

## Tammy Walker Cancer Center

at Salina Regional Health Center  
Salina, Kansas

**Enhancing patient quality of life—before, during, and after treatment**

**F**rAGMENTATION of healthcare services is an increasingly common refrain. But in the heart of Kansas, a community-based cancer center is achieving just the opposite—coordinated, comprehensive cancer care. Behind the development of the Tammy Walker Cancer Center is a story about physician leaders, a hospital's strong commitment to high-quality cancer care, and a community's support.

### Vital Statistics

- Total hospital bed size: 419
- Dedicated cancer unit beds: 11
- Number of new analytic cancer cases seen in 2004: 528

### Selected Support Services

- Support groups, including *Reach to Recovery, Survivors and Friends, Man to Man, Look Good...Feel Better*
- Appearance Center, offering a selection of wigs, hats, and prostheses
- American Cancer Society Boost program (dietary supplement)

### Building for the Future

When *Oncology Issues* last profiled ACCC member institution Salina Regional Health Center in 1997, the not-for-profit Salina Regional Health Center (SRHC) was newly formed, created by a merger between two local hospitals—St. John's Regional Health Center and Asbury-Salina Regional Medical Center. The merger provided an opportunity not only to combine the two hospitals' resources, but also for SRHC to centralize and expand cancer services for this community of more than 46,000. And yet, SRHC's cancer program's services remained somewhat fragmented with oncology inpatient units and some outpatient services, including radiation oncology, located on separate campuses about two miles apart.

Throughout the merger process and beyond, Salina Regional's commitment to improving cancer care for the local community and surrounding counties has been unwavering. That commitment fueled a multi-year effort to bring the ACoS-approved cancer program's services into one facility. In 2004, SRHC celebrated the realization of this long-time goal with the opening of the new 37,000 square-foot Tammy Walker Cancer Center.

Development of the new cancer center was made possible by the commitment of the local community, the hospital, and hospital staff. During 2003, the "Blueprint for Hope Capital Campaign" began with a goal of raising \$2 million towards building the new



Salina Regional Health Center's Tammy Walker Cancer Center in Salina, Kans.

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comprehensive cancer center. In fact, the community responded by raising \$2.6 million, said cancer program administrator Mary Quinley, RN, OCN,<sup>®</sup> MBA.

Located across the street from the SRHC, the Tammy Walker Cancer Center treats about 600 new cancer patients each year. The new facility houses all of the cancer program's outpatient services—medical oncology, radiation oncology, a chemotherapy infusion room, and access to the program's varied support services, including a cancer care coordinator, nutritional counseling, physical therapy, and pastoral care.

The cancer center's design reflects SRHC's commitment to providing patient-centered care. Entering the open, airy lobby, patients and families find a light-filled, calming environment with adequate seating to allow privacy. Ample parking is available adjacent to the cancer center. Patients can be dropped off right at the center's main entrance. Radiation oncology services are located on the first floor, and the chemotherapy infusion suite is located on the second floor adjacent to the medical oncology offices. The new chemotherapy infusion room features a wall of windows providing patients with a view of the changing seasons. The treatment room's open floor plan allows patients to visit with each other and to enjoy plenty of natural light.

"Patients love coming to a classy-looking, dedicated multidisciplinary care facility," said medical oncologist William Cathcart-Rake, MD.

In 2004, the Tammy Walker

Cancer Center served patients from more than 25 nearby counties. As in other rural areas, transportation can be a major obstacle for some patients with cancer. To help, SRHC provides medi-van service to transport patients from some rural locations.

**Bringing Leading-Edge Radiation Oncology Services to the Community**

SRHC's radiation oncology department has long been a leader in bringing state-of-the-art radiation treatment options to the community. Radiation oncologist Claudia Perez-Tamayo, MD, worked to establish the program's



**A radiation technician prepares a patient for treatment at the Tammy Walker Cancer Center.**

IMRT services. In 2002, SRHC was chosen as an IMRT beta site and prior to that the program was the first in Kansas to offer 3D conformal treatments—the precursor to IMRT.

Today, the Tammy Walker Cancer Center houses outpatient radiation oncology services, including two new linear accelerators. In addition to IMRT, the program offers CT simulations and 3D treatment planning; brachytherapy; prostate seed implants; and cryoablation for prostate cancer.

Being able to offer IMRT in the community setting has important benefits for patients, said Perez-Tamayo. "IMRT has definitely had an impact on morbidity. People are

not needing to take off from work. We are reducing acute toxicity.... People are able to carry on with life." SRHC's radiation oncology program participates in all national protocols.

The Salina Regional Health Center offers Mammotest for stereotactic breast biopsy; R2 Image Checker for mammograms (CAD); sentinel lymph node biopsies for breast cancer and melanoma; and transesophageal biopsies. SRHC's outpatient Imaging Center includes a Breast Diagnostic Center.

**Outreach and Education**

Reaching out to the community, the cancer center offers a variety of screening and educational programs, including a skin cancer screening program, a colon cancer awareness program, and a breast cancer forum. A cancer outreach coordinator travels out into the community to do breast cancer awareness education programs, and a grant from the Avon Corporation enables the cancer outreach coordinator to work with county health nurses and nearby hospitals in smaller communities.

Pulling services together and streamlining care for the benefit of patients and their caregivers has taken commitment, dedication, and good communication.

"I can't say enough about the hospital's true and heartfelt commitment to the cancer center," said Perez-Tamayo. To create the new center, medical oncologists and radiation oncologists from separate practices had to come together to bring services under one roof. The transition to one-stop cancer care has been smooth said Quinley, "because it was such a good collaborative effort.... It was a big project; it really went very smoothly because everyone was so willing to work together. Having this building—having everything together—it's very rewarding to see. We just think of it as being for the patients and a commitment to cancer care for years to come." 📍