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PHOTO BY DUANE TINKEY

Dr. Philip Colletier,  
radiation oncologist

## ZEROING IN on **CANCER**

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# ZEROING IN on CANCER

BY JOE GARDYASZ

Comprehensive cancer care is reaching new and increasingly competitive heights in Greater Des Moines.

Next month, Mercy Medical Center – West Lakes will open its doors as part of the 300,000-square-foot Mercy Wellness Campus now taking shape in Clive. The 36,000-square-foot cancer center will bring an array of outpatient cancer therapy services to the western suburbs for the first time, including some of the most advanced radiation therapy technology in the world.

A central weapon in the center's cancer-fighting arsenal will be the Trilogy Radiotherapy System, a next-generation linear accelerator that delivers precisely targeted doses of intensive radiation to tumors with minimal impact on surrounding healthy tissue.

Mercy's launch of the center and Trilogy on Nov. 17 won't be the first use of this new technology in Central Iowa, however. On Aug. 25, the John Stoddard Cancer Center at Iowa Methodist Medical Center began treating patients with a Trilogy machine it purchased earlier this year.

The multimillion-dollar investments underscore a recognition by both health systems that an aging population and higher survival rates are driving an increasing need for cancer treatment. Mercy Cancer Center's patient load, for instance, increased by more than 50 percent between 2000 and 2006. Nationwide, the number of new cancer cases is expected to increase 38 percent by 2020.

Trilogy's advanced capabilities will complement Mercy's Cyberknife system, also one of the most advanced non-invasive radiation therapy systems available, said Dr. Philip Colletier, one of Mercy Cancer Center's six radiation oncologists. Mercy Cancer Center was the 25th hospital in the nation to obtain the Cyberknife system 2 1/2 years ago, and remains the only Iowa hospital to have one, he said.

"This (new center) will really improve our ability to deliver rapid care at (Mercy's main campus), and fulfill a huge need out here with all the growing population," Colletier said. Trilogy's sub-millimeter accuracy means that more effective high-dose treatments can be safely delivered, which has proved to boost cure rates, he said.

With an on-board CT scanner to verify the precise location of the tumor immediately prior to treatment, technology that enables it to direct the dose around vital organs, and the ability to maneuver 360 degrees to target hard-to-reach tumors, the Trilogy system is one of the world's most precise and flexible treatment options, Colletier said.

Beyond its newest technological capabilities, Mercy's new \$7.2 million

## ■ Mercy Cancer Center – West Lakes will feature world-class radiation therapy technology



PHOTO BY IAN BRADSHAW

Technicians at Mercy Cancer Center – West Lakes demonstrate how a patient would be positioned on the Trilogy Radiotherapy System.

Cover Story

center will provide many of the same cancer treatment services available at Mercy's main campus, said Philip Blumberg, director of the Mercy Cancer Center.

"Really, we're duplicating what we have downtown, and putting an integrated cancer center here with all of the outpatient services that you would need: medical oncology with chemotherapy upstairs, PET/CT imaging, chest X-ray, a resource center, counseling services, massage therapy, dietitian and genetic counseling. And we're going to have that right here in Clive."

Between 30 and 35 patients per day will be scheduled daily for treatments on the Trilogy system, which will relieve pressure on Mercy's cancer center on its main campus, Colletier said. That will mean fewer patients will need to be scheduled into the evening for treatments, he said.

Mercy obtained approval for the center and its Trilogy machine in June 2007 from the Iowa Department of Public Health's Health Facilities Council. Because the Stoddard Center replaced an existing linear accelerator with the Trilogy system, it did not require a certificate of need for its machine.

Phil Harrop, executive director of the Stoddard Center, said no decisions have been made whether Iowa Health

– Des Moines, which operates Iowa Methodist and the Stoddard Center, will build a satellite outpatient cancer treatment facility similar to Mercy's in the western suburbs.

"At this point, we feel very strongly that our downtown location provides a comprehensive set of services and treatment options that are available in one location that are convenient and high-quality," Harrop said. "Are we aware of Mercy's efforts? Sure. Will we watch and monitor the results of those? You bet we will. Is that something that's our primary focus? Not at all. Our patients are our primary focus."

