

[Home](#) > [Navigating Cancer Care](#) > [Cancer Basics](#) > [The Cancer Care Team](#) > [Doctor Stories](#) > Massimo Cristofanilli, MD, FACP

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Massimo Cristofanilli, MD, FACP [1]



Colleagues and patients alike note the extraordinary dedication that Massimo

Cristofanilli, MD, demonstrates in the care of people with breast cancer, from large-scale efforts to highly personalized patient interactions. He specializes in inflammatory breast cancer (IBC), a rare and aggressive form of the disease. Because IBC can grow and spread quickly, it is often advanced at the time of diagnosis. As a result, patients have historically had few treatment options.

Recognizing the need to improve care for this largely underserved population, Dr. Cristofanilli founded the Morgan Welch Inflammatory Breast Cancer Program and Clinic at The University of Texas M. D. Anderson Cancer Center and, later, the Inflammatory Breast Cancer Clinic at Fox Chase Cancer Center in Philadelphia—the first of their kind. Through his leadership, the clinics launched the first clinical trials specifically designed for patients with IBC that did not respond to treatment or was inoperable. Dr. Cristofanilli ensured that these clinical trials involved coordinated care delivered by a multidisciplinary team of health care professionals. He is also responsible for the development of an IBC tissue registry, which facilitates such research.



Dr. Cristofanilli has supported grassroots movements among breast cancer

patient advocates that led the New Mexico and Texas state legislatures to allocate \$3.2 million and \$4 million, respectively, for IBC research and clinical infrastructure development. That funding was later matched by a grant of more than \$7 million from American Airlines.

He also cofounded and serves as a medical advisor for the Inflammatory Breast Cancer

Foundation, a non-profit organization dedicated to educating the general public and the medical community to ensure that IBC is recognized, accurately diagnosed, and appropriately treated.

Meanwhile, Dr. Cristofanilli goes above and beyond the call of duty in caring for his patients, who commend him for his accessibility and compassion. They note that he often takes patient phone calls at untimely hours and quickly responds to patient inquiries to ensure that IBC patients with late-stage disease are seen as soon as possible. The husband of one of Dr. Cristofanilli's patients described his approach to patient care, saying that he was the only doctor who could look his wife in the eyes and help her find courage and strength while being completely honest in describing the circumstances and options.



A time-worn picture of one of his patients rests in Dr. Cristofanilli's pocket as a constant reminder of the reason for his efforts. The picture was taken shortly after the woman's honeymoon, and she later passed away from breast cancer. In his unflagging work, Dr. Cristofanilli aims to advance breast cancer care to prevent the loss of other people to the disease.

Massimo Cristofanilli, MD, FACP, currently serves as Director of Translational Medicine at Fox Chase Cancer Center and holds the G. Morris Dorrance Jr. Endowed Chair in Medical Oncology. He oversees all breast cancer care at Fox Chase's new Women's Cancer Center and co-directs the Women's Cancer Research Program.

Links:

[1] <http://www.cancer.net/navigating-cancer-care/cancer-basics/cancer-care-team/doctor-stories/massimo-cristofanilli-md-facp>