

St. Luke's Mountain States Tumor Institute

Expanding services to meet patient needs in urban, rural, and remote settings

The names say it all. Canyon County. West Treasure Valley. Magic Valley. Twin Falls. Fruitland. Mountain Home. St. Luke's Regional Medical Center's Mountain States Tumor Institute (MSTI) in Boise, Idaho, is located in an area of the American West studded with mountains, deserts, and more than 2,000 lakes. Sitting in the shadow of the Rocky Mountains, on a high desert plain, Boise has a rich history, which includes the Gold Rush days of the 1800s as well as being part of the legendary Oregon Trail that thousands followed on their way west.

The Mountain States Tumor Institute has its own long history of providing quality cancer care to this growing community.

More than 50 years ago, St. Luke's Hospital in Boise organized its first tumor board in 1953 to care for cancer patients. From this beginning grew the Mountain States Tumor Institute, which in 1971 became the first cancer care and referral center for the region. Since that time, the cancer program has been committed to providing the community with high-quality cancer care along with cancer education, screening, and prevention programs.

Thomas Beck, MD, has been with the cancer program for nearly 30 years, serving as the institute's medical director for the last 11 years. One of the biggest challenges in recent years, he said, is expanding the cancer program's services to meet the needs of the region's growing population.

In the 1980s, as the population in the areas west of Boise began to increase, Mountain States Tumor Institute worked to offer quality cancer care to patients closer to home. Today the institute's programs serve people living within a 200-mile radius of Boise, including Oregon, Utah, and Nevada. In fact,



Pictured are Thomas Beck, MD, MSTI medical director and a staff member.

Vital Statistics

- Total hospital bed size: 489
- Dedicated cancer unit beds:
 - Pediatric inpatient unit, 6 dedicated beds
 - Adult inpatient unit, 4 dedicated adolescent beds and 20 dedicated adult beds
- Number of new analytic cases seen in 2003: 2,100

the program now serves a population area of about 600,000, which is close to half of the state's current population of 1.3 million.

In 1991 Mountain States Tumor Institute Nampa opened to provide care for patients in West Treasure Valley. In 2000 MSTI opened a new facility in Meridian and in 2001 a new clinic in Fruitland. Twin Falls, 130 miles to the east, was opened in 2002. Mountain States Tumor Institute also operates a physician

Selected Patient Support Services

- A Complementary and Integrative Medicine (CIM) Program provides writing classes, music as a healing art, sculpted masks, clay sculpting, labyrinth, relaxation, Qi Gong.
- Yoga, meditation, nutrition counseling, spiritual counseling, peer support groups, massage, and rehabilitation services are also offered.
- On-going community outreach programs include breast cancer, prostate, and skin cancer screening programs; the Race for the Cure; Light the Night; and health fairs in up to 10 communities annually.
- Patient support groups offered at every MSTI site.

clinic in McCall. Today the cancer program operates five full-service locations that provide both chemotherapy and radiation therapy. Each location has its own tumor board. At three locations, these boards are associated with the local hospital.

In 2003 Mountain States Tumor Institute had 142,000 patient visits, including all sites. Approximately, 400 patients a day come to the institute for treatment and follow-up. The program offers both adult and pediatric oncology services.

Staffing can be a challenge with

five different practice locations; however, professional staff has had a very low turnover rate. In over 30 years, no employed physician has ever left the program, Beck noted.

Currently, the Mountain States Tumor Institute employs all of its medical and pediatric oncologists. This structure allows the cancer program more flexibility in scheduling physicians to cover the program's geographically challenging service area. Each physician has a home base and each travels one or two days a week to allow coverage for all five Mountain States Tumor Institute sites.

The program is also structured so that the inpatient nursing unit at St. Luke's Regional Medical Center is part of the Mountain States Tumor Institute staff. This arrangement helps ensure that inpatient and outpatient care are integrated and seamless, said cancer program administrator Luana Lamkin, RN, MPH.

