

spotlight

UT Southwestern Harold C. Simmons Comprehensive Cancer Center, Dallas, Texas



The UT Southwestern Harold C. Simmons Comprehensive Cancer Center was established in 1988 from a generous donation from philanthropist Harold C. Simmons and his wife, Annette. Today, the NCI-designated cancer center (designation earned in 2010) offers 13 comprehensive clinical care programs. It is the only NCI-designated cancer center in North Texas.

James K.V. Willson, MD, Director, Harold C. Simmons Comprehensive Cancer Center, says the center's mission is to reduce the impact of cancer today and to work to eliminate the threat of cancer in our community and beyond. "We honor this mission by offering the latest in both basic and clinical research that is advancing treatment options right now and in years to come."

Part of a large medical school with a robust training program, the cancer center's more than 230 members are affiliated with

approximately 40 departments or centers across UT Southwestern. These affiliations translate into a wealth of opportunity to blend basic science knowledge with translational and clinical pursuits for the common goal of disease intervention.

The Simmons Cancer Center is headquartered within the Seay Biomedical Building on the UT Southwestern campus in Dallas, which also houses outpatient clinics for bone marrow transplant/hematologic malignancies, breast care, gynecological oncology, and medical and surgical oncology. Simmons Cancer Center has recently opened new clinic locations in Richardson, Texas, and Ft. Worth, Texas.

Connected to the Seay Building is the Moncrief Radiation Oncology Building. All 18 radiation oncologists have offices in this building and utilize state-of-the-art treatment modalities, such as IMRT, and tech-

nologies, such as CyberKnife and Gamma Knife. Initial consultation, treatments, and follow-up radiation oncology visits occur in this location, as well as two others—the Harold C. Simmons Cancer Center-Radiation Oncology building on the west campus and the Annette Simmons Stereotactic Center in Zale-Lipshy University Hospital.

Simmons Cancer Center's clinical program is organized along disease-oriented teams. Radiation, medical, and surgical oncologists, as well as imaging professionals, researchers, and pathologists, come together to focus on the care of patients with a particular cancer diagnosis. According to Dr. Willson, the "glue" holding these teams together is the patient coordinators, sometimes called navigators.

Given the size and scope of services offered at Simmons, patient coordinators are an essential component of the care team. "They're not simply individuals who get patients from one point to another. They're usually nurses with a strong oncology background and so they become a tremendous resource in helping patients to make treatment decisions, as well as understand the complexity of the cancer experience," said Dr. Willson.

In order to help patients and families manage the stress that can come with care transitions, patients are assigned a Transitional Care Coordinator when they are admitted to the hospital and this person becomes a part of the patient's cancer care team. Oncology Transitional Care Coordinators are medical social workers that coordinate all outpatient appointments after a patient is discharged, act as a point of contact for questions, and address any issues relating to discharge instructions.





“This position is very important since we’re a large medical center and we have inpatient care units and we provide ambulatory care. The Transitional Care Coordinator helps build effective communications between those different venues, as well as community services,” said Dr. Willson.

Oncology social workers are also available to assist patients in accessing community resources, applying to financial assistance programs, finding support groups, and to address other supportive care issues.

An important component of supportive care is survivorship. For 2015, the Commission on Cancer Standard 3.3 calls for provision of a survivorship care plan. In a unique collaborative effort, Simmons Cancer Center’s affiliate Moncrief Cancer Institute, located in Ft. Worth, offers a multi-county, community-based survivorship program for patients learning to live again after treatment. The 60,000-square-foot facility also houses a wellness center, meditation garden, and hosts educational seminars in its auditorium.

“We have strong relationships with our affiliates and safety net hospitals in both Dallas and Tarrant county, which allows us to extend services to a larger group of individuals who otherwise might not have access to those services,” said Dr. Willson.

Learn more about this innovative program in the article by Keith Argenbright, MD, and colleagues on page 40.

At the Dallas location, Simmons Cancer Center is launching its EMBRACE Survivorship program in 2014. It has two tracks—one geared toward patients in treatment and the other focused on those who are post treatment.

Complementary Scientific Programs

At Simmons Cancer Center, five complementary scientific programs affiliated with 40 departments or centers across UT Southwestern act as “vehicles of discovery”:

- Cancer Cell Networks
- Chemistry and Cancer
- Development and Cancer
- Experimental Therapeutics of Cancer
- Population Science and Cancer Control.

These programs work to translate research findings across disciplines to improve patient care. Simmons further supports this transdisciplinary model by providing researchers with shared resources as well as interactive forums.

CancerGene Connect

Researchers and clinicians at the cancer center are pioneering new ways to assess individual cancer risk. Simmons Cancer Center developed CancerGene Connect, a patient-driven online genetic risk assessment program. Using CancerGene Connect, patients complete a family and medical history online prior to their appointment. This saves time and paperwork and often results in a more accurate history. The program mathematically calculates patient risk for specific hereditary syndromes and specific cancers, and allows genetic counselors to create a complete pedigree prior to the patient’s visit.

The program fulfills all the clinical documentation requirements for the new Commission on Cancer Standard 2.3 for Risk Assessment and Genetic Testing and Counseling and NAPBC Standard 2.16. The CancerGene Connect program has allowed the genetic

counseling program to cut evaluation and documentation time in half and to expand services without increasing staff or compromising patient care. Simmons Cancer Center received a 2013 ACCC Innovator Award for this program. For more information, please visit www.accc-cancer.org/innovator to watch a highlight video.

Building Toward the Future

UT Southwestern is currently constructing the \$800 million, 460-bed, 12-story William P. Clements Jr. University Hospital, scheduled to open in late 2014 to complement the 149-bed Zale Lipshy University Hospital. An entire floor will be dedicated to hematology-oncology care, including a 32-bed unit for stem cell transplantation. Designed to be patient-centered, planning input for the new hospital was given by patients, doctors, nurses, and other support staff.

Select Support Services

- Cancer psychology
- Integrative therapies
- Oncology nutrition
- Social work
- Spiritual support
- Transitional care

Newly-registered cancer patients, UTSW University Hospitals and Parkland Health and Hospital System in 2011: 5,053.