

H.W. Koenig Cancer Centers at SSM St. Joseph

Comprehensive, compassionate, community-based care

When it comes to oncology services, SSM St. Joseph Health is certainly living up to Missouri's motto as the "Show Me" state. Located in St. Charles County Missouri, SSM St. Joseph is showing residents of the tri-county area (St. Charles, Lincoln, and Warren counties) the value and importance of having innovative, state-of-the-art services delivered by exceptional physicians, nurses, and staff close to home.

SSM St. Joseph Health Center began providing cancer services to the community in 1991, and during the past decade has continuously upgraded and expanded in order to meet the needs of the fastest-growing region in Missouri.

The H.W. Koenig Cancer Center, located at St. Joseph Health Center in downtown St. Charles, is the anchor of the campus' cancer program. The hospital is a 364-bed, acute care hospital with a Level II Trauma Center.

Remodeled in 2005, the Cancer Center provides fully integrated radiation and outpatient medical oncology services. SSM St. Joseph Health Center has a dedicated inpatient oncology floor, cancer registry, Cancer Information Center, and the International Early Lung Cancer Program (I-ELCAP). A second H.W. Koenig Cancer Center is located at SSM St. Joseph Medical Park, an ambulatory care center with fully integrated radiation and medical oncology services.

SSM St. Joseph Hospital West in Lake Saint Louis, a 125-bed, acute care facility, has a dedicated inpatient oncology floor that provides care for patients living in the western region of the county, as well as Warren and Lincoln counties. A third H.W. Koenig Cancer Center at Hospital West is planned for the near future.



A meeting of the cancer program's tumor board

Vital Statistics

- Total hospital bed size: 364 licensed beds (St. Joseph Health Center); 125 licensed beds (St. Joseph Hospital West)
- Designated inpatient cancer unit: 14 beds
- Number of new analytic cases seen in 2005: 865

Selected Patient Support Services

- Integrative and Complementary Therapies program includes yoga, Pilates, tai chi, and massage therapy
- Man to Man/US TOO® prostate cancer support group
- Breast Cancer Support Group
- Cancer Information Center
- Nutrition Services
- Pastoral Care Services
- Specialty Senior Services
- Palliative Care Services

The SSM St. Joseph oncology program is designated as a comprehensive community cancer center by the American College of Surgeons (ACoS), and has received that designation annually since 1993. In 2005, the program received the ACoS Commission on Cancer Outstanding Achievement Award for garnering nine of nine commendations.

"The Commission on Cancer's approval and top rating demonstrates the high quality cancer care we provide for our patients," said Daniel Luedke, MD, medical director of SSM St. Joseph's oncology services. "They have access to multidisciplinary specialists who can meet all

of their needs and they don't have to travel outside of their community for this excellent care."

SSM St. Joseph is fully integrated—meaning patients have access to a continuum of care including fully equipped surgical suites, cardiovascular surgery, intensive care units, and an inpatient oncology floor with specially trained nurses.

Aligned Services for Optimum Care

Aligning services to offer patients one-stop care, both H.W. Koenig Cancer Centers are designed so that chemotherapy and radiation oncology services can be provided in one

location. These facilities are staffed by the independent, dedicated physicians of Missouri Cancer Care, P.C., a private practice of six medical oncologists and two radiation oncologists. Each center features a centrally located reading and consultation area allowing physicians to easily consult on cases.

For patients and their families, these centers offer seamless, efficient care delivery. "When the patients arrive, whether they will be seen by the medical oncologist or radiation oncologist, they are greeted by the same receptionist. From the beginning they see a familiar face," said Dr. Luedke. "This helps smooth the navigation of the multidisciplinary cancer treatment they are receiving."

The H.W. Koenig Cancer Centers house the latest technically advanced equipment for the diagnosis and treatment of cancer. Each facility is equipped with a 21 EX linear accelerator, and each offers intensity modulated radiation therapy (IMRT) with respiratory gating. St. Joseph radiation oncologists Jeffrey Gilroy, MD, and John Bedwinek, MD, are the only specialists in the St. Charles County region to use the respiratory gating technology.

St. Joseph Medical Park houses the only fixed PET/CT scanner in the tri-counties area. "We installed the respiratory gating packet on our PET/CT scanner, our CT simulator scanner, and on both linear accelerators," said Lillie Thomas, RT, BA, director of oncology services. "We have the capability to do treatment planning from the PET/CT and transmit those images to the CT simulator for further treatment planning. When the patient is ready to start his or her treatment, the same data will flow to the linear accelerator at both facilities." Thomas says that in developing the Cancer Centers, St. Joseph has invested in digital imaging and electronic medical record technology so that radiation oncologists can easily share information between the two Centers.

Disease-site Specific, Multidisciplinary Care

The program has 865 patient visits per year, with the leading cancer sites being breast and lung, followed by prostate and colorectal cancer. Currently, the program offers disease-site specific multidisciplinary care for both breast and lung

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cancers with future multidisciplinary programs for gastrointestinal and genitourinary cancer in the planning stages. Both the breast and the lung cancer multidisciplinary programs include a full-time nurse navigator who helps patients through the continuum of care.

Breast cancer services are located in all three facilities. The program's nurse navigator is prepared and trained to be an advocate for the patient, and assists the primary care physician at each stage of the patient's progress through the program. Through a Susan G. Komen Foundation grant, St. Joseph offers free diagnostic and screening mammograms to eligible women.

Mammograms are available at all sites. Each facility is equipped with computer aided detection (CAD), breast MRI, ultrasound-guided biopsy, and breast stereotactic procedures. Digital mammograms are available at St. Joseph Medical Park. A multidisciplinary breast conference, which includes a surgeon, radiologist, medical oncologist, radiation oncologist, pathologist, nurse navigator, and other specialists, meets twice monthly.

Through the SSM St. Joseph cancer program, patients have access to a range of clinical trials. The program accrues 5 to 10 percent of patients to clinical trials each year. Since 2005,

the program has participated in the I-ELCAP international early lung cancer action project that involves CT screening for lung cancer. Through a grant, the program is able to offer patient assistance for those who cannot afford the cost of CT screening.

No Place Like Home

St. Joseph's cancer program shows its commitment to understanding and meeting the community's healthcare needs through its extensive outreach efforts in cancer prevention, screening, and early detection. For example, the St. Charles County community has particularly high rates of smoking. All of the St. Joseph facilities are tobacco-free environments, and the nurse clinician on staff at the Cancer Information Center provides education sessions at local schools on the danger of smoking.

One challenge for this community cancer center—as is the case for many others nationwide—is its close proximity to a large, NCI-designated cancer center that has begun to extend its reach into the community as well. On the one hand, the two cancer programs derive mutual benefit from their proximity. The academic program looks to the community-based cancer program to help build patient accrual to clinical trials. In turn, the community-based program benefits from the ability to participate in such trials, and also from the ability to refer patients to the academic institution's bone marrow transplantation program.

On other hand, challenges arise when academic institutions move into the community, establishing "clone" facilities that compete with community-based programs. Community-based programs offer patients the important option of receiving full-service, high-quality care in their home setting, according to Dr. Leudke. "We feel we have much more to offer patients by virtue of the fact that we are fully integrated at two sites and strategically located in the county," he said. "Our cancer program is anchored in a hospital that is 20 minutes away for our patients, not a 20-minute helicopter ride. We are here 24 hours a day. If the patient has neutropenic fever or a heart attack, our emergency department and hospital are here—and close—for them." ■