

spotlight

Corewell Health—West



Along the corridors of the Medical Mile in Grand Rapids, Michigan, sits Lemmen-Holton Cancer Pavilion, the main campus of Corewell Health—West. The six-story building is one of the cancer program's 6 locations across Northwest Michigan. Through its doors, patients with cancer can access the only adult blood and marrow transplant department on the west side of the state. This department has 11 infusion chairs, 4 private rooms, and is staffed by 2 physicians, 7 advanced practice providers (APPs), 6 nurse coordinators, and 6 registered nurses (RNs).

Lemmen-Holton Cancer Pavilion provides patients with surgical services, medical oncology and hematology services, an infusion clinic with 26 chairs, and laboratories for cytogenetics, flow cytometry, and molecular diagnostics. Its radiation oncology department is staffed by 10 dosimetrists, 6 physicists, 8 radiation oncologists, 15 RNs, and 37 radiation therapists. The medical oncology department is staffed by 7 oncologists, 9 APPs, 38 RNs, and 3 charge RNs. The center has 16 surgeons—2 of whom provide gender affirmation surgery. This department's staff includes 14 RNs, 20 APPs, and 2 licensed practical nurses. "Our cancer care team largely consists of employed providers," said Anas Al-Janadi, MD, vice president, department chief, Oncology at Corewell Health—West.

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Patients with cancer who present at the center have access to 6 apheresis bays, 4 linear accelerators, and a radiology department that

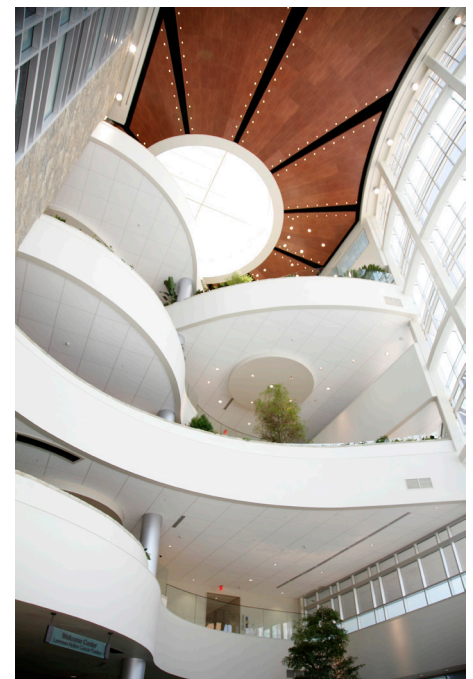
provides port placement, image-guided biopsies, thoracentesis, and paracentesis services. "[In this location], we get patients from as far north as the upper peninsula, and even some who will come from the south, and across state lines to receive treatment," said Katie Celentino, director of operations at Corewell Health—West.

Comprehensive Cancer Care

According to Celentino, delivering care to a diverse patient population close to home is only one part of the puzzle. Ensuring the care is comprehensive is the other. "We are connected in a way that you do not always see with large systems," Celentino explained. "The

care is not going to vary or be substandard because you are in an outlier clinic or infusion facility." Consequently, each center is tailored to needs of the community in which it is located.

In Reed City, patients can find The Susan P. Wheatlake Cancer Center, equipped with a full-service pharmacy, 16 infusion chairs, and a linear accelerator. "The pharmacy just underwent a \$3 million renovation to ensure that it is meeting all the requirements for comprehensive cancer care," said Aly Dondzila, MHA, director of operations, Cancer Care at Corewell Health—West. The Gerver Cancer Center has 9 infusion chairs, while the Greenville and Ludington Cancer Centers each have 8 infusion chairs. The Pennock Cancer Center has 7





infusion chairs, and patients are provided non-oncology infusion services at Blodgett Hospital in Grand Rapids, and Zeeland Hospital in Zeeland, Michigan.

On January 16, 2024, the program opened the doors of a brand-new facility on the Ludington campus: Crane Haven Cancer Care Center. A total of \$5.47 million was dedicated to the project, which began on November 30, 2022. According to Barbara Schmidtman, PhD, vice president, cancer health operations, Corewell Health–West, the facility represents the program’s commitment to ensuring patients receive the best care possible at state-of-the-art facilities. The Greenville facility will also undergo similar renovations later this year.

