



UCHealth's
Cancer Center
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Cutting-Edge Care

UCHealth's comprehensive new cancer center

by rhea maze

Cancer is a complex and often terrifying journey. Survivors who have been through it played a key role in developing the components of University of Colorado Health's new cancer center in Fort Collins, which opened in June 2014.

When plans for the new center began in 2011, an advisory council of survivors assembled around the table—elbow-to-elbow with physicians, nurses and administrators—to ensure that the patients coming after them would have access to the best possible care and support.

“When they spoke, we listened,” says JoAnn Lovins, senior director of oncology at the new center. “From concepts to actual design to picking out fabrics, they let us know what was most valuable to have—and there’s healing in that.”

The 30,000-square-foot, \$11 million cancer center prioritizes treating the whole person with the most advanced care. It does so by providing access to treatment, research, and a variety of support and survivorship services under one roof.

“The average cancer patient has about 100 visits in their first year,” Lovins says. “Our goal is to bring that down to 60.”

A single appointment at the cancer center often involves meeting with a variety of specialists—from physicians, counselors and patient navigators to social workers, dietitians and financial advisors. This makes it possible for cancer patients to more efficiently receive the care they need, without extensive travel.

The cancer center’s lobby, a wrap-around design meant to evoke the feeling of a hug or a warm blanket, is bright, inviting and opens up to an outdoor healing garden. The radiation department houses two linear accelerators, deemed the world’s most advanced technology for delivering targeted radiation to cancer tumors.

The modern-looking infusion center is adorned with vibrant local artwork and stylish, glazed-glass sliding partitions that take the place of ominous hospital curtains. It provides patients with options including private and semi-private rooms, family-friendly rooms, heated chairs and comfortable community and outdoor spaces.

“Patients will sometimes have their physician visits on the outdoor patio facing the mountains and the trees,” Lovins says.

The center includes a robust team of clinical research professionals who work in close partnership with Colorado State University and University of Colorado Cancer Center in metro Denver. These collaborations allow patients to access promising clinical trials.

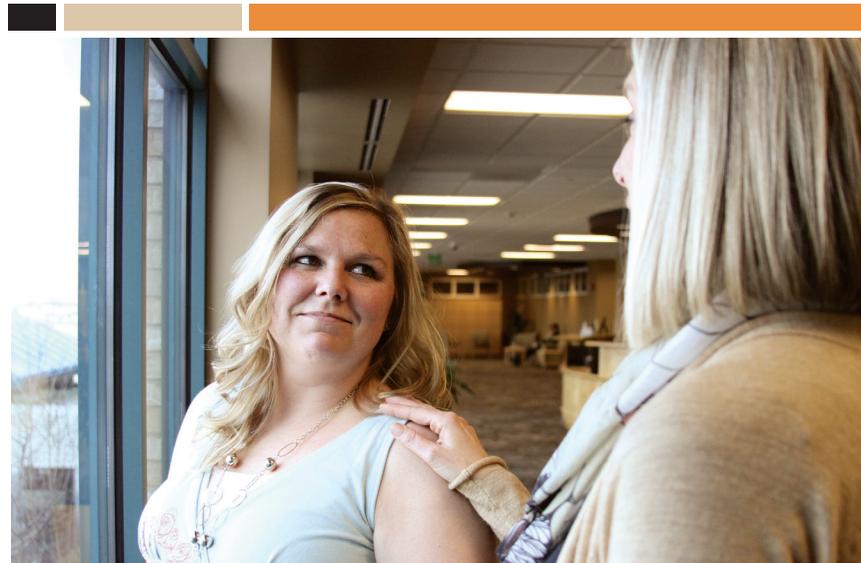
Physicians from the new cancer center will even travel to places like

Estes Park and Laramie so that patients don’t have to come to Fort Collins for everything. “We want to get care as close to home as possible, safely,” Lovins says.

The real magic, however, happens in the center’s multidisciplinary room. Here, teams of physicians, specialists and other professionals assemble weekly to share their expertise and develop the best treatment plans for each patient. They can also teleconference with experts from around the world when tackling challenging cases, bringing everyone with something valuable to contribute together into one room.

Local lung cancer survivor Dona Ammons exemplifies the strategy’s success. After experiencing some chest pain, a mass was found in her lung. The next morning, UCHealth’s lung nodule team met to take a look at what was found and discuss the best course of action for her care. A simple treatment plan was decided upon and a little over two months later, her cancer was gone.

But reaching a cured state is not the end of a cancer patient’s journey. The final phase of the new cancer center, slated for completion in June, is a survivorship and wellness center. This will help patients who have completed treatment successfully integrate back into their lives and the community. Complete with an exercise gym, a demonstration/participation kitchen, rehab and physical therapy programs, support groups, and a conference center for community education workshops, the plan includes what survivors know future patients need to fully heal. And it has already succeeded in bringing many supportive local entities together. “When you listen to your patients,” Lovins says, “you can’t go wrong.”



Many survivors recall the stress of not knowing who to call after receiving a cancer diagnosis. They say they wish they’d had a guide. “Most people don’t have an oncologist on speed dial—so we have patient navigators, who are highly skilled, highly trained oncology nurses, help navigate patients and families through this very difficult phase,” Lovins says.