Adding the Trilogy machine will expand Stoddard's capabilities by enabling it to treat tumors both within the brain as well as areas outside the brain, such as spinal or other "extracranial" areas. The center also this year added a new PET/CT scanner in its radiation department, which enables tumors to be precisely located for treat-

ment planning.

"At Stoddard, we feel like historically we've always been on the cutting edge; we remain on the cutting edge," Harrop said. "We have the most technologically diverse range of treatment options for our patients."

Harrop noted that Iowa Health recently completed a renovation of the inpatient oncology unit, located on the Powell Wing of Iowa Methodist, to provide a more "family-centric environment" during treatment stays. The amenities added include laundry and shower facilities for family members as well as a chapel and healing garden.

Similar renovations to increase patient amenities and comfort may be ahead at Stoddard, Harrop said.

"I wouldn't want to speculate on what capital requests I have submitted might be approved, but it is my hope there will be additional renovation work done to the John Stoddard Cancer Center," he said.

Harrop said the Stoddard Center, like Mercy, has had to schedule outpatient cancer treatments in the evening because of high patient volume.

"We have found that some patients don't mind that option," he said. "Whenever possible, we keep scheduling to a day shift. But truly, looking at capacity, hours are the easiest way to increase the center's capacity, instead of investing millions of dollars in another machine. It's quite easy and less expensive to expand hours for a period of time."

Stoddard also plans to hire additional cancer care coordinators – nurses who are specially trained to facilitate all aspects of a patient's cancer care – who work as part of multidisciplinary teams. The center currently has care coordinators and teams dedicated to colorectal cancer, breast cancer and liver disease

patients, and with additional hires will expand that approach to other types of cancer. "Obviously, that compassionate care is very important when fighting cancer," Harrop said.

Mercy's new cancer center will take a holistic approach as well, Colletier said.

"A big part of modern-day cancer treatment is not only to get their surgery, radiation and chemotherapy perfect, but also to take care of them as a survivor,

a spouse and a working person," he said, "so that the whole person is managed and not just see them as a cancer patient. I was amazed when we were designing this building; I learned things I never knew about that would create a healing and soothing environment for a patient." □



– Phil Harrop  
executive director,  
John Stoddard Cancer Center

## Mercy Wellness campus

Developed by Ladco Development, the six-building Mercy Wellness Campus will encompass 300,000 square feet of space dedicated to health and wellness facilities. It's located on a 24.5-acre site at the intersection of University Avenue and 128th Street in Clive. The campus will feature 12 acres of open space, 784 parking stalls and the buildings will be connected by enclosed walkways. The project "is a unique approach to unifying clinical care with health and wellness programs, to create a campus that provides the total package for healthier living for people in the community," said Jon Garnas, Ladco's president and CEO.

In addition to the Mercy Cancer Center – West Lakes, the campus includes:

FACILITY	SQUARE FEET	PROJECTED COMPLETION
YMCA Healthy Living Center	68,000	June 2009
Multi-specialty medical office	56,000	Construction to start mid-2009
Ambulatory surgery center	83,000	September 2009
Sleep center	38,000	December 2008
Multi-specialty medical office	18,000	Construction to start mid-2009

## Facts about the Trilogy system

- The Trilogy Radiotherapy System, manufactured by Varian Medical Systems Inc., is the first linear accelerator that can be used to deliver all advanced forms of external-beam radiotherapy, including 3D conformal radiotherapy, Intensity Modulated Radiation Therapy (IMRT) and fractionated stereotactic radiation therapy.
- Prior to treatment, images of a patient's tumor and the surrounding anatomy are generated using MRI, CT or PET scanning, and a treatment plan is prepared that specifies the exact dose of radiation to be delivered, as well as how the system can best deliver that dose. The system's increased accuracy and power enables smaller lesions to be treated more effectively.
- A respiratory management system takes into account the tumor movement that occurs as the patient breathes, turning the beam off and on so that treatment is delivered only when the tumor is stationary, so that patients can continue to breathe naturally during treatment.

SOURCE: MERCY CANCER CENTER