

PROFILE

The Curtis and Elizabeth Anderson Cancer Institute at Memorial Health University Medical Center

Promoting hope, healing, and holistic care

The August 2003 opening of the Curtis and Elizabeth Anderson Cancer Institute (CEACI) marks an important milestone for the cancer program at Memorial Health University Medical Center in Savannah, Ga. The \$5.6 million facility, with nearly 28,000 square feet of space, streamlines patient access to care by bringing all ambulatory oncology and support services under one roof.

Over the past three years, CEACI has recruited three Georgia-state-designated distinguished clinicians and scientists, as well as additional clinical experts and support staff. These initiatives have helped support the program's goal of bringing world-class cancer care to the region.

Over the past three years, the oncology program has also seen growth in patient volume. In 2003 CEACI's inpatient volume increased 24 percent and outpatient visits totaled 26,372.

CEACI offers the area's only established gynecologic oncology and surgical oncology programs, as well as the region's only center devoted exclusively to women's breast health, the Center for Breast Care. CEACI's patients have access to the latest technological advances such as SmartBeam dynamic IMRT, which delivers high doses of radiation directly to cancer cells in a precise, targeted way, and MammoSite high-dose radiation therapy for women with early-stage breast cancer.

A Multidisciplinary Approach

CEACI has implemented eight multidisciplinary disease-site teams: thoracic, colorectal, gynecologic, breast, head and neck, urology, pediatric, and upper gastrointesti-



The Serenity Garden at the Curtis and Elizabeth Anderson Cancer Institute in Savannah, Ga.

Vital Statistics

- Total hospital bed size: 535
- Dedicated cancer unit beds: 27
- Number of new analytic cancer cases seen per year: 1,282
- Managed care penetration in Georgia: 21 percent

Selected Patient Support Services

- The Center for Breast Care is the region's only practice devoted solely to women's breast health.
- Annual "Harvest of Hope" retreat; a free weekend program for patients with cancer and their families
- Psychosocial support team comprised of oncology nurses, social workers, chaplains, case managers, and therapists.
- "Return to Wholeness," mind-body medicine program offered through The Chopra Center at Memorial Health.

nal. The teams consist of medical oncologists, surgeons, radiation oncologists, nurse navigators, research coordinators, tumor registry staff, and other supportive care staff, and include supporting physicians from areas such as pathology and radiology. Each team focuses on the complete spectrum of issues affecting patient care, collaborating on individual cases, identifying special needs, and providing seamless coordination of services.

"I think the disease team concept, which brings all the different specialties together at the same

table to focus around that particular cancer, is by far the most important part of our program," said William J. Hoskins, MD, senior vice president of oncology and research and director of the Curtis and Elizabeth Anderson Cancer Institute.

In 2001 Hoskins, an innovator of surgical techniques for gynecologic cancers who is widely known for his research and treatment methods of ovarian tumors, arrived from Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in New York to head the Curtis and Elizabeth Anderson

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Cancer Institute. Under Hoskins' leadership, CEACI has implemented and grown the multidisciplinary site-specific disease management team approach. CEACI anticipates adding a hematologic multidisciplinary treatment team in 2004.

Patients First

Patients at CEACI not only have the convenience of services in one location, they also receive care in a patient-focused setting. CEACI's Serenity Garden sets the tone from the moment of arrival.

"The patients love it," said Cancer Program Administrator Sally Welsh, RN, MSN. "Everyone who walks in, patients, past patients... gets this sense of calm."

The lobby overlooks the garden, as does the chemotherapy treatment area. Tranquility and beauty are themes projected throughout the CEACI in artwork provided by the Savannah College of Art and Design and local artists.

In this patient-centered care setting, nurse navigators play a pivotal role. Currently CEACI has three full-time nurse navigators and is in the process of recruiting a fourth. All the nurse navigators are advance practice nurses, such as clinical nurse specialists or nurse practitioners, and have vast clinical expertise.

