

spotlight

Charleston Area Medical Center Cancer Center Charleston, WV



The Charleston Area Medical Center (CAMC) Cancer Center, part of the CAMC Health System, sees more patients than any other cancer center in the state of West Virginia. The Cancer Program at CAMC has been accredited by the American College of Surgeons for more than 60 years, and received commendation in all areas this past year. The cancer center is also the only QOPI-certified center in the state. With more than 20,000 patient visits last year, providing patient-centered care is a top priority.

“The relationships that are established between the patients and the staff turn into life-long friendships. To quote a patient ‘when you walk down that hall to see the physician, it’s always terrifying...and when you come to chemotherapy, you would think that you would be terrified. But everyone is so welcoming and friendly that you really look forward to seeing these people,’” shared Beverly Farmer, RN, BSN, OCN, NE-BC, clinical practice administrator at CAMC Cancer Center.

A Patient-Centered Approach

This patient-centered focus—coupled with an ever-growing patient population—necessitated the building of a new comprehensive cancer center. The campaign to build the new cancer center was called “The Power of Many.” Before the campaign was even launched publicly, cancer center employees and all four hospital divisions raised almost \$50,000 towards the effort. Once opened up to the community, the cancer center was able to raise \$15 million, with the hospital system covering the rest of the building

costs. “The community has played a big role in building our cancer center. We feel like they’re really a part of it,” said Farmer.

Key stakeholders in the construction of the new cancer center included various staff members, hospital board members, and a patient focus group.

New Center, New Services

Cancer services will relocate from two floors of a medical office building to a three-story free-standing facility. As this article goes to press, the new cancer center will be up and running. Patients and visitors can access the new facility via a drive-up entrance with a covered awning and the option for valet parking.

The lobby area features a new Steinway player piano, which will be playing from an app during the day, but could also be used by patients. One of CAMC’s physicians, Dr. Jubelirer, also plays frequently.

Staff worked with an interior designer to showcase the aesthetic theme of “West Virginia” with a palate of fall colors to represent the seasonal changing of the leaves in the state each year.

On entering the center’s first floor, to the immediate left is the concierge area where a greeter’s desk provides way-finding. This section of the ground floor also houses navigators, social work, psychologist, dietitian services, and pastoral care. A unique supportive care option also found on the lower level is Gigi’s Room. Made possible by a donor, Gigi’s Room offers psychological services for children whose parents may be diagnosed with cancer or who have passed away from cancer.

The first floor also includes a dedicated oncology retail pharmacy, a cafe, and a boutique that offers prostheses and wigs, manicures, pedicures, and massages for patients. The clinical trials department and outpatient lab round out the first floor services. CAMC’s clinical cancer research activities have provided state-of-the-art cancer care opportunities for patients for more than 25 years.

Once patients check in for their appointment, they are handed a pager. This system allows patients the freedom to walk around and explore areas like the healing garden while they wait.

A grand staircase leads up to the second floor. From here, patients have access to an outdoor terrace that overlooks the cancer center’s healing garden. Medical oncology offices, as well as infusion services, are located here.

The new cancer center space has allowed the infusion area to go from 23 to 32 chairs and 4 private beds. Chemotherapy suites are in pods of four. Each chair comes with a heat and massage function and also a heat panel overhead so patients can have some control over their environment of care. Within the infusion area, each patient has a television, as well as room for visitors, with an option for a private or open setting. Sliding glass panels give some privacy in addition to the curtains. A chemotherapy education program is available by patient request.

On the third floor of the new building are the Tumor Registry and the Breast Center, which includes the breast surgeons’ offices. The Breast Center services include mammography, bone density scans,



ultrasound, and biopsies. Currently, some open space is available on this floor, which may be dedicated to palliative care services in the future.

Radiation oncology services will eventually be offered onsite as well; however, the vaults are still being built. This service line is currently offered via a joint venture between CAMC and Alliance Oncology, a radiation oncology practice. Tumor boards meet every Monday for a multidisciplinary approach to the individual care of the patient.

An Emphasis on Supportive Care

The current staffing of the CAMC Cancer Center includes:

- 8 board-certified oncologists
- 30 nurses
- An oncology-certified pharmacist
- 5 navigators
- A social worker
- A psychologist
- A nutritionist
- Pastoral care
- A quality coordinator.

Navigation services are offered to every cancer patient. Each new patient will see a


navigator to undergo distress screening; the CAMC Cancer Center uses the NCCN Distress Scale. If needed, a navigator will follow up with patients after this assessment with a phone call and/or a face-to-face meeting. Since the new building comes with more space, the navigators have their own office for patient visits.

Financial navigation is also available to patients and families. Once the physician has prescribed chemotherapy for a patient, an order is sent to a pre-certification team. The team calculates the patient's financial responsibility, and then a financial navigator gets involved to see if she can be of any assistance. One of the financial navigators is a biller, and the other is currently training to become a social worker.

According to Farmer, one of the biggest barriers to care for CAMC Cancer Center's patient population is transportation. Since the cancer center draws from all over the state of West Virginia, many patients in their service area live in a rural setting. The cancer center partners with the American Cancer Society to help offset this barrier with gas cards, and several local church organizations also assist with transportation. The cancer

center operates a satellite clinic in Teays Valley (about 20 miles away) that provides medical oncology and chemotherapy infusion services.

For the survivorship portion of care, a nurse practitioner prepares the care plan. She gives the care plan to the patient, and records a copy electronically. The electronic copy is also sent to the patient's treating primary care physician.

Other supportive care services include psychological services, smoking cessation, nutrition classes, pet therapy, and an exercise program called Healthy Steps. 

Select Support Services

- Social Work
- Financial Navigation
- Psychology Services
- Pastoral Care
- Nutrition Services

Number of new analytic cases in 2014: 1,493.