

## Cancer Care: Body, Mind, and Spirit

**Ironwood Cancer & Research Centers deliver supportive, integrative care you can trust.**

A cancer diagnosis is hard enough without the difficulties and side effects that may come with treatment. But add extreme fatigue, nausea, brain fog, and neuropathy to the equation, and the toll on the mind and spirit, as well as the body, can seem insurmountable.

Integrative oncology, however, is an evolving area of cancer care that has for many years now demonstrated its worth and value in providing cancer patients with holistic support and complementary treatments proven to diminish side effects and improve mental well-being when layered into conventional treatments such as chemotherapy, radiation, and surgery.

Dr. Heidi Rula, a board-certified and fellowship-trained physician in integrative medicine, is a leader in the field with more than 20 years of experience working with patients in the Phoenix area. She joined Ironwood Cancer & Research Centers in 2018, tasked with expanding the centers' integrative oncology offerings into a full spectrum program assisting patients from diagnosis, through treatment and recovery, and into survivorship.

### Benefits of Integrative Oncology

"An integrative approach to cancer treatment can decrease symptoms of the disease as well as the side effects that may come with treatment," Dr. Rula says. "In fact, the body of scientific evidence that supports the use of mind-body

therapies such as meditation, yoga, acupuncture, lymphatic massage, and other therapies to improve the overall quality of life of cancer patients continues to grow."

Dr. Rula's role at Ironwood Cancer & Research Centers—a collective of 14 community-based facilities strategically located throughout the Metro Phoenix area—is to see each patient as the individual she is, the person behind the cancer, and to work in partnership with each patient to create a plan and provide tools to deal with the stress, anxiety, pain, and discomfort that frequently accompany cancer and its treatment.

"Integrative oncology is just one piece of the multidisciplinary, person-centered approach to medicine that's making a difference in patients' cancer journeys," explains Dr. Rula. "Options like acupuncture as a means to overcome pain instead of or in concert with pain medications or using yoga to fight off fatigue are both valid and supported by scientific studies."

### Survivorship Programs

Integrative care extends beyond treatment and into survivorship as well. According to Dr. Rula, that period can be as fraught with stress and anxiety as any other during the cancer journey.

"It's a critical phase in the healing process during which there's an expectation that patients will simply exist with no plan

and no treatment, waiting for the results of their next scans," she notes.

They may also be dealing with very real residual side effects such as fatigue and neuropathy as well as new stressors pertaining to issues of spirituality or sexuality, for example.

"But survivorship is an area in which integrative oncology really shines," Dr. Rula says. "Through complementary therapies such as nutritional guidance, guided imagery, physical therapy, and more, we can help cancer patients live mindfully and find joy in every day."

**Ironwood Cancer & Research Centers offer individual counseling, support groups, educational classes, and other integrative services. Support groups and classes are open to all individuals in the community affected by cancer and are not limited to Ironwood Cancer & Research Center patients.**



HEIDI RULA, MD



**Ironwood Cancer  
& Research Centers**

*Outsmarting Cancer One Patient at a Time™*

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## Academic Cancer Care in a Community Setting

**Ironwood Women's Centers deliver patient-focused, multidisciplinary care in an innovative community setting.**

No one should ever get breast cancer. The fact of the matter, however, is that 1 in 8 American women will at some point receive such a diagnosis. Studies, meanwhile, repeatedly demonstrate the importance of a patient-centered, multidisciplinary approach in treating cancer. Ironwood Women's Centers are committed to delivering such an approach, saving patient's time and worry by having the doctors, therapists, and other resources needed in one convenient location, eliminating delays, miscommunication, and confusion.

"The collaborative efforts that result when breast surgeons, medical oncologists, radiation oncologists, and others work together from a single location ensure the highest standards of care and the best possible outcomes," says Dr. Emily Ho, a board-certified and fellowship-trained breast surgical oncologist.

Furthermore, stresses Dr. Zeynep Bostanci, who is also a board-certified and fellowship-trained breast surgical oncologist, Ironwood Women's Centers also deliver an academic level of care that is unique in the community health arena.

"Patients benefit from the fact that Ironwood Women's Centers and Cancer & Research Centers are committed to the advancement of medical knowledge and medical research," Dr. Bostanci explains. "Our active and expanding clinical research programs enable us to provide

eligible patients with the latest therapies and cutting-edge treatments."

### High-Risk Patients

Patients at a high risk for breast cancer—those with a family history or genetic mutations such as BRCA1 or BRCA2—will find experienced, compassionate care at Ironwood.

Dr. Bostanci explains that at Ironwood all genetic counseling and testing is done on-site.

"If a mutation is found, we counsel accordingly, and that applies to breast as well as other cancers," she says. "If no mutations are found, we will move cautiously forward alongside our patients."

Ironwood's recommendation for high-risk patients is regular and thorough monitoring, which includes annual exams plus both mammograms and MRIs alternating every six months. Dr. Bostanci suggests that for patients with a family history of breast cancer, monitoring should begin 10 years before the age of the youngest family member who was affected by the disease. Self-exams, she notes, should become a part of every woman's routine beginning in their early 30s.

### Innovations in Breast Surgery

Breast surgery has come a long way, and today the physicians at Ironwood Women's Centers are focusing their efforts on innovative procedures

including oncoplastic breast surgery, skin-sparing and nipple-sparing mastectomies, arm port placements for chemotherapy, cryoablation, and intraoperative radiation therapy.

"Oncoplastic surgery, in particular, is a highly innovative and cutting-edge specialty gaining more and more attention," Dr. Ho points out. "From a surgical standpoint, why leave visible scars if doing so can be avoided? Our goal first and foremost is, of course, treating and removing the cancer, but if we can do so and also deliver a better aesthetic outcome for our patients, well, that's the best possible outcome."

**With community-based centers strategically located throughout the Metro Phoenix area, Ironwood Women's Centers offer advanced therapies and a multidisciplinary approach usually associated with large academic centers—but with a personalized touch that recognizes the individual needs of each patient.**



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