

## Santa Fe Cancer Center in New Mexico— A Full-Service Cancer Program

**S**t. Vincent Hospital in Santa Fe, New Mexico, has been caring for people of Santa Fe, northern New Mexico, and southern Colorado for more than 130 years. In 2002 the hospital invested nearly \$5 million to remodel its 20-year-old cancer center, which is integrated into the St. Vincent Hospital campus. The one-story, 14,600-square-foot facility also changed its name to the Santa Fe Cancer Center and now offers an integrated cancer program with all services provided at one facility.

The need for a state-of-the-art cancer treatment facility in Santa Fe

has never been greater: The next closest full-service cancer treatment facility is 65 miles away, and nearly 14,000 New Mexicans lost their lives to cancer in 2000. In Santa Fe County, 836 family members, neighbors and friends died of the disease, while many others were diagnosed and treated.

As part of the cancer program's renewal plan, the hospital formed a partnership with Valley Radiotherapy Associates Medical Group Inc. (VRA). The group is the sole provider of radiation oncology services at the Santa Fe Cancer Center. The agreement between St. Vincent Hospital and VRA brings experi-



**Harpist Melodye Eisele plays in the cancer center's beautiful Healing Garden.**

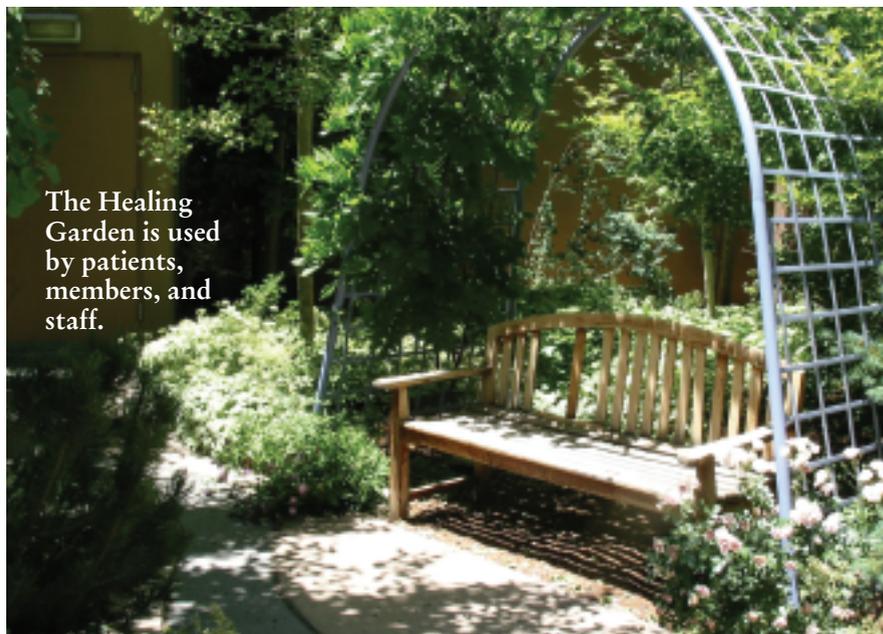
enced, highly qualified, full-time Santa Fe-based radiation oncologists to the cancer center and helps to enhance and improve the center's radiation oncology services.

In addition to the radiation oncology partnership with VRA, the cancer center has also established a relationship with an oncology gynecology group from Albuquerque that sees patients at the Santa Fe Cancer Center once a week.

### Investing in the Future

Not only has St. Vincent Hospital invested in remodeling its cancer center, the hospital also designates funds for new technology. Recently, the hospital purchased a new Varian linear accelerator, equipped with Portal Imaging and multi-leaf collimator and IMRT capabilities, and a large-bore CT/Simulator. At the Santa Fe Cancer Center, experienced cancer specialists provide high- and low-dose brachytherapy services.

The center plans to expand its HDR program and will be offering Mammosite® within the next three months. The center is also equipped with a new IMPAC Oncology Management System that is capable of multiple tasks, including a record and verify system. The system updates the patient database and



The Healing Garden is used by patients, members, and staff.

