

PHOENIX  
HEALTHCARE PROFILES

# Supporting Fighters

*At the women's oncology program at Ironwood Cancer & Research Centers, women battling cancer receive comprehensive care from a multidisciplinary team of specialists and support staff.*

**A**s the field of oncology has evolved, so, too, has the medical community's understanding of how cancer affects women. As a result, more effective treatments for breast cancer and gynecological cancers have emerged, leading to better outcomes for female patients.

The women's oncology program at Ironwood Cancer & Research Centers is a thriving example of this synergy between women's health and oncology. With services at a dozen locations in the greater Phoenix area, Ironwood Women's Centers provide comprehensive, multidisciplinary care at the hands of specialists in breast cancer, gynecologic oncology, medical oncology, and integrative oncology. Practitioners here enjoy access to the full spectrum of Ironwood's technology and research muscle as they serve each patient with academic cancer care in a community setting.



Jasleen Khanuja, M.D.

"As physicians, we are dedicated to providing women the kind of comprehensive care they deserve," says Jasleen Khanuja, M.D., a medical oncology and hematology specialist. "Women are strong and resilient, and we are honored to help them in their fight against cancer."

## Under One Roof

There is nothing simple about a cancer diagnosis: It demands immediate buy-in from multiple specialists and an ever-evolving treatment plan. This is especially true for women diagnosed with breast cancer, who will inevitably need surgery and likely chemotherapy and radiation therapies, too. Yet, when the specialists overseeing their care operate in siloed departments or even at separate institutions, the entire process of managing one's care becomes complicated and exhausting.

As a multidisciplinary institution, Ironwood aims to streamline

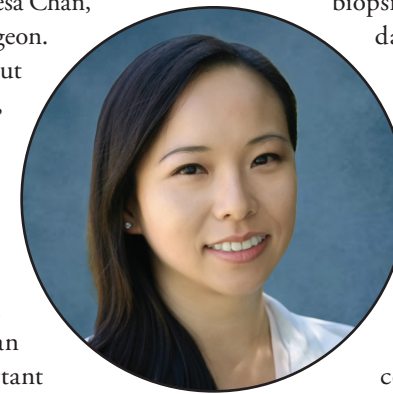
this process. Patients here are seen by medical oncologists within 48 hours of receiving their first diagnosis, and their films and records are transferred within the organization in time for their next appointment. The cancer centers themselves are organized into pods of specialists who are within a quick walk of one another and accustomed to collaborating on each patient's case.

What this means for a patient with breast cancer is that she can see her surgeon, radiation oncologist, and medical oncologist in one visit—and know that they are all in conversation. "There are a lot of pieces in a woman's journey, so it is our goal to keep everything under one roof," says Dr. Khanuja. "Life can be stressful enough, and carrying one's own records and remembering details relayed by this specialist or that one should not be a patient's burden."

In addition to the myriad therapies and side effects thereof, cancer patients must contend with seismic impacts on their lifestyle, finances, and diet. Recognizing these challenges, Ironwood developed an Integrative Oncology program that helps patients achieve the strength and wellness they need to

fight cancer. Service providers in Integrative Oncology advise on diagnostic testing, supplement recommendations, nutritional guidelines, stress reduction techniques, and symptom management, and offer services in acupuncture, massage, yoga, and other wellness modalities. There are even social workers on hand who run support groups for patients and their families, and help survivors find the tools and resources they need to thrive after their experience with cancer.

"We treat the patient as a whole," says Theresa Chan, M.D., breast surgeon. "It's not just about surviving cancer, but the process itself. Being able to offer patients those resources to help them through that journey is an incredibly important aspect of our approach at Ironwood."



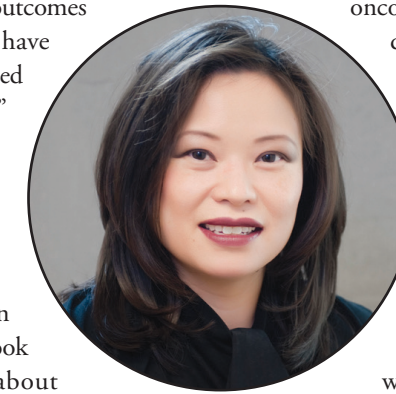
Theresa Chan, M.D.

## High-Tech, Personalized Treatment

As a cancer research center positioned at the forefront of its field, Ironwood is known for embracing new approaches and technologies. Take its philosophy of care. Historically, oncology has followed a "slash-poison-burn" strategy, in which doctors employed aggressive forms of surgery, chemotherapy, and radiation to hinder cancer's spread at any cost. Today, that approach has fallen by the wayside as customized care and harm reduction take precedence at leading institutions such as Ironwood.

"Cancer is essentially a disease in

the DNA, and outcomes and treatments have to be individualized to each person," says Alice Tsai, M.D., radiation oncologist. "At Ironwood, treatments are not based on an algorithm; we look at everything about that patient as we determine their course of care."



Alice Tsai, M.D.

For breast cancer patients, that means molecular profiling of biopsies, which is a standard practice of disease management at Ironwood. For patients with other cancers, it could entail next-generation sequencing—available at any of Ironwood's five comprehensive care centers—which gives oncologists a deeper

look at the cancer they are dealing with. Armed with these technologies and the insights they provide, Ironwood physicians can focus on designing treatment plans that involve less aggressive measures.

"In the past, radiation

oncologists favored high doses of radiation," Dr. Tsai says. "Today, because of our ability to understand and study a patient's tumor genetics, we have a better idea of how that tumor will respond to radiation, which allows us to consider lower doses or fewer treatments."

With access to groundbreaking clinical trials and cutting-edge technologies—such as PET-CT scans, which help find cancer and determine its stage—Ironwood rivals any of the major cancer research centers across the country, attracting top-tier physicians, oncologists, and nurses. At the same time, Ironwood maintains its connection to the community and upholds its commitment to delivering a high standard of personalized care.

"When people have cancer, they might gravitate toward bigger centers," says Dr. Chan. "What sets Ironwood apart is that patients can move through their cancer journey in a more intimate setting, and with physicians who are at the forefront of their specialties."



**Ironwood Cancer  
& Research Centers**

*Outsmarting Cancer One Patient at a Time®*



**Ironwood Women's Centers**

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