

Shawnee Mission Medical Center

Compassionate Care In Kansas City

The oncology program at Shawnee Mission Medical Center (SMMC) has served the Kansas side of metropolitan Kansas City for more than 15 years. As part of Saint Luke's-Shawnee Mission Health System, the 383-bed community medical center in Shawnee Mission, Kans., has a 26-bed inpatient oncology unit with a full staff of oncology professionals. Specialists excel in such services as palliative care, lymphedema prevention and treatment, and women's health.

Four years ago SMMC opened its lymphedema treatment program. Today, the program is the largest lymphedema program in the Kansas City area. In the first eight months of 2000, 182 patients were seen. Because lymphedema treatment is very specialized and not available in smaller communities, some patients choose to drive for up to three hours to receive treatment. Lymphedema services are provided by four licensed occupational therapists with specialized training in the comprehensive treatment of lymphatic and venous edema. Patient evaluation requires a physician's referral.

Comprehensive lymphedema treatment at SMMC includes manual lymph drainage, multilayered compression bandaging, application of the pneumatic compression pump, exercise prescription, fitting for compression garments, and education. Patient education is provided in the areas of lymphedema precautions, skin care, self-bandaging, and self-massage. The duration of treatment varies anywhere from two to six weeks depending on the severity of the lymphedema. Patients are evaluated every six months after completing therapy to ensure maintenance of limb reduction. Patients and their families are encouraged to attend the hospital's monthly lymph-

phedema support group. A unique service that the clinic provides is a one-time, pre-op or post-op educational session that emphasizes lymphedema precautions, meticulous skin care, and exercise.

EMPOWERING AND COMFORTING PATIENTS

The inpatient oncology unit at SMMC is well respected across the Kansas City metro area for the clinical expertise of its nursing staff. Assessment and management of pain and other acute symptoms in patients with cancer are major strengths of the team. One of the first hospitals in the city to develop protocols for palliative care, the oncology team is currently expanding palliative care services for use throughout the hospital for any patient at the end of life. In addition, work begun in 1997 by the oncology team to raise the standards of pain assessment and management led to hospital-wide initiatives in 1998.

Soft colors and lighting, and a rock fountain at the entrance to the cancer unit, help create an atmosphere where patients and families feel empowered and supported. Volunteers bring a cart filled with paintings to patients so they can select art to hang in their room. Frequently the aroma of fresh-baked bread fills the unit.

The center takes great pride in its unusual "Laughing Room," the outpatient treatment room and resource center for humor. Patients can relax in a homelike setting while receiving their treatments. The late Norman Cousins, former editor of *The Saturday Review*, dedicated this special place in 1984. Cousins' personal philosophy of humor and healing inspired its name. The concept of the Laughing Room embraces the idea that

humor can have a positive effect on the ability of the human body to heal and fight disease. Staff nurse Susan Layton-Nelson explained, "I tell patients that you have to find humor in everything that happens in life—the good and the bad. I am not sure who came up with the phrase 'laughter is the best medicine,' but there has never been a truer statement."

Some patients come to the Laughing Room for a simple injection, and others come to receive antibiotics. However, the majority of patients stay for several hours to receive chemotherapy or blood transfusions. Most of the patients visit the room on an outpatient basis.

"Patients don't dread coming for chemotherapy. Instead, they actually look forward to seeing the same people," said Layton-Nelson, "which is why a lot of them schedule appointments the same day of the week. The Laughing Room becomes a support place as well as a treatment center."

According to Layton-Nelson, next to humor, support is the best medicine. SMMC encourages family members or friends to come to appointments with patients and share a meal or watch a comedy video.

The 1994 renovation of the cancer center allowed for the addition of a large family room with a full bath and kitchenette. Relatives of patients who are not doing well use the area as a waiting room, sometimes for as long as a week. At other times, patients use the room for short visits. The room has been the setting for birthday and Christmas parties, and even for the wedding of a patient's daughter.

The SMMC's Center for Women's Health houses a busy mammography program. The

The Shawnee Mission Medical Center is affiliated with the Saint Luke's-Shawnee Mission Health System, which includes eight hospitals throughout the Kansas City area. The American College of Surgeons Commission on Cancer approved SMMC at the community comprehensive level in 1985. SMMC received the Kansas Excellence Award in 1998. The award is the highest level of recognition presented to any Kansas organization by the Kansas Award for Excellence Foundation.

For more information, contact

the Shawnee Mission Medical Center at 913-676-2000, or visit the web site: www.saint-lukes.org.

VITAL STATISTICS

- Total hospital bed size: 383
- Cancer unit beds: 26
- Number of analytic cancer cases seen in 1999: 729
- Managed care penetration in state: 19 percent

SELECTED PATIENT SUPPORT SERVICES

- The Lymphedema Support Group for patients and their

supporters meets monthly.

- The Breast Cancer Support Group for women or men meets regularly.
- Look Good/Feel Better! is a grooming and makeup program for patients undergoing cancer treatment.
- Camp Bluebird is a three-day adult cancer camp held twice a year. Patients can participate in hiking, horseback riding, and other recreational activities while receiving support and information on dealing with cancer.



Patients receive comprehensive lymphedema treatment at SMMC.

department performs more than 14,000 mammograms annually. A sono-directed, hand-held mammo-tome biopsy device was recently added. It allows for a more complete

removal of a tumor non-surgically and was the first of its kind in the greater Kansas City area. SMMC expansion plans include a Comprehensive Breast Center planned for

late 2000 in collaboration with St. Luke's Shawnee Mission Health System. ☐