

Lakeland Regional Cancer Center—

Where Patient Satisfaction Is Excellent

Part of the Lakeland Regional Health System, the Lakeland Regional Cancer Center opened its 33,000-square-foot facility in January 2003.

The cancer center's goal is to improve responsiveness to patients and the community by centralizing and integrating all of its outpatient care, support services, and complementary programs under one roof—from physician offices, diagnostics and lab space, pharmacy, and chemotherapy and radiation, to a resource library with computers for patients' use and healing arts.

Barbara Harrison, MSA, RN, CNA, the cancer center's vice president, proudly points out that the Lakeland Regional Cancer Center provides state-of-the-art care and

services in a healing environment—just one factor that sets the center apart.

"We offer hope, optimism, and self-empowerment for our patients with cancer," said Harrison, adding that the facility's design establishes a setting for holistic care that focuses on mind, body, and spirit.

When patients with cancer and their family members visit the 22-acre site, they are struck by the cancer center's unique atmosphere. A pianist plays in the center's open and inviting lobby. A "healing garden" offers patients and their families a quiet place to relax and reflect. For patients and their families, a putting green provides a needed diversion. At any given moment, patients might be relaxing with a yoga class, while a breast cancer survivor focuses on healing through dance.

Putting Patients First

Lakeland Regional Cancer Center prides itself on its patient access to care. Patients are seen by clinicians in a very timely manner. "We know

that patients who are concerned about their health and may have cancer are anxious to see the clinicians right away," Harrison said.

Patient Advocacy Specialist Alice Varnadore provides support for patients throughout their continuum of care. Varnadore is a point of contact for new patients, helping to orient patients and their families to the center and to the many resources available to them. Varnadore fields all questions from patients or their family members and coordinates responses and follow-up to assure all questions are answered.

Although the center is a new facility, Harrison believes in measuring patient satisfaction immediately. The results of a recent, third-party survey on Lakeland's outpatient oncology services found that patient satisfaction overall care assessment score is 94 percent.

Harrison passionately believes that "the best way to impact the mortality and morbidity of cancer is through empowering the community through education and screening

programs." In 2002 the Lakeland Regional Cancer Program offered more than 75 educational programs to the community, such as the well-received Summer Lecture Series. Topics have included "Advances in the Prevention and Detection of Prostate Cancer," which included free prostate cancer screening; "Exploring the Risks of Chemotherapy;" "The Importance of Research in Cancer Clinical Trials;" and "IMRT."

This year's National Cancer Survivors' Day, with the theme "A Celebration of Life Through Art," drew between 200-300 participants. The program included

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(Above) A woman with cancer participates in National Cancer Survivors' Day activities at LRCC last May. (Right) The entrance of the Lakeland Regional Cancer Center.



PROFILE

an interactive art festival. Scott Burton, an award-winning comedian, national champion juggler, and author, was the keynote speaker.

In addition, the cancer center holds a Director's Hour on the first Monday evening of every month. The program, which is open to the community, features LRCC's Director, Douglas S. Reintgen, MD, answering questions from a small group (10 or fewer) of community members about cancer-related concerns.

The Best and Brightest

Word has spread about all that the Lakeland Regional Cancer Center has to offer, attracting nationally renowned surgical, medical, radiation, and urologic oncologists. These specialists, who are researchers, authors, professors, and lecturers, lend their expertise to patients, as well as other physicians throughout the country. With 20 years of experience as a surgical oncologist, cancer center director Reintgen has earned international acclaim for his innovative work in lymph node mapping and his extensive research in breast cancer and melanoma.

Oncology certified nurses, clinical nutritionists, pharmacists, therapists, case managers, pastoral care staff, and others work as a team along with the cancer center's physicians. Working closely together, these healthcare professionals are better able to provide effective and efficient care, consulting with one another about each case, and ensuring that all patient needs are met. Staff is readily available to discuss patient concerns such as whether or not a particular treatment is the best course, how to access community resources, or how to obtain psychological support services.

The Lakeland Regional Cancer Center offers a host of diagnostic procedures including stereotactic biopsy, seed implants, flow cytometry, biopsies, ultrasound, endoscopy, and nuclear medicine. A full range of surgery, chemotherapy, and radiation options are available, as well as intraoperative sentinel lymph node mapping for

Vital Statistics

- Total hospital bed size: 851
- Dedicated cancer unit beds: 45
- Number of new analytic cancer cases seen in 2002: 1,803
- Managed care penetration in Florida: 32 percent

Selected Patient Support Services

- A support group for newly diagnosed breast and melanoma patients was implemented in October 2003. LRCC offers a *Look Good, Feel Better* cancer support group in collaboration with the American Cancer Society. In January 2004, LRCC will offer a third support group for leukemia and lymphoma patients in collaboration with the local society.
- Arts in Healthcare-Polk partners with LRCC to provide music, visual arts, and performances for patients, family, and caregivers coping with the stress of illness.
- Complementary classes include yoga, Tai Chi, journaling, Dream Catchers, creating with clay, oil painting, exploring with collage, dance movement, and playing with porcelain.

those patients who are eligible.

Technology is continually changing, and the center strives to bring patients the latest, most advanced lifesaving tools. The Lakeland facility houses two linear accelerators for radiation therapy, including 3-D treatment planning, IMRT, and a CT simulator. High dose rate (HDR) brachytherapy will be added to the cancer program in 2004. In addition, Lakeland Regional Cancer Center is one of the few facilities in the country to perform hypothermic isolated limb perfusion (ILP), a very delicate surgical procedure for melanoma, which can save an extremity such as an arm, leg, hand, or foot that may otherwise be lost to amputation.

Research and Screening

Cancer research is an important component at Lakeland. According to Patricia Gowland, RN, OCN[®], CCRC, associate director of clinical research at the cancer center, patient accrual to cancer clinical trials is 19 percent, far beyond the national average of about 5 percent. Currently, the cancer center has enrolled more than 300 patients in 52 clinical trials that cover multiple sites and stages of cancer. And, the center has received a \$12 million endowment for research—including research in geriatric cancer—over the next five years.

“Open, honest discussion” with patients is the key to their accrual into clinical research, Gowland

maintains. “It’s so important to share with patients the potential benefits of clinical research and also let them know we may not have all the answers. Patients voluntarily participate knowing they may not directly benefit from the research but that future generations may benefit from their participation,” she said. “We strive to have treatment trials across all the major disease sites and at the multiple stages of disease. It is our commitment to our patients and our community to continually challenge the standard of care in pursuit of safer, more targeted therapies and ultimately a cure,” Gowland added.

The cancer center is actively involved in two National Cancer Institute-sponsored national cancer prevention trials—STAR, the breast cancer prevention trial, and SELECT, the prostate prevention trial.

Striving to continually improve its service to patients, Lakeland Regional Cancer Center has been awarded a contract to provide mobile screening services for 13,500 employees and retirees of the Polk County School Board. Specific education and screenings include breast, prostate, skin, and colon cancer, as well as osteoporosis screening. In addition, a fixed-site Cancer Screening and Women's Health Center opened in November 2003. Women's health services provided at the center include state-of-the-art mammography services, breast health clinics, and genetic counseling. ❏