

World-class cancer care

New Avera Cancer Institute offers comprehensive care, right here at home

BY DONNA FARRIS, AVERA MCKENNAN WRITER/EDITOR



World-class cancer care calls for evidence-based treatment provided by an expert team of physicians, with outcomes that meet or exceed national standards. World-class care offers the latest technology... a healing, welcoming environment... and integrative therapies to care for the whole person, body, mind and spirit.

The new Avera Cancer Institute will be that world-class center – right here in Sioux Falls. A local and regional *destination* for cancer care, the Avera Cancer Institute will be the largest and healthiest comprehensive healing environment for cancer in the city of Sioux Falls, the state of South Dakota and the wider region. Innovative design will accompany innovative approaches to the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of cancer, as well as rebuilding of patients' lives after treatment.

Slated for completion in the fall of 2010, this five-story, 217,000 square-foot facility is the largest building project in Avera history. The building, which will house the Avera Cancer Institute as well as a new outpatient surgery center, is a \$90 million investment in a healthier future for residents of this region.

"We're building upon our 26-year standing as a regional cancer leader. Thanks to the leadership of a dynamic team, we are providing services rarely found in communities our size, such as bone marrow transplant, tumor specific programs and gynecologic oncology," said Fred Slunecka, regional president for Avera McKennan.

A regional leader

Avera McKennan has been a leader in cancer care throughout the region for 26 years. The hospital's first inpatient oncology unit was opened in 1982. In 1986, it was the first cancer program in the state to be nationally recognized as a Comprehensive Community Cancer Center by the American College of Surgeons. Avera McKennan then opened the region's first free-standing comprehensive cancer center in 1990. South Dakota's only bone marrow transplant program was added in 1996.

"Now, our desire to expand our services is propelling us to the next phase of integrating diagnostic and support services into the medical plan for cancer treatment," said Kris Gaster, assistant vice president of Outpatient Cancer Clinics.

"Our care goals are first to prevent cancer, to cure the disease for those who have cancer, to help cancer patients cope through treatment, and then help rebuild their lives after cancer," said Dr. Addison Tolentino, oncologist with Avera Medical Oncology and Hematology. "There are a lot of programs we wish to implement that our current building does not allow."

Cancer cases at Avera McKennan have increased by 24 percent since 2002. Lung, breast and colon cancers have increased by 65 percent, 27 percent and 30 percent respectively in the last five years in terms of patients treated. Inpatient and outpatient discharges have grown by over 12 percent, with a 19 percent increase in clinic visits. Oncology/hematology inpatient care has grown by 20 percent at Avera McKennan.

"While we're seeing a growth in volume, expansion of cancer services has always been the impetus driving our cancer program," Gaster said.

Cancer treatments are increasing in complexity and duration. "The next generation of cancer treatment is beginning to emerge," Gaster said. Some of these treatments include targeted drug therapies, vaccine therapies, DNA profiling, gene therapy, and further advances in radiation therapy. "Staying at the cutting edge of cancer care requires a new state-of-the-art facility that accommodates all aspects of cancer care."

Design and development

The innovative and unique design of the new Avera Cancer Institute is the result of site visits to nationally-known community cancer centers and months of focus group meetings.

Patients communicated that they wanted to come to one place for all their care, rather than going from building to building.

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– FRED SLUNECKA, REGIONAL PRESIDENT, AVERA MCKENNAN

They wanted a healing environment, incorporating the beauty of nature both indoors and out.

“The best thing about being involved with this process is helping to make things better for the next person who battles cancer,” said Janice O’Connor, breast cancer survivor and focus group member. Privacy during infusion came to the forefront at patient focus groups. While patients experience camaraderie in the same room with others going through chemotherapy, many prefer infusion to be a private process, with plenty of room for family and friends.

Incorporating nature is refreshing and inspiring. “It’s life,” O’Connor said. “The building design includes waterfalls and water features, which remind me of baptism.”

Physicians were also involved every step of the way. “Our physicians are very compassionate and patient-focused,” Gaster said. “They see the patient as a whole person, rather than a diagnosis. They have a very high standard of care, and their patients always come first.”

Private infusion suites which overlook an indoor atrium are among highlights of the new ACI, Dr. Tolentino said. A layout for efficient clinic operation is another. “The space is designed to help us work more efficiently and spend more time with our patients, rather than patients spending more time in the waiting room.”

World-class facility

The new ACI will offer access to the latest in technology, with diagnostic imaging, physician’s clinics, chemotherapy, radiation therapy, research, a breast health diagnostic center, integrative medicine and support services all under one roof.