Mountain States Tumor Institute staff includes 11 medical oncologists, 2 pediatric oncologists, and 1 surgical oncologist. Five radiation oncologists are affiliated with Mountain States Tumor Institute facilities but are not hospital employees. The cancer program also employs a number of mid-level staff including six nurse practitioners (four of whom are Mountain States Tumor Institute employees and two of whom are employed by the radiation oncology group). All of the nurse practitioners have extensive oncology nursing experience and specialized training in chemotherapy administration, and five have achieved OCN® certification. OCN certification is required of all nursing staff in the chemotherapy infusion suites, all the primary nurses in medical, surgical, and radiation therapy areas, and the inpatient nursing unit within two years of hire.

A recent innovation at the Mountain States Tumor Institute is the "Total Chemotherapy Learning" class. Patients can take this 60 to 90 minute class in advance of starting chemotherapy treatment. Team

taught by an oncology nurse, a social worker, and a pharmacist, the class provides patients with an opportunity to learn what to expect before they begin chemotherapy and to ask questions in a supportive, relaxed environment. These free classes are offered seven times a week and are available in all the Mountain States Tumor Institute locations.

The Latest Treatment Options

The Mountain States Tumor Institute program has six linear accelerators (two at the Boise location) and offers IMRT at three of its five sites. The cancer program also offers HDR, MammoSite (in two locations) and R2 Image Checker, and brachytherapy. Mountain States Tumor Institute also has a bone marrow transplant program.

In a region that encompasses rural and remote population areas, the Mountain States Tumor Institute has been able to expand to provide many patients quality cancer care closer to their homes. In particular, the Fruitland and Nampa centers offer care in a setting designed to make patients feel at home. "When I go to visit sites, I always spend some time sitting in the lobby with patients and family, talking with them. It's clear to me how happy they are to seek treatment, close to home, that has the Mountain States Tumor Institute name associated with it," said Lamkin. "They are getting high-quality care but in their home community."

For patients that travel to Boise for care, the Mountain States Tumor Institute offers the unique option of covered RV parking complete with all the necessary hook ups. The ability to travel for care and bring the comforts of home along can make all the difference to patients who have to receive treatment over a period of several weeks. The Mountain States Tumor Institute also offers temporary housing for \$10 per day at Bishop Foote Guest House in Boise, and a Ronald McDonald House is available to families of pediatric patients.

Judging from St. Luke's award-winning patient satisfaction scores, the program is doing an excellent job of responding to patients' needs. In 2004 St. Luke's Regional Medical Center was recognized by

Avatar with awards in the categories of Overall Best Performer and Exceeding Patient Expectations. In the last survey, patient expectations were exceeded in all five treatment sites and in the breast diagnostic services sites. Patient satisfaction surveys are done continuously and reported monthly. The program also recently initiated employee satisfaction surveys.

To Educate, Screen, and Prevent

A long-time component of the institute's leadership and community service role has been education, screening, and prevention. By 1973 the Mountain States Tumor Institute had opened its Breast Cancer Detection Center in Boise. Today the Institute operates five such centers and also sends a mobile mammography screening van out into the community 52 weeks a year. Totalling the five sites, the program performs 42,000 mammograms annually.

The Mountain States Tumor Institute outreach program offers breast cancer screening and prostate cancer screening. In 2003 the program offered 21 days of free prostate screening, many in conjunction with Senator Mike Crapo's Health Awareness Booth at the Western Idaho Fair.

A Partner in Research

The Mountain States Tumor Institute is proud of its research program. Inaugurated by Beck more than 25 years ago, the program has grown into a large, comprehensive research effort. Here, patients have access to a number of screening and prevention trials, cooperative group trials, and pharmaceutical trials, both Phase II and Phase III. All bone marrow transplant patients are trial participants. The Mountain States Tumor Institute participates in three large screening and prevention trials sponsored by the National Cancer Institute: the Prostate, Lung, Colorectal, Ovarian (PLCO) Screening Trial; the National Lung Study Trial (NLST), and the SELECT Trial.

As the Mountain States Tumor Institute enters its fourth decade of service, the cancer program continues to evolve to meet the needs of the community it serves. 