

The Comprehensive Cancer Center at Pardee Hospital, Hendersonville, N.C.

Exceptional access to excellent, close-to-home care

Pardee Hospital, a 222-bed not-for-profit community hospital located in the beautiful Blue Ridge Mountains of western North Carolina is home to Henderson County's only ACoS-accredited Community Comprehensive Cancer Program. With a population of about 90,000, the county has an exceptionally large retiree population—approximately 22 percent of residents are aged 65 or older.

The Comprehensive Cancer Center at Pardee Hospital provides a full range of advanced diagnostic and treatment services delivered with a multidisciplinary approach to care. With an active clinical research program, the Cancer Center currently offers patients access to 50 clinical trials for 14 different cancer sites. Last year the program accrued 10.2 percent of new cancer patients to clinical trials.

In 2007 Pardee Cancer Center saw 579 new patients. Leading cancer sites treated are breast, prostate, lung, colon, and bladder.

The Comfort of Convenient Care

The Comprehensive Cancer Center's services are provided at several sites within Pardee Hospital. Outpatient and inpatient medical oncology services are located on the hospital's third floor. Radiation oncology services are directly across the street in the Pardee Outpatient Radiology Center, which is also home to the Elizabeth Reilly Breast Center.

Ensuring patient access to convenient quality care is a hallmark of this community cancer program. In October 2007, the Cancer Center began offering outpatient oncology nursing services around the clock—24 hours a day, 7 days a week. "It didn't seem fair that people needing chemotherapy, blood transfusions, and other outpatient services were limited to daytime appointments, Monday

through Friday, no weekends, no holidays, when they had care needs all the time... It is more holistic for our patients to come to the inpatient oncology unit, day or night, to receive outpatient care from the same nurses who are providing inpatient care," said Sandy Weeks, RN, MSN, CNAA, director for medical and oncology nursing. To make this transition, the program converted rooms on the inpatient oncology unit for outpatient care. Now people can schedule outpatient chemotherapy, blood transfusions,

and other care at a time and day that works best for them. The 24-hour service "has been very well received by patients," Weeks said. "So much of a patient's—and family's—life is interrupted by cancer and resulting care needs. This gives patients and their families control in scheduling treatments instead of having to take off work on a weekday for outpatient care." Pardee has been able to offer this service without any increase in nurse staffing levels, Weeks said.

The Cancer Center's medical



The Pardee Outpatient Radiology Center is home to the Elizabeth Reilly Breast Center.

Vital Statistics

- Total hospital bed size: 222
- Dedicated inpatient cancer unit beds: 10
- Dedicated outpatient infusion chairs: 6
- Number of new analytic cases seen in 2007: 579

Selected Support Services

- Social work services
- Nutrition services
- Rehabilitation services
- Pastoral care
- Palliative and hospice services
- Support programs including, *I Can Cope*; *Reach to Recovery*, *Look Good ... Feel Better*, *Us Too*, *Personal Loss* support group; *Bosom Buddies* support group; smoking cessation; lymphedema education; and more
- Cancer Resource Room with free wigs, hats, turbans, and prostheses

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oncology services are provided on a 32-bed, heart-shaped unit shared by two specialties—oncology and medicine—with oncology rooms located on the left side of the “heart” and medicine on the right. At the top of the “heart” directly across from the nurses’ station are the rooms that have been converted for outpatient oncology care. Color-coding and signage distinguish the specialties; the oncology side has pale green walls and the medical side has blue walls. Nurses staffing the shared medical/oncology unit are nationally certified in oncology, medical-surgical, geriatric, and/or hospice and palliative nursing. All of the oncology nurses have taken the ONS chemotherapy and biological response modifier course and are chemotherapy certified. Several of the med/surg nurses have also taken the ONS chemotherapy course and are chemotherapy certified as well. The oncology unit has six infusion chairs with the option to provide infusion services in an inpatient bed if needed. A room dedicated to patient and family education offers resource materials and computer access so that patients can check their home email.

