March 19, 2009

Contact: Caryn Ruch, 503 494-4082, OHSU, ruchc@ohsu.edu

**Partnership Providing Local Access to Highest Quality Care, Research, Translates to Savings of Time and Money for Patients and Oregon**

_The successful collaboration between OHSU Knight Cancer Institute and Salem Cancer Institute provides more access to new teams of healthcare providers, clinical trials._

A long car ride to receive healthcare can be trying for anyone. Compounding that with a diagnosis of cancer and frequent trips to Portland for care can be life altering. Today, cancer patients in Marion and Yamhill counties are more likely to be treated close to home and have access to cutting-edge clinical trials near their community, thanks to the partnership between Salem Cancer Institute and OHSU Knight Cancer Institute. The Salem Cancer Institute is part of Salem Health, and represents a coalition of cancer specialists, primary care physicians and Salem Hospital.

The collaboration is one of many successful efforts to address healthcare work force shortages in Oregon by providing added access to care with existing services, and to keep Oregonians closer to home for care when they have cancer. The partnership allows both providers to share expertise and resources, while avoiding duplicative services. The result is better patient care, a cost savings for patients and a cost savings for Oregon overall.

“A patient’s health and access to care are the motivating factors for these partnerships. An added benefit for all of us are the opportunities we have to share the latest knowledge amongst each other as care providers,” said Brian Druker, M.D., director of the OHSU Knight Cancer Institute.

The Salem Cancer Institute brings a strong history of cancer treatment in the Willamette Valley to the partnership with innovative treatments such as TomoTherapy, the first hospital-based and best utilized radiation treatment unit in Oregon. “We’ve enjoyed collaborating with OHSU over the years. Formalizing the partnership now brings added value through shared care protocols and coordinated care offerings. It also allows us to look forward to additional shared care innovations in the future,” said Nancy Boutin, M.D., medical director of the Salem Cancer Institute.

A significant component of the partnership is including Salem patient cases in tumor board discussions where best treatment options are determined for individuals. OHSU Knight Cancer Institute oncology subspecialists travel to Salem Cancer Institute to participate in their tumor boards. Meanwhile, Salem physicians have access to any of 15 tumor boards that are held each week at OHSU to discuss specific types of cancer, such as breast, prostate and lung cancers, and leukemia. Since no cancers are alike, and
different types of people respond to different treatments, this approach ensures that patients get the targeted and personal care they need. The boards include oncology specialists such as physicians, nurses, radiologists, pharmacists and genetics counselors, all bringing their expertise to the table.

Integral to the partnership’s success is the ongoing commitment of John Strother, M.D., affiliation medical director, who has been charged with making this collaboration work as envisioned. Strother, with strong ties to OHSU and now a practicing medical oncologist in Salem, is looking to create new opportunities between Salem Cancer Institute and OHSU for better patient care. For example, a recent breast cancer symposium, where OHSU and Salem doctors shared best practice treatment models is being proposed as a regular event to bring the providers together around other types of cancer treatments.

When patients are eligible for clinical trials they now can be enrolled and participate through Salem Cancer Institute, which has direct access to many of the principal investigators and treatments under way at OHSU. This means patients no longer must travel to be a part of the latest promising research. An indirect benefit is that more patients can be in the studies, adding to the body of knowledge available for study.

For Greg Elwood, a Salem resident with leukemia, access to clinical trials at OHSU may have saved his life. His disease had been kept under control for years by his Salem oncologist, Bud Pierce, M.D., Ph.D. But as the leukemia progressed, it was clear that a bone marrow transplant would be needed. Pierce, a member of the Salem Cancer Institute and now a member of the executive committee of the Salem Cancer Institute/OHSU Knight Cancer Institute affiliation, referred Elwood to the OHSU Transplant Clinic. Though OHSU could perform the transplant, no donor match was available.

Fortunately OHSU doctors shared information about a study under way to test the effectiveness of the drug Gleevec on patients with the same type of leukemia that Elwood was battling. Druker, the lead investigator of the clinical trial and the person who discovered Gleevec, found a spot for Elwood in the study. Years later, Elwood is still taking Gleevec, which has since been approved by the FDA, and he is still in remission.

Patients also benefit from an OHSU medical geneticist and counselor who travel monthly to Salem Cancer Institute to hold genetic counseling clinics. The clinics look to determine which people need more frequent screenings and whether family members may be at risk as well. Add to it all, a shared medical record to help provide seamless coordination of care. For example if a patient needs an OHSU consultation, the results can be reported to the patient’s Salem physician, and a course of treatment determined and delivered, close to home and family.

[Editors note: The merits and successes of the program will be shared with Oregon legislators and cancer survivors Thursday, March 19, from 4 to 6 p.m., in the Center for Outpatient Medicine at the Salem Hospital Cancer Institute.]