



## Charles Meltzer, MD

HEAD AND NECK SURGERY, SANTA ROSA

“My father died from cancer when I was 2 years old, and I had my own run in with it. As a survivor, I understand what patients go through, and I want to make sure that we’re doing the best we can for our patients with head and neck cancer.”

## Head and Neck Cancer Care

Dr. Meltzer’s journey to improve care for patients with head and neck cancer began by creating a virtual Head and Neck Multidisciplinary Tumor Board. Unlike a traditional tumor board where specialists convene around a conference table, Dr. Meltzer’s vision was to create a virtual tumor board with a community of specialists from around the region. In 2014, the group made recommendations for 1,100 patients with head and neck cancers.

“Our Head and Neck Cancer Care Program is more than just a tumor board because we’re addressing the entire continuum of care,” notes Dr. Meltzer.

This continuum begins at the patient’s facility, where the referring physician does the initial workup of the patient’s cancer. The patient is then referred to one of three hubs for evaluation by a multidisciplinary team.

The team includes head and neck surgeons, medical oncologists, radiation oncologists, pathologists, neuro-radiologists and nuclear medicine specialists. With the virtual tumor board format, participants can hear the case presentations and view the CT, MRI and PET scans, plus clinical images and pathology slides.

Based on the treatment plan, patients with simple and moderately complex cancers are cared for at their home facility, while those with highly complex cases are treated by an oncologic surgeon at one of the hubs.

Dr. Meltzer is keen to address both the clinical and psycho-social aspects of a patient’s care. Educational packets are in production for different types of cancer, and a Quality of Life questionnaire is being finalized to gather baseline data and patient-reported outcomes in the months and years following treatment.