Across the street, the Pardee Outpatient Radiology Center houses the cancer program’s radiation oncology services guided by radiation oncologist W. Mark McCollough, MD. Staffed with board-certified radiation oncologists, registered radiation therapists, a board-certified medical physicist, and a dosimetrist, the radiation oncology program offers leading-edge treatment modalities including intensity-modulated radiation therapy (IMRT) with image guidance used primarily for prostate, head and neck, and pelvic malignancies. The center has an active prostate seed implant program in conjunction with Western Carolina Urological Associates.

The Elizabeth Reilly Breast Center provides comprehensive breast health services under medical director Charles A. Albers, MD, FACS. Patients have convenient access to such advanced breast diagnostic and treatment services as digital mammography; stereotactic biopsy; sentinel node biopsy; breast MRI; and PET/

CT imaging services. Patient navigator Kay Boyd, RN, assists patients from the initial breast cancer diagnosis through treatment and recovery.

Clinical Trial Access for Older Patients

The Cancer Program at Pardee Hospital participates in NCI-sponsored cancer clinical research as a member of the Southeast Cancer Control



Lobby of the Pardee Hospital’s Comprehensive Cancer Center.

Consortium (SCCC). Pardee is the only institution in Henderson County participating in national and international cancer research programs. Led by medical oncologist James E. Radford, Jr., MD, the Pardee Cancer Research Program has a staff of 3.5 FTE dedicated research nurses.

Nationwide, people aged 65 and older make up the majority of cancer patients, yet these older patients are under-represented in clinical trials. Improving access to clinical trials for older cancer patients remains a priority in developing treatments that will benefit this patient population. Dr. Radford notes that Henderson County’s unique demographics have led to the program seeing a large number of patients who are in their late 70s and early 80s. Pardee’s Cancer Research Program has been highly successful in recruiting older patients to clinical trials and has developed extensive experience working with this patient population in the clinical trial setting. For the SELECT prostate cancer study, Pardee was the second highest accruer out of 18 SCCC member institutions.

Innovative Outreach Education

Education is one key way to enhance a community’s access to care. For the past four years, the Cancer Center has participated in an innovative annual outreach education program by hosting a “public cancer conference” at the Pardee Health Education Center

in the Blue Ridge Mall in Hendersonville. For this unique educational program, physicians from the multidisciplinary cancer care team hold a “public” tumor board conference, presenting breast, colon, and prostate cancer cases, along with radiology and pathology slides. The program gives people attending a glimpse of how the multidisciplinary team approach to care unfolds in the context of a tumor board conference. Afterward, a moderator helps field questions from the audience. “We try to emphasize the process whereby the difficult or unusual patients are treated in multidisciplinary fashion. Patients may only see one physician in the office, but it’s usually a plethora of physicians who participate in the cancer conferences,” said surgeon Thomas L. Eisenhauer, MD, FACS.

The location of the Pardee Health Education Center in the Blue Ridge Mall makes it a convenient drop-in site for local residents to get their blood pressure checked, participate in health screening activities, and access a variety of educational and support programs.

A new outreach activity will be launched this fall when Pardee Hospital hosts its first annual weekend camp for adult cancer patients and survivors. Camp Liberty will provide cancer patients and survivors an opportunity to interact in a relaxed and supportive setting. A “Celebration of Life” picnic is scheduled on the final day of camp for participants and their families.

Access for All

Convenient access to high-quality care; exceptional access to clinical trials; and broad community access to health education and screenings—all are important facets of the Comprehensive Cancer Center at Pardee Hospital. The program takes pride in the fact that no patient has ever been turned away for inability to pay for care. With a very strong support system at the hospital and in the medical oncology, surgical, and radiation oncology practices, and with staff dedicated to helping patients access patient assistance programs when necessary, this ACoS-accredited community comprehensive cancer program is succeeding in providing access to excellent close-to-home care for all patients. 🏠