

## New Cardio-Oncology Programme Launched



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A new Cardio-Oncology Programme to protect hearts and keep them beating strong during breast cancer treatments has been developed by Orlando Health Heart Institute and UF Health Cancer Center at Orlando Health. The programme comprises a multidisciplinary team including cardiologists, oncologists, nurse practitioners and other clinicians.

When patients undergo treatments for breast cancer, their hearts are put at risk in view of toxic side effects from common procedures such as chemotherapy and radiation therapy. Taking into account age and other factors, evidence shows that about 30 percent of patients receiving radiation therapy or chemotherapy are likely to have heart damage arising from treatment.

Heart problems related to cancer treatments include cardiomyopathy, a disease that weakens and enlarges the heart muscle. If not treated properly, the condition could lead to irregular heartbeats or heart failure. Experts cite these other possible cardiac conditions: heart attack, damage to the heart membrane, and arterial valve problems.

The programme:

- Prior to receiving treatment, patients are examined by clinicians to get a baseline assessment of their hearts; this evaluation helps cardiologists detect changes as they monitor patients during the duration of cancer treatments;
- Testing before, during, and after treatments may include blood tests, echocardiograms, and other diagnostics to show markers and indications that a patient has heart damage, or is at risk of developing heart problems;
- When heart damage is detected, or risk factors are identified, cardiologists and oncologists work together to adjust cancer treatments and/or prescribe heart medications.

Initially, the programme focuses on breast cancer patients receiving radiation therapy or chemotherapy on the left side of their chest. There are plans to expand coverage of the programme to include patients with other types of cancers.

[Source: Orlando Health](#)

Image credit: Wikipedia Commons

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