Betty Ford Breast Care Service

The 1974 breast cancer diagnosis of Elizabeth Anne Ford, the 38th First Lady of the United States, sparked the recognition of Breast Cancer Awareness Month the following year.¹ Ford, who grew up in Grand Rapids, was just 7 weeks into her role as First Lady when a routine exam revealed a lump in her chest.¹ At the time, no guidelines around breast cancer existed. Ford promptly announced that she had breast cancer and would undergo a mastectomy—a public acknowledgement that up until her announcement was unthinkable for any woman, much less the First Lady. Within a week following Ford’s surgery, women across the US reported to clinics for breast exams and

newspaper articles detailed how to perform self-exams. The White House received tens of thousands of cards and letters from women offering their support and sharing how Ford’s candor and confidence influenced them to get screened. The effect Ford had on the women’s health in the US cannot be understated and through the Betty Ford Breast Care Service, Corewell Health–West continues her legacy. The service has 17 locations throughout West Michigan and its staff includes a radiology manager, 8 RNs, 42 mammographers, 11 ultrasound technologists, 3 mobile mammography unit drivers, and a community health program specialist who oversees grant funding. Through its mobile mammography unit, the program provides screening services to the American Indian population in Michigan.

“We have a 4-year relationship with the Inter-Tribal Council of Michigan, where we serve the American Indian women in the upper most part of northern Michigan,” said Nichole Coy, director of operations, Oncology at Corewell Health–West. “This past year we were able to provide 138 mammograms to the Native American communities over a 5-day period.” According to Coy, the program plans to offer these patients screening for cervical cancer in the summer of 2024. This is a necessary initiative, as American Indian and Alaskan Native women are nearly twice as likely to develop cervical cancer compared to White women.² “Over 4 years, we have been able to improve access to an incredibly underserved and rightfully mistrustful patient population by 200%,” Coy said. “That has taken a lot of meaningful conversation and intentionality to make that happen. It is something we are incredibly proud of.”

From January 1, 2020, to December 31, 2022, the mobile mammography unit performed 11,466 screenings. The program’s community outreach efforts also include a partnership with Grand Rapids African American Health Institute to engage Baptist Churches in conversations about cancer screening, annual melanoma screening events, the distribution of a fecal immunochemical test kit that boasts an 82% return rate, and the Irish Jig—an annual 5k run to raise awareness for all cancers with a focus on fundraising for patient assistance programs. The 40th edition of the race will happen later this year.

Support Services

Understanding the need to help patients as they navigate the cancer care continuum, the program offers a wide array of support services. “We have nutrition, salon, music therapy, massage services, and more to support patients throughout the course of their treatment and into survivorship,” said Katherine Williams, supervisor for Community Programming at Corewell Health–West. The Lemmen-Holton Cancer Pavilion houses a salon that is open on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and it had 293 patient appointments in 2023. The center also hosts an expressive arts program twice a month. Patients can access individual acupuncture services at the Pavilion and Crane Haven Center and group sessions at the Susan P. Wheatlake Cancer Center.

“Under our community program, we house 3 social workers in Grand Rapids, and 3 currently support our other locations,” Williams said.

“I am always eager to brag about our social work and nurse navigation team in Grand Rapids—they are disease site specialists and help navigate those patients through the continuum of their care,” Celentino shared. According to Williams, a very generous philanthropic community ensures the program can deliver these services to patients at no cost.

Clinical Trials

“Clinical trials are a major component of our program,” Dr. Al-Janadi said. According to Dr. Al-Janadi, the program has multiple site-specific tumor boards during the week. “There is always a clinical trial office team member present at each tumor board,” he said. “This is important as each patient is screened by the clinical trial office when they are coming for a new appointment, so we are always aware of the trial pool.”

The program is accredited by the American College of Surgeons in breast cancer, Commission on Cancer, Foundation for the Accreditation of Cellular Therapy, and the American College of Radiation Oncology.

According to Schmidtman, these feats demonstrate the program’s commitment to excellence and collaboration as part of a larger not-for-profit health system, named Corewell Health, that provides healthcare and coverage



with a staff of more than 65000, in 21 hospitals, more than 300 outpatient locations, and several post-acute facilities.

“I think our secret sauce here is truly the leadership team, as well as the people that are delivering care,” she said. “Yes, we span wide and far, but our team has done an exceptional job in developing ways to care for patients in some of the most rural communities in the west side of the state that otherwise would not have access to an oncologist.” 🗣️

References

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