

spotlight

St. Charles Cancer Center Bend, Oregon



Bend, Ore., is a famous destination for lovers of adventure and the outdoors. Through days full of sunshine and mountainous views, St. Charles Cancer Center provides comprehensive cancer care to patients in central and eastern Oregon, a service area of 32,000 square miles. Located on the west side of the St. Charles Hospital campus, the cancer center operates as an outpatient department of the St. Charles Health System, a four-hospital system with locations in Bend, Redmond, Prineville, and Madras, Ore.

St. Charles Cancer Center provides multidisciplinary oncology and hematology services. The leading sites treated at St. Charles Cancer Center include breast, colon, lung, and prostate cancers. The cancer program is accredited by the American College of Surgeons Commission on Cancer and the National Accreditation Program for Breast Centers. It is also one of 24 cancer centers in the United States to receive the 2018 Commission on Cancer Outstanding Achievement Award. In prioritizing multidisciplinary care, St. Charles Cancer Center provides services to its community that compete with large academic cancer programs.

A Spirit of Teamwork

The cancer center houses medical and radiation oncology services, an infusion center, a dedicated infusion pharmacy, and supportive cancer care services. Surgical oncology services are provided as part of the cancer program within the main hospital and in outpatient surgery centers. The cancer center provides specialty surgeries through a

dedicated lung cancer surgeon, fellowship-trained colorectal surgeon, and fellowship-trained breast surgeon. All physicians and staff of St. Charles Cancer Center are employed by St. Charles Health System.

The cancer center's medical oncology services provide patient care through a dynamic system of teamwork built around its physicians, rather than the popular nurse-run triage model. Eight physicians provide medical oncology services through teams that are made up of two physicians, each with a dedicated nurse and medical assistants; a scheduler who is shared; a scribe; and a physician assistant with two dedicated medical assistants. Four radiation oncologists make up the radiation oncology team. All schedulers, registration clerks, and financial navigators provide services to patients across all modalities of treatment.

Comprehensive Care

St. Charles Cancer Center provides various modalities of radiation treatment via two LINAC machines and a computed tomography simulator, including IMRT, IGRT, and SBRT. A 22-chair infusion suite with a private room is located on the second floor of the cancer center and is staffed with up to 10 chemotherapy- and biotherapy-certified nurses. Chairs are placed around the suite so patients can view the Cascade Mountain range through spacious windows that provide plenty of natural light. Scribes are available in the clinic areas to help streamline patients' appointments, so patients can check out and schedule their next appointment at once. Scribes will also capture the necessary documentation so that physicians'

notes are completed in a timely manner, including any assessments and plans of care.

The USP-800-compliant infusion pharmacy is adjacent to the infusion suite in which the cancer center can compound chemotherapy on-site. Three oncology pharmacists and four pharmacy technicians make up the pharmacy staff. The pharmacy does not dispense its own oral oncolytics but receives these medications through specialty pharmacies. Pharmacy staff are dedicated to helping patients find financial support through its oral chemotherapy support program and providing education to patients on both oral and/or infused therapies.

"We help patients navigate through chemotherapy and financial assistance, so that cost is not a barrier to starting therapy," explains Sarah Hawkins, PharmD, BCPS, BCOP, pharmacy manager at St. Charles Cancer Center.

The cancer center offers patients access to a variety of supportive care services free of charge. Speech pathology, oncology rehabilitation, palliative care, social work, nurse navigators, along with complementary services such as Reiki and acupuncture are available. The cancer center recently implemented a survivorship program for patients who have finished active treatment and are transitioning back into healthy self-care. This program runs in coordination with supportive services, such as rehabilitation and nutrition, and educates patients on exercise, activity, movement, diet, and mental health while they are in survivorship care. By engaging the community, the cancer center is also able to provide food directly to patients in need through its Harvest for Hope

program, which also provides snacks for patients in the infusion suite. To learn about and gain access to these services, all patients have an initial meeting with a social worker to assess needs via a distress thermometer. Staff at St. Charles Cancer Center are proud to provide a vast array of supportive services to treat patients' psychosocial needs.

Close to Home Care

To bring care close to home and ensure treatment adherence, St. Charles Cancer Center has a satellite clinic in Redmond, Ore., 25 miles north of the main cancer center and a remote clinic in Burns, Ore., that is more than 100 miles away.

"Because we are so spread out, some of our patients have to travel great distances to get to us, which can be a limiting factor," explains radiation oncologist Linyee Chang, MD. Each clinic follows the same staffing model the main cancer center follows.

Medical oncology's physician teams travel to each location together to provide care at the clinics, and each team visits a clinic about once a month.

The Redmond location has a medical oncology clinic with a dedicated pharmacy, staffed by an oncology pharmacist, that was recently upgraded to be USP-800 compliant. The Redmond clinic's infusion suite is staffed full-time with chemotherapy- and biotherapy-certified nurses and schedulers who rotate between its two clinic locations. The Redmond clinic provides chemotherapy and follow-up visits to patients. To further serve patients in the rural setting, plans are in place to include radiation oncology services in Redmond and expand its infusion services to include a total of 15 chairs and one private room.

The Burns clinic provides infusion services



and follow-up visits only, because all surgical and radiation treatments for these patients must be done at St. Charles Cancer Center. On average staff will see about 60 patients per month at the Bend location and 16 patients per day at each satellite clinic.

Protecting the Community

St. Charles Cancer Center prioritizes risk reduction and preventive services through its high-risk clinics. The high-risk breast clinic applies "smarter screening" by giving women who are identified as higher risk for breast cancer more intensive screening, explains Dr. Chang. Women receive genetic testing, imaging, and education about possible risk reductions. St. Charles Cancer Center refers to and partners with Central Oregon Radiology to perform this screening. Patients' information is collected in a database so that their primary care physicians have access to consult reports from the cancer center. The database will then alert providers when a patient's next imaging is due and coordinate care between the cancer center and the patient's primary care physician. St. Charles Cancer Center is expanding its high-risk clinics to include a pulmonary nodule clinic

to identify lung cancers at an earlier stage and a high-risk colorectal clinic that will be managed by its colorectal surgeon and genetic specialists.

Central Oregon also sees more sun daily than many states and sits at a higher altitude, giving the area the nickname of the "high desert" of Oregon. Due to these factors, St. Charles Cancer Center sees more visitors in the summer and a higher incidence rate of skin cancers compared to the other states. The cancer center provides extensive education on its website on how to best protect the skin while outside and how to spot a potentially cancerous mole from sunburns.

Providers and staff at St. Charles Cancer Center are dedicated to delivering strategic preventative and comprehensive cancer care to its community. "We are really focused on how we treat people. We treat our patients in a way that we would want to be treated, and I think that really shows in our care," says Tom Schumacher, BSN, MHA, director of St. Charles Cancer Center. 