



Southern Comfort: The Cancer Center of Southwest Virginia

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Southern Comfort: The Cancer Center of Southwest Virginia

Roanoke Memorial Hospitals is a 680-bed regional tertiary care medical center and teaching hospital. It is the flagship of Carilion Health Systems, an affiliation of 13 hospitals within southwestern Virginia. The Cancer Center of Southwest Virginia, a division of the hospital, opened in 1980.

Vital Statistics

- Total institution bed size: 680
- Dedicated cancer unit beds: 56
- New cancer patients seen each year: 1,000
- Annual number of patients on NCI-approved protocols: 50
- Community served: 1 million.

Social Support Services

- An 18-bedroom Ronald McDonald House, located a few blocks from the Cancer Center, provides accommodations for cancer outpatients as well as families.
- Four support groups
- An on site image enhancement service, known as Expressions!, helps build patients' self esteem.
- A full-time patient representative attends to patients' nonmedical needs and serves to assist with communication and resources.
- A free local shuttle is provided for patients who live within 15 minutes of the Cancer Center.

“**W**hat sets our Cancer Center apart from others is the beauty of the facility itself and the affiliation with the hospitals within our system to provide exceptional quality of care for our patients,” said Margaret Harvey, R.T.T., Cancer Program Administrator at the Cancer Center of Southwest Virginia. “We serve the community with a comprehensive continuum of cancer care from education to survivorship and hospice. We are committed to a Cancer Center of Excellence with an integrated interdisciplinary approach.”

The entire first floor of the Cancer Center is dedicated to radiation therapy, while seven board-certified oncologists and hematologists are located on the second floor. Oncology social work services are managed by 1.5 full-time employees, and a full-time oncology dietitian provides in- and outpatient support. Oncology nursing care is provided in two inpatient oncology units consisting of 56 hospital beds. Physical and occupational therapies are provided through departments within Roanoke Memorial Hospitals.

Because The Cancer Center of Southwest Virginia is a part of the Carilion Health System, which is an

affiliation of 13 hospitals, it gains referrals from outside the Roanoke area. “We take advantage of the opportunities the system provides by expanding regional outreach and referral potential, allowing primary care to remain in the local community and specialized cancer care referred to the tertiary cancer center site,” said Harvey.

The medical oncologists have reached the rural community by establishing three oncology outreach clinics. The medical and radiation oncologists participate in six tumor boards in six hospitals outside the direct areas served. This participation provides expertise in medical management of patients, permits decisions to remain at the community hospital, and allows easy access and enhanced communication between rural primary care physicians and the oncologists.

The Cancer Center offers a variety of community education and early detection services. An established breast awareness program reaches about 120 women each month at all socioeconomic levels. “System-wide mammography campaigns, prostate screenings, and other activities have heightened the awareness and position of our system as the lead in cancer care in the region,” said Harvey. “We remain active in the community, participating with the American Cancer Society and other community service organizations.” Recently, two major community-wide survivorship recognition activities were accomplished with this cooperative effort.

The Cancer Center's philosophy is to bring to the community a facility that relays the feeling of living. The radiation oncology area, which was built with the patient's well-being in mind, features two-story high skylights and flowering gardens in each of the four radiation treatment rooms. One room even has its own waterfall, symbolic of life. “Care has been taken to design the facility to help remind patients that even with the necessity of treatment, there is still beauty in life,” said Harvey. ■



Physically connected to the oncology in-patient units via a covered walkway, the three-story Cancer Center houses radiation oncology services and oncology and hematology medical offices.