The building features natural daylight, stone, wood and green areas. Public areas will include space for musical and drama performances, meeting rooms, a bistro, retail store and wig salon. Throughout the building will be numerous pieces of commissioned artwork. A two-story indoor atrium will feature abundant

Caring for the whole person

The Avera Cancer Institute will be home to the region’s largest integrative medicine program. While a new term in the medical realm, 70 percent of cancer patients are already seeking out alternative ways to heal.

“Integrative medicine is seen by patients and practitioners alike as an important aspect of cancer care,” said Dr. Stephen Medlin, hematologist with Avera Hematology and Transplant.

Integrative medicine involves therapies like yoga, healing touch or massage, acupuncture, aroma therapy, and dietary and nutrition consultation.



“Medicine’s focus tends to be on the physical health of the person. But the issues are much more complex, involving psychological, social, financial and spiritual aspects,” Dr. Medlin said. “Not all of a patient’s needs are met by meeting with their physician to manage their cancer. Integrative medicine is a way to address other issues, helping cancer patients to regain their sense of well-being.”

Integrative medicine treats the whole person – physically, emotionally, spiritually and socially. It’s a collaboration of evidence-based medicine and healing therapies.

Medical treatment is still critical in cancer care. An Internet search of “alternative medicine” for cancer care can turn up treatments that may not help at all, and in fact, could harm. “Physicians in a health care system have a responsibility to help our patients choose therapies that can help them succeed,” Dr. Medlin said.

While the integrative medicine program at the Avera Cancer Institute is still in development, it will follow recommendations made by national oncology organizations for patients in active cancer care.

Research is ongoing as to how integrative therapies help patients. Acupuncture may help relieve nausea or pain. Healing touch may aid in relaxation and pain relief. Yoga provides relaxation, and the ability to focus one’s mental energy. Expressive therapy, such as photography, sculpture or music, may benefit patients in ways different than traditional support groups.

“If we can do a better job meeting these needs of our patients, we’re doing a better job of taking care of our patients,” Dr. Medlin said. “Integrative medicine will give patients more tools to work with in their fight against cancer.”

plantings, waterfalls and other water features. An outdoor sculpture garden is open to the community for enjoying walks, nature and art.

“We understand and respect the healing qualities of art,” Gaster said. “If we can create an environment that promotes healing, we can place our patients in the best positive position for healing – physically, emotionally and spiritually.”

The chosen theme for the building is “Life’s Transformation through Grace and Technology.”

“A cancer diagnosis is a life-transforming event,” Gaster said. “It creates such a crystallization of what is really important.”

Grace is delivered by God through family, friends, doctors, nurses and support staff. Gaster said. “Technology is the cutting-edge treatments that allow more and more people to survive cancer.”

Toward a better future

In future years, the ACI will continue developing programs around specific diagnoses, similar to the ACI’s current comprehensive breast cancer program. “Each program will be unique, because each disease is unique,” Gaster said. Because more people today are surviving cancer than ever before, survivorship care will remain a priority.

The ACI will continue its strong commitment to research, education and prevention in the fight against cancer. “We hope that this building someday will be used for something other than cancer,” Gaster said.

Dr. Tolentino agreed. “The goal of the National Cancer Institute is to make cancer a chronic disease, like hypertension, rather than a deadly disease. That’s something that is achievable in the next decade.” The ultimate goal is a cure. “Already, there are cancers that are very curable,” Dr. Tolentino said.



An investment in the future

With more than a half million deaths annually in the United States, cancer is the second leading cause of death in the nation.

In recent years, Avera has made significant investments to address other leading causes of death:

- **Heart disease, the nation’s No. 1 killer:** In 2001, Avera joined in partnership with North Central Heart Institute and MedCath Inc. to open the Avera Heart Hospital of South Dakota, the region’s first and only hospital dedicated solely to the diagnosis and treatment of heart disease.
- **Stroke and cerebrovascular disease, the No. 3 cause of death:** Avera McKennan is home to the Avera Neuroscience Institute, with expanding programs in diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation. The Avera McKennan Stroke Center in 2005 became the first stroke center in the region certified by the Joint Commission.
- **Accidents and trauma, fifth leading cause of death:** Avera McKennan is designated as a Level II Trauma Center, with a new state-of-the-art Emergency Department constructed in 2007.

“Now is the time to invest in cancer. While early diagnosis and more effective treatments are dramatically changing cancer outcomes, this disease is still a formidable enemy,” said Fred Slunicka, regional president of Avera McKennan.

With an increased incidence of cancer, an aging population, advances in early detection, more complex treatments and increased survivorship, cancer needs are expanding and changing. Everyone is touched by this disease – either personally, or by a loved one affected by cancer. Consider these statistics:

- In South Dakota, 19 people die each day – four of cancer.
- During this decade, cancer cases are increasing by a projected 23 percent, to reach 1.6 million nationwide in 2010.
- In South Dakota, 4,000 cases per year are diagnosed.
- A new cancer is diagnosed every 30 seconds.
- One in two men will be diagnosed with cancer at some point in his lifetime.
- One in three women will be diagnosed with cancer at some point in her lifetime.

