

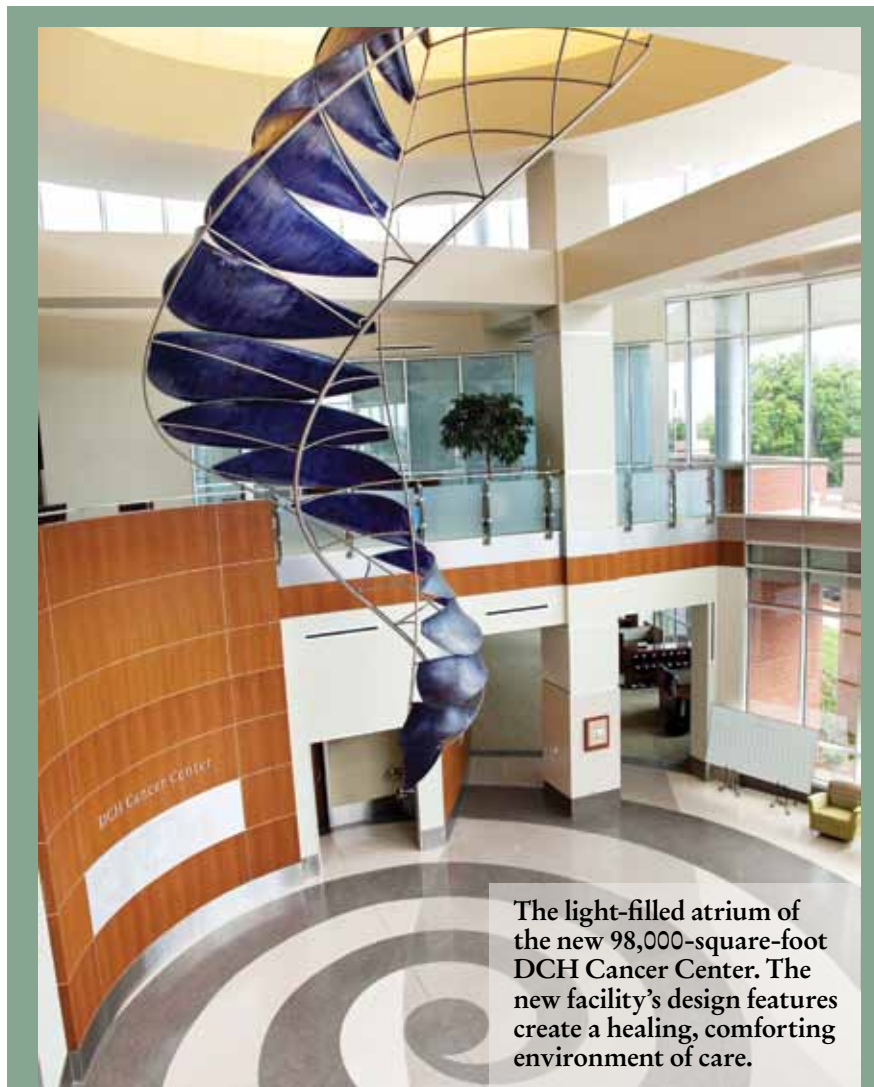
DCH Cancer Center in Tuscaloosa, Alabama

Holistic, comprehensive cancer care in a healing environment

April 2009 was a landmark month for DCH Regional Medical Center in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. Not only did the new 98,000-square-foot DCH Cancer Center open, but, in the same month, the cancer program received three-year approval with commendation from the American College of Surgeons Commission on Cancer. DCH Regional Medical Center is a 583-bed not-for-profit community-owned hospital. It is part of the DCH Health System that includes Northport Medical Center, Fayette Medical Center, and Pickens County Medical Center. All facilities are located in Tuscaloosa and Western Alabama.

At the cost of \$30 million, the new DCH Cancer Center took approximately two years to complete from inception to grand opening. The need for the new Cancer Center was clear. Over the past 12 years, patient volumes had grown by 70 percent. The previous facility had one waiting area for both medical oncology and radiation oncology, which often became so crowded it was standing room only. The infusion center, originally designed to treat 8 to 10 patients, often treated 20 to 22 patients at a time. The community saw a need for something much better for the patients of West Alabama, and they responded passionately. The DCH Foundation led a community-wide campaign and raised more than \$10 million to help fund the construction. Today, the new state-of-the-art DCH Cancer Center provides holistic, comprehensive cancer care to residents of Tuscaloosa and West Alabama.

“We are a community cancer center in West Alabama that easily competes with the top community cancer centers in the nation in terms of quality of care, technology advancements, and support services,” said Amanda Henson, MSHA, MBA, administrative
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The light-filled atrium of the new 98,000-square-foot DCH Cancer Center. The new facility's design features create a healing, comforting environment of care.

