

## Good Samaritan Cancer Center Kearney, Nebraska

*Quality care centered on the patient*

**G**ood Samaritan Cancer Center in Kearney, Nebraska, is an example of a community-based cancer program that not only provides quality care for the region it serves, but as a National Cancer Institute Community Cancer Centers Program (NCCCP) site also contributes to efforts aimed at improving cancer care nationwide.

Accredited by the American College of Surgeons Commission on Cancer (CoC) since 1982, Good Samaritan Cancer Center has been an NCCCP site since 2007. Sponsored by Catholic Health Initiatives (CHI), Good Samaritan Hospital is a regional referral center. The Good Samaritan Cancer Center service area covers a population of nearly 350,000 that includes central Nebraska and northern Kansas. The cancer center provides comprehensive cancer care in a patient-centered, healing environment. Services include:

- Infusion therapy
- Radiation therapy
- Genetic counseling
- Patient navigation
- A patient resource library
- Support groups
- Access to a wide range of clinical trials.

Like many community-based cancer programs serving semi-rural areas, Good Samaritan Cancer Center cares for patients who often have to travel long distances to receive cancer treatment. Through its NCCCP participation, the cancer center is working to improve access to care for both the rural population and for the region's underserved.



Gathered in the Healing Garden, Good Samaritan staff sport "Kearney Tackles Cancer" tee-shirts.

### The Latest Treatment Options

In 2004 a new one-story cancer center with a Varian 21EX linear accelerator was constructed on the hospital campus. Then, in 2007, the facility was expanded to accommodate a new Varian Trilogy linear accelerator with on-board imaging. Today Good Samaritan Cancer Center offers the latest radiation oncology treatment options including IMRT, IGRT with respiratory

### Vital Statistics

- Hospital bed size: 287
- Number of new analytics cases seen in 2010: 500

### Selected Support Services

- Survivorship Program
- Dedicated Oncology Dietitian
- Oncology Exercise and Rehabilitation Program
- Integrated Care (yoga, massage therapy, acupuncture)
- Pastoral Care and Palliative Care

gating, stereotactic radiosurgery/radiotherapy (SRS/SRT), high and low dose rate brachytherapy, MammoSite, and a prostate seed implant program.

Visitors arriving at the cancer center enter into a spacious light-filled lobby and reception area. Conveniently located off the lobby are the patient resource library, a conference room, and a playroom for children. The resource

library features a touch-screen computer from CancerHelp® that is pre-populated with cancer education information, including publications from the National Cancer Institute. Visitors can view videos, search for information, and download and print out materials on topics of interest. Information is available in English and Spanish and is updated monthly. The search function allows staff to use an English-language menu to find Spanish-language materials.

A hallway, with views of the tranquil healing garden, leads to radiation oncology services (on the right) and the infusion area (on the left). Outpatient infusion services, staffed by oncology-certified nurses, are available Monday-Friday and on weekends by appointment. The infusion area has eight private rooms comfortably furnished with TV, DVD players, and phones. Patients have a choice of receiving treatment in a bed or recliner. Snacks, refreshments, and meals are available.

An RN multidisciplinary care coordinator schedules the cancer center's bi-weekly breast cancer multidisciplinary conferences and the monthly neuro-oncology multidisciplinary conferences. General cancer conferences are held twice per month.

### Support Services

Good Samaritan Cancer Center offers a range of support services to patients and their families, including smoking cessation counseling; genetics counseling; support groups, such as a breast cancer support group, "A Time to Heal" rehabilitation program, and "Life After Cancer—Surviving to Thriving"; and a telephone support group in collaboration with the local Leukemia & Lymphoma Society. The cancer center has an RN breast health specialist and a second RN coordinator who focuses primarily on assisting rural and underserved patients.

### Exceptional Access to Clinical Trials

Clinical trials are the key to advancements in the understanding and treatment of

cancer. As a regionally coordinated NCCCP site, Good Samaritan Cancer Center is working with two other CHI facilities in Nebraska—Saint Elizabeth Cancer Institute in Lincoln and Saint Francis Cancer Treatment Center in Grand Island—to increase awareness of and access to clinical trials statewide. The cancer center is also affiliated with the Southwest Oncology Group (SWOG), the Radiation Therapy Oncology Group (RTOG), and is a member of the NCI's Cancer Trials Support Unit (CTSU). In 2010 Good Samaritan Cancer Center accrued 150 patients to clinical trials, an accrual rate of approximately 30 percent.

### Quality Reporting

Good Samaritan Cancer Center not only shares quality reporting information on its website, the cancer center also served as a beta site for the Commission on Cancer's Rapid Quality Reporting System (RQRS), a reporting and quality improvement tool that has been developed to help CoC-accredited cancer programs promote evidence-based care at the local level.

### Regional Collaboration

Participation in the NCCCP has allowed Good Samaritan Cancer Center to improve outreach both within the CHI health system's Nebraska locations and across the region. A primary focus of the cancer center's NCCCP work has been outreach to the rural population and the area's Hispanic population. Through the NCCCP project, efforts include patient navigation, outreach services, and clinical trial recruitment to increase access for underserved populations.

The three CHI Nebraska NCCCP pilot sites have collaborated to conduct both professional education programs and patient education and support programs via telehealth. They have also collaborated to distribute newsletters and participate in monthly NCCCP conference calls. Outreach nurses from the three CHI Nebraska NCCCP pilot sites also work

collaboratively both in program development and in outreach efforts.

Good Samaritan Cancer Center is also working with the Nebraska Library Association to help provide reputable information on cancer to the region's rural population. The project, a collaborative effort between the Nebraska Cancer Control Plan and Good Samaritan Cancer Center, involves developing a cancer resource section within select local libraries. The cancer center has launched a pilot outreach effort in five community libraries that agreed to develop a dedicated space within the library for cancer information that is then provided by various health organizations. The library director or outreach staff then spread the word to local physicians that this vetted patient information is available at the local library.

### Community Connections

In the current economic environment, many community cancer centers are seeing an increase in patients needing assistance with the costs of cancer care. Over the past three years, efforts by local high school and college students and the community have raised \$75,000 through the "Kearney Tackles Cancer" campaign. Annual tee shirt sales and a fundraising BBQ event generate most of the monies raised. The fundraiser was initiated by a group of high school students who wanted to start a program that would benefit the community and honor a teacher who had cancer. The funds raised go to the Good Samaritan Hospital Foundation and are administered by advocates to cancer patients in need.

"Even though we are a smaller community hospital, we provide a wide range of services to help the people of our region. Our staff is very experienced and highly qualified, and we are very lucky to have them. Oncology is very much a service program that involves people, and our people are our biggest asset," said Connie Wittman, RN, MN, AOCN, MHA, director of oncology services. 