

Feist-Weiller Cancer Center

Louisiana State University Healthcare System, Shreveport, La.

Optimizing community access to high quality care

Feist-Weiller Cancer Center (FWCC) is part of the Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center at Shreveport. FWCC provides advanced cancer care in a university teaching hospital setting for all Louisiana residents regardless of their ability to pay. The impetus for the multidisciplinary program is to improve patient access to care and to increase translational cancer research, focusing especially on cancers predominant among state residents. Currently, FWCC is the primary state provider of oncology care in Louisiana with more than 2,000 new cases of cancer and more than 6,000 patients treated annually. FWCC is now the only program in the state providing autologous, allogenic, and matched unrelated donor bone marrow transplants.

FWCC has not only accomplished its goal of making a difference in community access to care, it is also a leader in conducting translational cancer research, and it is fulfilling its academic mandate of training the next generation of oncologists through its fellowship program. Currently 15 medical doctors are receiving training at FWCC to become oncologists and hematologists, making the program one of the largest fellowship programs in the southeast.

Access, Research, Education

Feist-Weiller Cancer Center is guided by a three-fold mission: to connect patients from Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center at Shreveport to new cancer therapies and access to clinical trials; to foster multidisciplinary research; and to educate providers and residents about cancer prevention, detection, and treatment. The program is organized into three divisions: Basic Cancer Research; Clinical Cancer Research and Treatment; and Cancer Prevention and Control. Headed by found-

ing director Jonathan Glass, MD, this comprehensive cancer center brings together more than 50 full-time faculty in the basic and clinical science departments within the School of Medicine. This academic team works collaboratively with a staff of more than 250 professionals to provide multidisciplinary care.

In October 2004, FWCC realized a major goal with the opening of a new four-story, 60,000-square-foot, multidisciplinary outpatient facility.

Planners designed the facility to consolidate all outpatient treatment of cancer. The first floor houses registration/medical records; CT equipment; dedicated space for a future radiation therapy unit; a fully staffed resource library, open to the public; and pediatric oncology with a pediatric chemotherapy area. FWCC is one of five national affiliates of St. Jude Children's Research Hospital.

Clinic space for adult oncology



Members of the Feist-Weiller Cancer Center's multidisciplinary oncology team evaluate the clinical impact of a research study.

Vital Statistics

- Licensed hospital beds: 436
- Designated inpatient cancer unit beds: 16 inpatient dedicated oncology beds; 12 additional beds for BMT patients
- Number of new analytic cases seen at FWCC and partner hospitals in 2005: 2,000

Selected Patient Support Services

- Look Good...Feel Better
- Support Groups facilitated through the Department of Psychiatry
- Full range of social work services
- Community Library
- Arts in Medicine program, a creative program in which patients "re-create" art masterpieces
- Seminars and Educational Programs throughout the year

is located on the second floor, along with the adult chemotherapy treatment area; transfusion area; special hematology laboratory; genetic counseling; and clinical research support. FWCC was the first program in the state to establish a cancer genetics screening counseling program. The Hereditary Cancer Risk Assessment Program is staffed by Gary Von Burton, MD, co-director of the Breast Cancer Program; Benjamin D. Li, MD, co-director of the Breast Cancer Program; Mary Lowery Nordberg, PhD, director of Molecular Pathology; and Mary Gutowski-Futch, RN, MSN, a cancer genetics educator. This program provides counseling for breast, ovarian, colorectal, endometrial uterine cancer, and melanoma.

The third floor houses surgical and ENT oncology clinic space; a surgical cancer procedure area that includes two fully equipped operating rooms for day surgery and a pre-and post-operative care unit; two endoscopy suites; and a radiology area that includes breast ultrasound, mammography, diagnostic radiology and fluoroscopy, and bone densitometry.

A dedicated pharmacy along with faculty and staff offices and a large conference room with video-conferencing capabilities are on the center's fourth floor.

FWCC uses an electronic medical records system and computerized physician order entry.

Designed to facilitate delivery of multidisciplinary, disease-site specific care, the outpatient building is configured so that patients can receive a full range of services—from diagnostics to treatment—in one location. "Just about everything that needs to be done diagnostically, as well as therapeutically, is done in our facility," said Dr. Glass. For example, upon arrival a patient can receive a range of diagnostic tests and that same afternoon meet with physicians from a variety of disciplines, including medical oncology, surgical oncology, pathology, radiology, and others as needed.

Currently radiation therapy services are provided in a separate



Basic cancer research is a vital part of the Feist-Weiller Cancer Center's mission.

nearby building. However, planning is underway to incorporate image-guided radiation therapy services in the new outpatient facility. Among the radiotherapy treatment modalities available through FWCC are IMRT, GammaKnife®, and brachytherapy.

Translational Research, Access to Clinical Studies

The new outpatient facility has been designed to enhance the translational aspect of FWCC with the goal of providing rapid application of laboratory research into the clinical setting.

"The basic cancer research division has evolved since inception. We have been working with the scientists in that division to direct their research more to problems with direct clinical impact. Simultaneously, we have been working with our clinicians to interact with the basic scientists in the various programs to raise investigators' awareness of the clinical problems we encounter. As a consequence, we have a number of scientific programs with tremendous clinical impact, and we are fostering an environment that promotes collaboration between scientists and clinicians," said Dr. Glass.

With its strong commitment to research, FWCC has approximately 100 open clinical trials available to qualified patients. A member of the Southwest Oncology Group (SWOG), FWCC is a leader in enrolling patients to national clinical trials. FWCC consistently ranks among the top five institutions nationwide in accrual of patients to SWOG trials.

Reaching the Underserved

In keeping with its goal of community outreach, FWCC developed the Partners in Wellness program, an early detection and disease prevention program targeting low-income individuals who do not participate in a healthcare system. Free screenings for high cholesterol, high blood pressure, diabetes, cervical cancer, prostate cancer, colon cancer, and breast cancer are offered to these individuals through this program. Screenings are available at clinic locations throughout the broader community. Since the program began in 1999, nearly 10,000 people have benefited.

FWCC faculty also go into the community to work with patients served by outreach programs located in two smaller facilities elsewhere in the state. Once a week, FWCC faculty participates in telemedicine with these outreach sites. Patients are presented to a panel of oncologists at FWCC by the physicians at the outreach site. FWCC physicians review the case. If the patient is appropriate for referral to a clinical research study, the FWCC data manager can verify the patient's eligibility. In this way, FWCC is able to reach out to patients in outlying rural areas, expanding opportunities for clinical trial participation to this underserved population.

Storm Legacy

In the aftermath of the 2005 hurricane season, FWCC continues to face some added challenges. "Several problems have been amplified by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita that decimated the healthcare system in South Louisiana," said Dr. Glass. "On a daily basis we are receiving patient referrals from all over the state. We frequently see patients from 200 or more miles away. Transportation is difficult, even for people of means. It is not only expensive, it's also time consuming to travel. A family member or friend has to do the driving." Currently, no special housing is available for patients and caregivers at FWCC. Developing some type of lodging option for patients who need extended stays locally is a priority.

By addressing challenges with creative solutions, the Feist-Weiller Cancer Center of LSUHSC-S continues to fulfill its mission of improving the health and healthcare of all Louisiana residents. ❏