- Prostate, lung and breast are the top three cancers, followed closely by colorectal cancer. Survivorship is an important aspect in the future of cancer care. Since the mid-1990s the cancer death rate has been steadily decreasing because of incredible advances in cancer detection, prevention and treatment.
- The overall national five-year survival rate has increased from 51 percent in 1975 to 66 percent today.
- Currently in the United States there are 10.5 million cancer survivors.

Already, the Avera Cancer Institute has implemented numerous programs for cancer survivors, including the region’s only cancer rehabilitation/fitness program in partnership with the Avera McKennan Fitness Center and “A Time to Heal” for breast cancer survivors. Currently, survivorship plans of care for other types of cancer are being completed by an interdisciplinary group of cancer physicians.

Sources: National Center for Health Statistics, American Cancer Society and National Cancer Institute’s SEER (Surveillance, Epidemiology and End Results)

World-class expertise



Thanks to cutting-edge treatments and technology, Avera outcomes are on a par with national cancer centers, said Dr. Addison Tolentino, oncologist

with Avera Medical Oncology and Hematology. Yet, in comparison with other community cancer centers, “we have an edge here.”

With 14 specialists, Avera has the largest team of cancer experts in the state and region. That includes specialists in breast cancer, radiology, gynecologic oncology, bone marrow transplant and hematology, to name a few. A strong commitment by physicians ensures that the most progressive comprehensive cancer care is available right here in Sioux Falls and throughout the region through outreach care. This has been demonstrated in a number of ways:

- Hematologists and transplant physicians have developed a fully accredited bone marrow/stem cell transplant program so that any transplant performed at any other center in the United States can be performed here.
- Medical oncologists are working with a team of pathologists, radiologists, surgeons, plastic surgeons and primary care physicians to develop tumor-site specific programs for breast, lung, colorectal and other types of cancer.
- Gynecologic oncologists bring the latest surgical techniques of robotics.
- Physicians participating in clinical and pharmaceutical trials give patients access to the latest cancer treatments.
- Dr. Michael Robinson’s additional certification as a palliative care physician brings expertise in symptom management during treatment.
- Radiation oncologists offer clinical trials and progressive radiation treatments, such as brachytherapy and X-Knife stereotactic radiosurgery.

Staying on the cutting edge is a continual process of seeking out the best evidence-based practices at national conferences or in medical journals. Physicians collaborate in a weekly tumor board and breast cancer conference to discuss cases and ensure patients are getting the very best care for their specific diagnoses. “Iron sharpens iron,” Dr. Tolentino added.

GREEN More than our corporate color

Avera is going green – not just as a corporate color, but in a commitment to protect the environment, said Richard Molseed, senior vice president for Environmental Services at Avera McKennan.

“We want to make sure our facilities are as clean and safe as possible. In light of society’s growing awareness of our environment, it’s just logical to take it to the next step, as a green building,” Molseed said.

The Avera Cancer Institute is registered as a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED)[®] project by the U.S. Green Building Council. Avera will pursue LEED certification, and if certified, the ACI would be one of an elite group of health care buildings achieving this designation.

Designed to conserve energy and water, the ACI is the first project in South Dakota to utilize Xcel Energy’s Energy Design Assistance[®] (EDA) program. Other aspects of energy and water conservation include:

- A passive solar design with south-side glass. “By changing the width of the window mullions, we maximized passive solar gain in the winter, and minimized it in the summer,” Molseed said.
- Interior lighting plan to maximize sunlight and reduce electricity use
- Landscaping with native vegetation for minimal watering
- A rooftop garden to reduce the “heat island” effect caused by heat absorption and cut cooling costs
- Ice storage to conserve cooling costs. During the night, the cooler will create a large block of ice to be used as a coolant during the daytime. This will keep energy use at a consistent level, rather than peaks and valleys. When the ice melts, that water is reused.

“The energy-saving measures we incorporated will pay for themselves in eight years or less,” Molseed said. Other measures that make the building “clean” and green” include:

- Recycling, use of recycled building materials and reduction of construction waste
- Purchasing of construction materials locally to save transportation costs
- Indoor air quality measures, including filtering air and exposing air to UV light to kill airborne bacteria
- Use of materials or chemicals that are not harmful, i.e., adhesives, paints and sealants
- 7,500 square feet of indoor gardens that will aid in balancing indoor humidity and air quality.

“There is no one big feature that makes this building green. It’s the summation of a lot of little things that add up to a big impact in terms of conserving our natural resources and protecting our environment,” Molseed said.

“WE HAVE AN EDGE HERE.” – DR. ADDISON TOLENTINO, ONCOLOGIST