Nurse navigators are the liaison for any services the cancer patient requires. They meet patients at their point of entry—whether it's at the chemotherapy infusion center, in the inpatient setting, or in the physician office. The nurse navigator's role is connected with the specific disease site, not with a specific physician.

"We promote a seamless approach to educating the patient and the family and [facilitating] communication between all the players in our multidisciplinary team so that nothing falls between the cracks," nurse navigator Michelle Hendry, RN, MSN, CGRN, said.

At the Curtis and Elizabeth Anderson Cancer Institute, putting patients first means reaching out

past the hospital's walls to patients with cancer and their families in the surrounding community and beyond.

Recognizing that cancer can steal precious time from family life, CEACI created the "Harvest of Hope Retreat." The free weekend program gives both childhood and adult cancer survivors and their families a chance to reconnect in a relaxed and supportive environment. This year, 100 participants enjoyed a host of program activities, including music therapy, art therapy, child life specialists' activities, health education programs, Tai Chi, and massage therapy.

CEACI sponsors major professional educational programs quarterly, including an annual Cancer Congress. Outreach staff participates in health fairs, screening and detection events, and community lectures. In addition, CEACI has implemented an educational program with the local library system to bring information about cancer, prevention, detection, and treatment to library patrons.

Cutting-Edge Services

CEACI offers state-of-the-art treatments such as stereotactic radiosurgery and high dose rate brachytherapy. The program has a CT-simulator 3-D treatment planning system and two multileaf collimators to aid in precise treatment planning and delivery. In 2001 a new 120 multileaf Varian Linear Accelerator was acquired. In 2003 additional equipment and computer upgrades were completed.

CEACI's very active intensity modulated radiation therapy (IMRT) program was the region's first IMRT program. CEACI offers hepatic artery pump infusion and radiofrequency ablation procedures for patients with liver metastases. CEACI was the leader in establishing sentinel lymph node biopsy for breast cancer patients in the region. A wide range of brachytherapy treatments are offered, including prostate seed implants, GYN HDR (high-dose rate after loader), and other interstitial sites.

The research program at the Curtis and Elizabeth Anderson Cancer Institute is growing. The program has been a member of the

Southeast Cancer Control Consortium (SCCC), a leading Community Clinical Oncology Program (CCOP), since 1987. Through SCCC, CEACI patients are able to participate in many national clinical trials through CALGB, NSABP, RTOG, and SWOG. CEACI also participates in the Gynecologic Oncology Group (GOG) protocols; the STAR (Study of Tamoxifen and Raloxifene) trial for the prevention of breast cancer in high-risk women; and SELECT (Selenium and Vitamin E Cancer Prevention Trial) for prostate cancer prevention.

CEACI received a \$50,000 grant to improve minority recruitment to the SELECT trial and as of Sept. 15, 2003, CEACI was one of the top accruers within the SCCC for the first quarter.

CEACI's pediatric oncology program has been a member of the Children's Oncology Group since 1993.

Looking at Tomorrow's Needs Today

In the coming months, CEACI plans include construction of a technically advanced education and research building to promote cancer research in such areas as genetics, immunology, and cell biology.

Staffing shortages present challenges to most cancer programs today. At CEACI, creative solutions that help build excellence in cancer care are underway. The Curtis and Elizabeth Anderson Cancer Institute has established collaborative relationships with several local institutions to help train and recruit staff. For example, to help fill a statewide need for certified tumor registrars, CEACI staff worked with the Southeast Georgia Cancer Alliance to develop an online tumor registrar training curriculum with a local technical school. Once the program begins, CEACI will serve as a practicum site for the students. CEACI has also created unique oncology nursing mentoring/fellowship programs. Designed to help both experienced staff nurses obtain ONS certification and recent nursing school graduates with an interest in oncology, the programs support staff nurses while simultaneously enhancing cancer care. ☐