### Vital Statistics

- Total hospital bed size: 268
- Dedicated cancer unit beds: 14
- Number of new analytic cancer cases seen in 2003: 686
- Managed care penetration in New Mexico: 30 percent

### Selected Patient Support Services

- Healing Through Writing—a writing group that explores life-challenging experiences
- Chi-Lel Qigong—a form of healing therapy focusing on movements and visualization
- Support groups such as Look Good Feel Better and I Can Cope

manages the scheduling and billing.

The radiation oncology waiting area provides patients with magnificent views of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, the southernmost part of the Rockies.

Due to the cancer program's expansion, the Santa Fe Cancer

oncology program in the near future.

Also recently hired is a clinical care coordinator, who serves on the cancer center's breast care team.

This individual helps patients and their families navigate the patient's treatment regimen and schedule visits with the necessary oncology specialists. She makes sure that patients have access to the many additional services offered at the cancer center, including complementary holistic

this time is not participating in clinical research with a cooperative group, physicians affiliated with the cancer center are participating in internal clinical studies run by the hospital's institutional review board.

"Hopefully, in the next six months, we'll affiliate with one of the big cooperative groups and be able to offer clinical trials, perhaps in breast and/or prostate cancer for our population," Wyman said.

### The Extra Touch

The Santa Fe Cancer Center conducts an ongoing internal survey of patient satisfaction. Radiation therapy survey results have been "very favorable," Wyman said. Patients indicate that they are pleased that they don't need to travel long distances to receive cancer care. The center also recently implemented surgical and medical oncology patient satisfaction surveys.

Understanding that a healing environment can foster optimum care, the Santa Fe Cancer Center offers patients a beautiful on-site Healing Garden inspired by former cancer patient Nancy Dickenson. She was the lead donor on the project and generously underwrote its design.

The Healing Garden demonstrates clearly the hospital's philosophy that a closer connection to nature during treatment can help patients and their families feel calmer, more connected to the world around them, and more positive about the outcome of their treatments.

Incorporating an indoor atrium and an outdoor garden for patient and family use, the Healing Garden combines a variety of native plants with local Santa Fe cultural elements offering visitors a tranquil space reflective of the area.

Accredited by the American College of Surgeons' Commission on Cancer, the Santa Fe Cancer Center continues to reach out to the community by providing innovative programs that include free breast and prostate cancer screening clinics.

"To be the best, we must provide the best equipment, the best care, the best staff, and the best support system for patients and their families," said Alex Valdez, JD, president and CEO of St. Vincent Hospital. ☐



High-tech equipment in the cancer center includes a large-bore CT/Simulator, which improves patient positioning.

Center decided to invest in a new and improved infusion room. Scheduled to open in September 2004, the new infusion room will have six chairs and a bed; a flat screen TV and DVD player for each patient; a library of books, movies, and music; and Internet connections available for use with a patient's own laptop computer.

"We're trying to make this room less clinical and more comfortable," said Brenda Wyman, director of the Santa Fe Cancer Center. The old infusion room will be converted to exam rooms.

Expansion of programs means recruiting experienced staff. The center recently hired a chief physicist credited with implementing the center's IMRT program. Within the last two years, the Santa Fe Cancer Center has also hired a medical oncologist and a surgical oncologist to help develop their respective departments. A full-range of specialists is on staff, including breast cancer and gynecologic cancer surgeons. Plans call for expanding the medical

medicine, genetic counseling, support group access, rehabilitation, healthy eating cooking classes, massage therapy, financial counseling, and more.

### Integrated Patient Care

Patients receive multidisciplinary care. For example, weekly conferences for breast cancer involve medical oncologists, surgeons, pathologists, radiologists, radiation oncologists, and a counselor.

"Conferences for treatment planning are designed to arrive at a consensus from all disciplines, providing information that will assist clinicians in developing a complete treatment plan," said Lynn Rogers, MD, a pathologist and chair of the breast cancer conference. "By allowing referring physicians to present cancer cases to a group that will review and develop a treatment plan on the spot, this approach shortens the time from definitive diagnosis to treatment." All breast patients with a confirmed diagnosis of cancer are presented.

Although the cancer center at