

## Clinical Trials Provide Hope and Progress

*Ironwood Cancer & Research Centers is proud to offer the Phoenix metropolitan area access to clinical trials closer to home.*

Clinical trials are one of the most exciting aspects of cancer treatment today. While new standard treatments can take years to pass through FDA approval and become readily available to the public, clinical trials provide patients with access to the most up-and-coming treatments that they wouldn't otherwise have access to. It's particularly attractive for patients who have exhausted other treatment options.

"There are always pros and cons to participating in a clinical trial; certainly the new treatment may not work, but generally the outcomes are the same, or in some cases better, than standard treatments of care," says Ramesh Ramanathan, M.D., medical director of clinical research, who joined Ironwood Cancer & Research Centers in 2023 after an illustrious two-decade career in academic research.

Ironwood is proud to offer a robust line of clinical trials in its community-based network of 15 locations. Rather than traveling long distances for trials at academic facilities, Ironwood offers access to these cutting-edge treatments within a convenient radius. "This is a big advantage for patients," says Dr. Ramanathan. "I came to Ironwood because I was interested in expanding patient access to clinical trials in community-based settings. Ironwood has great leadership that has enabled us to expand our clinical trial program and find new treatments for cancer."

### Exciting Advancements

Among the decade's biggest advancements in cancer treatment has been in the area of immunotherapy, which leverages the body's own immune system to recognize and fight cancer cells. As clinical trials move into "second generation" drugs, the hope is that cancers will continue to be targeted with more efficacy and fewer side effects.

Even pancreatic cancer, which is historically the deadliest and a notoriously difficult-to-treat cancer, has received promising results in clinical studies for KRAS inhibitors, which keep the cancer-causing gene mutation at bay.

It is for advancements like these that the continuation of clinical trial participation and research is vitally important—not only for today's patients, but for the patients of tomorrow. "Even if the treatment doesn't ultimately help the patient who is participating, most patients appreciate the opportunity to help others in the future," says Dr. Ramanathan.

### Team-Oriented Care

Since 1993, Ironwood has been a regional leader in subspecialty cancer care. With more than 100 multidisciplinary providers, it offers an unparalleled experience in personalized, integrated, and convenient cancer care.

"In cancer treatment, it's very important to have a team approach," says Dr. Ramanathan. "At Ironwood, we're a like-minded network of physicians who work together very closely and very quickly. We never make a decision for a patient's treatment without consulting other specialists."

Though a cancer diagnosis is a speedbump in life that no patient wishes to encounter, Ironwood is dedicated to walking alongside patients through every step of their journey with compassion and excellence.

"No matter what the outcome is, we make sure we're always delivering patients the best quality of care and improving their quality of life as much as possible," concludes Dr. Ramanathan.



**Ramesh Ramanathan, M.D.,**  
Medical Director of  
Clinical Research

## Breakthrough Breast Cancer Treatment in the Community

*Supporting a patient through a breast cancer diagnosis is a team effort, and Ironwood Cancer & Research Centers has one of the best available.*

"The unique part of Ironwood is that we can provide care that was previously limited to academic centers, but we're at the neighborhood level so people don't have to travel long distances," says Anu Batra, M.D., a medical oncologist who specializes in breast cancer and myeloma & lymphoma. "Because of our size, we're able to offer a level of subspecialization that allows us focus on the disease-specific areas."

One such area is breast cancer, which is Dr. Batra's focus along with benign and malignant hematology. A coordinated, multidisciplinary breast specialist team is involved in every patient's plan—from surgeons, medical oncologists, and radiation oncologists to pathologists, nutritionists, and integrative oncologists. Care is not only specialized, but personalized, ensuring each patient's unique medical and lifestyle factors are considered when creating a treatment plan. Best of all, each of Ironwood's 15 convenient, community-based locations is equipped with a full team. "You don't have to go from one physician to another at different sites. We're all available right there on the same day as your initial consult," says Dr. Batra.

Patients undergoing treatment are actively monitored. If complications arise, Ironwood makes it a priority to see them quickly, with the goal of avoiding the hassle and potential harm of an unnecessary ER visit.

### Hope on the Horizon

One of the most fascinating aspects of breast oncology, and one of the reasons Dr. Batra was attracted to the subspecialty, is that its treatment options are rapidly evolving and improving. Treatment options for breast cancer, including immunotherapy, antibody conjugates, and targeted therapy, for example, "have exploded," says Dr. Batra. New treatments in the metastatic breast cancer space have significantly improved patient outcomes.

Soon, Dr. Batra will be serving as the lead investigator in a clinical trial for endocrine receptor-positive breast cancer treatment. "Ironwood is getting more and more recognized as being a desirable practice for hosting clinical trials. We're increasingly approached by organizations who want to offer them through us," says Dr. Batra.

As a physician-owned practice, Ironwood prides itself on flexibility and adaptability, incorporating new treatments quickly to ensure patients always have access to the most up-to-date options. "Patient-centered care is everyone's goal here," Dr. Batra says. "You hear what a patient needs, and it gets done. You don't have to go through a lot of red tape to make it happen."



**Anu Batra, M.D.,**  
Medical Oncologist

### Relationships Matter

For many physicians, oncology feels like a true calling. It's a field that is both challenging and rewarding; forming close and comfortable patient relationships is often crucial in providing the most supportive care.

"It's a life-changing moment when people receive a cancer diagnosis," says Dr. Batra. "We all work together to support patients in every possible way through their cancer journey. It's very rewarding when somebody ends up at the finish line of their treatment and you see them live the way they want to live again."



**Ironwood Cancer  
& Research Centers**

*Outsmarting Cancer One Patient at a Time®*