



Florida Hospital the Walt Disney Memorial Cancer Institute Guided by Patient Priorities

Guided by Patient Priorities

To cite this article: (1999) Florida Hospital the Walt Disney Memorial Cancer Institute Guided by Patient Priorities, *Oncology Issues*, 14:5, 8-10, DOI: [10.1080/10463356.1999.11905083](https://doi.org/10.1080/10463356.1999.11905083)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10463356.1999.11905083>



Published online: 17 Oct 2017.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 3



View related articles [↗](#)

Florida Hospital The Walt Disney Memorial Cancer Institute Guided by Patient Priorities

The Walt Disney Memorial Cancer Institute began in 1985 as the cancer program at Florida Hospital. In 1989 it became the first member of the Duke Oncology Consortium, gaining inclusion in the university's clinical research program. The following year, the cancer program was named in honor of Walt Disney, to commemorate his name and ideals. The association with Duke University and Disney helped transform a strong cancer program into one of the largest and most advanced com-

munity cancer programs in the country. The involvement with Duke University resulted in an intense focus on research, clinical trials, and new technology; yet the customer-friendly vision of Walt Disney ensured that patients would benefit the most.

Designers and architects were faced with the challenge of building a facility that could accommodate all the necessary rooms, equipment, and clinics, while simultaneously maximizing convenience for patients, physicians, and staff. With easy access for patients a top priori-

ty, the new design had to minimize walking distances to and from all areas of the facility. Achieving this goal within a massive, 174,000 square-foot cancer center seemed daunting at first. Designers quickly recognized, however, that by concentrating on vertical rather than horizontal space, the Institute could accommodate all necessary elements and still offer easy access. As a result, the Walt Disney Memorial Cancer Center is a sleek, eight-story facility with an emphasis on elevators rather than long, sprawling hallways.

continued on page 10

Florida Hospital is an acute care health system in Orlando and the largest private, not-for-profit hospital in Florida. The Walt Disney Cancer Institute at Florida Hospital offers full diagnostic, treatment, prevention, education, and support services in a state-of-the-art facility that opened in 1998. Specialties include pediatric hematology/oncology, adult hematology/oncology, GYN oncology, adult and pediatric BMT (allo and auto), basic clinical research, a gamma knife center, a genetic counseling center, and a new neuro-oncology division.

VITAL STATISTICS

- Total hospital bed size: 1,432
- Dedicated cancer unit beds: 146
- Number of analytic cancer patients seen each year: 3,400
- Managed care penetration in the state: 28 percent

PATIENT SUPPORT SERVICES

- Registered oncology nurses provide information about cancer

detection, treatment, and prevention through Cancer Resource Line, a free 24-hour telephone service.

- The Interim Care Program serves as a cancer center for

out-of-town and seasonal patients traveling in the area.

- Specially trained volunteer patient care ambassadors provide support to patients.



continued from page 8

The patient-focused design continues with the interior layout of the Institute. Because of constant traffic, radiation and diagnostic radiology are conveniently located on the first floor. Patient education, a priority at the center, is strategically positioned next to the front door. This simple placement forces patients to regularly pass the cancer resource library, which offers the latest literature and videotapes.

Despite the short distances to all areas of the building, transportation services are available at the front door. In response to travel concerns outside the facility, the Institute plans to open a twenty-one suite hotel on the top floor. Although constructed with transplant patients in mind, the hotel also accommodates other patients drawn from the Institute's large tertiary referral area and from Central and South America.

THE DUKE CONNECTION

Through its affiliation with the Duke Comprehensive Cancer Center, cooperative research groups, and pharmaceutical companies, the Walt Disney Memorial Cancer Institute offers patients access to more than 180 different clinical trials for many types of cancer. "When the cancer program began in 1985," said Cancer Program Administrator Wendy Henry, "one of the things that we wanted to do was to get involved in clinical research, so that we wouldn't have to send patients out-of-town for clinical trials."

One particular benefit of the relationship with Duke University

has been inclusion in clinical research conducted with national cooperative groups. Today the Institute is the largest affiliate member of the Duke Oncology Consortium, a status that has paved the way for relationships with pharmaceutical companies. "Duke opened the door for us and enhanced what we already had here," Henry explained. "As a result of our participation in [federally-funded cooperative groups] and our high quality record of patient accrual and tracking, companies keep an eye on us, so as new therapies came forward, drug companies approached us."

The Institute is in the unique position of providing an "academic-like" focus in the community setting, with highly skilled specialty areas and basic research capabilities that are rarely seen outside academia. With a caseload approaching 4,000 per year, the Institute does not fit the mold of the typical community cancer center. "We're a different being, kind of a hybrid," said Henry.

REHABILITATION AND COMMUNICATION

The Walt Disney Memorial Cancer Institute has also benefited from the well-established rehabilitation program at Florida Hospital. By sharing expertise and multiple rehabilitation centers in the community, the Institute quickly developed a strong program of its own, particularly for breast cancer. Furthermore, the addition of lymphedema management has proven valuable to many patients, particularly those with

serious debilitation problems.

"We also conduct a comprehensive fatigue management project every year, and we focus on it for a whole month," Henry added. The rehabilitation and nursing team works to educate family members and staff about fatigue, and Henry is pleased to report that the project has strong physician support.

Communicating as a team remains an important goal at the new facility. To this end, having all outpatient cancer services under one roof affords physicians many advantages. "Prior to our new building, we had a very strong cancer program, but it was spread over a large campus and it was difficult to navigate," Henry stated. Now, members convene more frequently and as a result, communication has improved.

"Having so many specialists working collaboratively under one roof is unusual for a community hospital," added Medical Director Rebecca Moroose, M.D. "Many other community hospitals have specialists scattered in offices throughout the community," she said.

Since moving into the new building, Henry has found that, "our feeling of team is stronger than ever before." The increased interaction among physicians also provides indirect benefits to patients. By facilitating communication and coordinated teamwork, the ideal environment for physicians becomes the ideal environment for the best treatment outcomes. Henry was quick to point out, "the ultimate convenience for a patient is the best possible treatment." 🍀