

Tri-Cities Cancer Center Partnering for progress

In 1994, Kadlec Medical Center, Kennewick General Hospital, and Lourdes Health Network, along with individuals and other community groups, came together to create the Tri-Cities Cancer Center (TCCC) in Kennewick. Located in southeastern Washington state, the 32,000-square-foot, freestanding, non-profit center is a collaborative effort aimed at improving and increasing access to quality cancer care in the region. With a service area consisting of roughly a 60-mile radius around Kennewick, TCCC provides high-quality cancer care not just to the Tri-Cities area of Pasco, Kennewick, and Richland, Washington, but also to patients from the neighboring state of Oregon (about 10 percent of patients).

Planners for the new cancer center wanted to create a single center of excellence to serve the Tri-Cities

region, rather than having three separate programs located at three local hospitals. TCCC is structured so that radiation oncology services are owned and provided by the non-profit cancer center. Collaboration is central to TCCC's mission, and TCCC works with numerous providers in the community to offer patients high-quality care close to home.

In 1998, Columbia Basin Hematology and Oncology, PLLC, a privately owned medical oncology practice decided to lease space within the cancer center to better accommodate the needs of its patients. Over the past seven years, Columbia Basin Hematology & Oncology has partnered with the Tri-Cities Cancer Center in a philosophy and vision of care with a goal of providing high-quality, compassionate, and efficient care through integrated services.

For patients and their families, the end result is access to quality cancer

care efficiently provided in one convenient location. The one-story facility is configured so that the private practice medical oncology office and TCCC have separate entrances, and patients can be dropped off right at the door. Ample parking is available, including RV parking with full hook-ups that are provided free of charge.

Bringing Radiation Advances to the Community

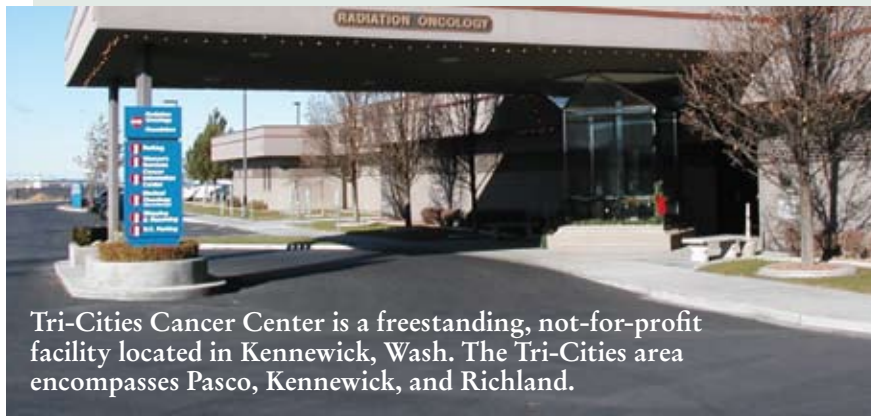
TCCC's radiation oncology program began offering intensity modulated radiation therapy (IMRT) to the community in 2004. With two linear accelerators, the program currently offers IMRT for prostate and head and neck cancers. In addition, TCCC is implementing a HDR brachytherapy program to be used with MammoSite® to treat breast and gynecological cancers. The program is also able to offer prostate seed implant treatment by partnering with a local hospital.

More than 500 patients received radiation treatment and care at TCCC in 2004, with an average of 40 patients treated each day. Responses to a recent patient satisfaction survey showed a 99 percent satisfaction level with TCCC's services.

Strong Community Ties

The Tri-Cities community shows its support for TCCC with an exceptional level of donations and volunteerism. According to Michele Caron, director of clinical services, last year nearly 300 volunteers gave their time to support TCCC's mission. A part-time volunteer coordinator helps facilitate volunteer support for the cancer center. Trained volunteer "patient greeters" staff the TCCC's private patient waiting area. From the Men's Club, which helped create the RV parking area, to the Guild, which provides such homey touches as seasonal decorations at TCCC, and juice, candy, and

PHOTOGRAPHS/COURTESY OF TRI-CITIES CANCER CENTER



Tri-Cities Cancer Center is a freestanding, not-for-profit facility located in Kennewick, Wash. The Tri-Cities area encompasses Pasco, Kennewick, and Richland.