Vital Statistics

- Hospital bed size: 583
- Number of dedicated inpatient oncology beds: 16
- Number of new cases seen annually: 1,100

Selected Support Services

- Support groups include: ACS Look Good Feel Better, HeArt (Healing with the Arts), Living with Cancer, grief support for children and teens, Prostate

Cancer Support Group, Breast Cancer Support Group, Cancer Wellness, Smoking Cessation, and Staying Strong (nutritional seminars)

- Oncology dietitian
- Lymphedema specialist
- Pastoral care
- Music therapist
- Resource Center
- Cancer screenings throughout the year

tive director of the DCH Cancer Center.

The concept for the Cancer Center's design focused on creating a comforting, patient-centered environment conducive to healing and hope. The building design by FKP Architects was inspired by the curving simplicity and beauty of a nautilus shell—a symbol associated with life, renewal, and nature. Curving shapes are reiterated throughout the new cancer center from the light-filled two-story atrium with its dramatic pendant spiral sculpture to the curves repeated by the spiral-shaped inlay in the floor below and the building's curving exterior wall. "What has made our center stand out," said Henson, "is the attention to the entire patient care environment, the colors used, artwork, furniture, and lighting. They all add to the center's warm and comforting atmosphere."

In 2008 the DCH Cancer Center saw 1,100 new analytic cases. The leading cancer sites were breast, lung, colon/rectum, prostate, and urinary bladder.

Convenience and Comfort

Now patients can access the full range of cancer treatment services under one roof. Parking and entrances are designed for patient convenience. At the front of the building is a covered patient drop-off area. The building connects to the parking deck on two levels, providing patients easy access to the appropriate treatment areas. So, for example, patients receiving daily radiation treatments can park and walk directly into the radiation waiting area.

The façade of the building is glass, filtering in abundant natural light and creating an open feel—the opposite of a cold, closed-in environment. With the new square footage, space became available for additional support services. New services offered to patients, caregivers, and the community include nutritional seminars, art therapy workshops, cancer-specific support groups, caregiver support groups, music therapy, and even an art gallery that showcases works created by patients in the weekly art therapy

workshop as well as artwork created by artists from the community.

State-of-the-art Treatment Options

Radiation oncology services are located on the first floor. Equipped with two new linear accelerators—a Varian IX and a Trilogy—the Cancer Center offers patients access



The new infusion center is designed with attention to patient comfort and convenience.

to cutting-edge treatment modalities, including stereotactic body radiation therapy (SBRT), stereotactic radiosurgery (SRS), intensity-modulated radiation therapy (IMRT), and image-guided radiation therapy (IGRT). In 2009 the program added Xofig[®] Electronic Brachytherapy for the treatment of breast cancer. In the same year, DCH Regional Medical Center began offering treatment for prostate cancer with the da Vinci Surgical System.

Also on the main floor are the Cancer Center's support services, including the Belcher Chapel, a Family Resource Center, a financial counselor, a social worker, and a community outreach coordinator. Here, too, are an art work room, a café, and a patient boutique with certified fitters for prosthetics.

Medical oncology and the infusion center are located on the second floor along with a large community conference room and a wellness room where exercise classes and support groups are held. The new infusion center is designed to enhance patient comfort and convenience. It features six treatment pods and four private rooms. Each treatment pod has four infusion recliners, which are equipped with a personal TV, a guest chair, a storage cabinet for personal belongings, and wireless Internet access. Large windows help bring the "outside in" with natural light and an open, spacious

feel. From each chair, patients have views of the outside terrace garden, which runs the length of the infusion treatment room. When the weather permits, patients and family members can sit out on the terrace and enjoy the fresh air. The infusion center has a dedicated oncology pharmacy staffed by two full-time pharmacists. All of the members of the nursing staff are OCN certified and most are long-time employees of the Cancer Center.

Both the first and second floors of the new DCH Cancer Center house shell space to allow for future expansion

Currently, the DCH Cancer Center uses an EMR in the radiation oncology area and is in the process of transitioning to an EMR in the medical oncology area. Once the EMR implementation is complete, all chemotherapy and physician ordering will be electronic.

Medical oncologists from the DCH Cancer Center staff three outlying community clinics located in Bibb, Fayette, and Pickens counties. The Fayette and Pickens county clinics operate their medical oncology clinic once per week, and the Bibb County clinic operates a medical oncology clinic twice a month. These locations allow the DCH Cancer Center to take its services closer to the patients' homes.

Patients have access to clinical trials through the Cancer Center's participation in ECOG and industry-sponsored trials. In 2008 the Cancer Center accrued four percent of new patients to clinical trials. In 2009 two percent of new patients were accrued to clinical trials.

The new DCH Cancer Center offers an environment of care specifically designed with the patient's comfort and healing in mind. But the beautiful facility is only one aspect of the patient experience. The cancer center staff is what sets the DCH Cancer Center apart, Henson said. "We have a commitment to provide the highest quality of patient care for the patients of West Alabama," she said. "Yes, we have an amazing facility, some of the best radiation technology in the world, and support services to ensure that our patients' needs are met. But most of all, we have staff who, above all, treat every patient as family." ■