000 appointments. This service encourages Veterans to repeatedly have a nearby VA treatment access point for care.

Ensure a nearby VA option for care

Close to Me encourages Veterans to repeatedly have a nearby VA treatment access point for care.



Close to Me Overview



KEY

 LIVE Facility

 In-Progress Facility

4,201 Veterans Enrolled

17,630 Treatment Encounters

1,378,936 Veteran Drive Miles Saved

1 Medical Emergency

98.7% Treatment Adherence

*FY22 – FY25Q3

Close To Me Insights

'The difference in travel for me going to the CBOC and going to the medical center is 3 hours. it is a savings of a huge amount of time for me.'



"It's so good to be able to come here to take off my pump, it saves me so much time! It's so close for me"



'The whole concept of 'close to me' is fantastic. The convenience is great and to have my same care team is amazing. I've been with my oncology nurse for many, many years and I love her.'



How We Operate

Through implementation and consultative partnerships, NTO promotes advocacy and establishes trust to raise the level of Veteran care everywhere.

Veteran Experience	Development and utilization of resources to create an experience consistent with being in-person.
Compliance and Engagement	Facilitation of procedure knowledge to bolster providers' clinical knowledge.
Risk Management	Upfront assessments and evidence-based quality assurance in advance.
Emergency Preparedness	Implementation of Office of Connected Care-required drills, trainings, and procedures.
High Reliability Organization Processes	Increase of safety through leadership engagement, peer review, enterprise risk management, standardization, and more.



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How We Improve Access



In applying a national operational clinical infrastructure, we focus on:

- **Building and sustaining a responsive, adaptable team**
 - Recruitment of physicians: working with academic affiliates
 - Across-the-nation clinical and administrative staff
- **Understanding the needs of the field**
 - Collaboration with the Veterans Experience Office
- **Learning about telehealth and clinical care**
 - THRIVE: Telehealth Research and Innovation for Veterans with Cancer (THRIVE) Research through NCI Telehealth Research Centers of Excellence (TRACE)
 - Value-based analyses



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Thank you!

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