TCCC's Selected Patient Support Services

- Free wigs, hats, bras, and prostheses for any patient
- Twice monthly women's support group
- Cancer support group for anyone dealing with effects of cancer on their life
- Monthly lymphedema support group
- Gas and food voucher program for patients in need
- Chaplain available for patients and their family members.

monthly treats for every radiation patient—volunteer commitment to TCCC is exceptional. “The community perception is that this is their cancer center,” said Caron. “We couldn’t do what we do without our volunteer workforce.”

A unique expression of local involvement greets radiation therapy

patients when they enter the treatment area. Colorful, hand-painted ceiling tiles created by local students decorate the ceiling. Brightening the environment and softening the clinical atmosphere, these tiles are a touch that patients love, Caron said. In fact, several staff have created tiles, and patients, too, have asked to decorate tiles for the center.

In 1996, the Tri-Cities Cancer Center Foundation, a separate entity, was formed to help facilitate the cancer center’s mission. Through generous charitable contributions

from individuals and businesses, the Foundation is able to provide funding for patient and community services that are not reimbursable and would not otherwise be provided. These programs include support services and free screenings.

Exceptional Support Services

TCCC’s support program includes three staff: a chaplain provided through a local chaplaincy/hospice group; an education/outreach coordinator; and a nurse case manager. Added to the program in 2001, TCCC’s nurse case manager is a registered nurse, who is available to anyone in the community with a cancer diagnosis regardless of whether that individual is a Tri-Cities Cancer Center patient. The nurse case manager not only helps coordinate patient care at the Cancer Center, she provides a range of support services, including helping patients with financial and insurance issues, transportation concerns, and sometimes simply assisting patients who are overwhelmed by paper work. When requested, she helps coordinate second opinion appointments and appointments with out-of-town specialists. In 2004, TCCC’s nurse case manager completed more than 2,500 patient visits.

TCCC provides a Cancer Information Center library for patients, which is stocked with books, tapes, and videos for checkout, as well as informational brochures. (See the box on page 15 for information about TCCC’s support services.)

Providing outreach and education to the community, TCCC staff conducts educational programs on cancer prevention and early detection. A monthly cancer education series, hosted by the Cancer Center, brings physicians and other speakers on-site for programs on a range of topics. Recent programs include a breast cancer talk; a genetic counselor; and a program on trusts and wills.

The Center also provides free screenings throughout the year for breast, prostate, skin, and colon cancer. In 2005, more than 700 individuals benefited from the free screening program, which was funded through the fundraising efforts of the TCCC Foundation.

Looking to the future, plans are underway for TCCC to add a Wellness Center to its facility in 2006.



Ken Clark, radiation therapist, treating a patient on a linear accelerator at the Tri-Cities Cancer Center. The program offers IMRT for prostate and head and neck cancers.

Practice Profile

Columbia Basin Hematology & Oncology, PLLC

Columbia Basin Hematology & Oncology, PLLC, the medical oncology practice leasing space in the TCCC building is a separate entity from the Tri-Cities Cancer Center. The practice was formed in 1998 when Thomas Rado, MD, and Ruben Sierra, MD, decided to combine their individual practices to form Columbia Basin Hematology & Oncology. By 2003, the practice had grown to include a total of four physicians, and recently, a nurse practitioner has joined the staff. Columbia Basin Hematology & Oncology has fully implemented use of the Intellidose® software program, which is designed to increase the safety and accuracy of chemotherapy administration.

The practice takes great pride in having received an Oncology Nursing Society award for maintaining 100 percent staffing of oncology certified nurses (OCNs) for two consecutive years. (Currently, due to staffing changes, the practice is at 60 percent OCNs, but continues to work to reclaim 100 percent OCN staffing.) The practice’s infusion unit consists of 12 chemotherapy units. In the past seven years, the practice has had more than 75,000 patient encounters, not including infusion visits through its chemotherapy unit. Services provided include oncology and hematology consults, chemotherapy treatment, central line maintenance, IV therapy, and patient education. ☎