

Community Cancer Center, Roseburg, Oregon

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spotlight

Community Cancer Center Roseburg, Oregon



With a population of 107,000, Douglas County, Oregon, is a rural area with high poverty and a high obesity rate. The county also has a high rate of tobacco use and lung cancer incidence; about 20 percent of adults in the county smoke, and 10 percent use smokeless tobacco, doubling and tripling the national rates, respectively. With a quarter of the population aged 65 or over, Douglas County has the third worst health outcomes in Oregon.

Nearly 40 years ago, a prominent community member in Roseburg, located in Douglas County, was diagnosed with cancer and had no option but to drive over an hour north to Eugene for radiation therapy. This firsthand experience with the burden of travel to receive cancer care raised the business community's awareness of the need to establish radiation services in Douglas County close to home. This prompted the creation of the Community Cancer Foundation and, through a capital campaign, funds were raised for a

10,000-square-foot building equipped with radiation oncology services called the Community Cancer Center.

By 2009 the program had outgrown its space and wanted to co-locate other supportive and medical services. The community came through again, raising more \$2.5 million for a new 44,000-square-foot building.

An Independent Nonprofit

Located on the grounds of Mercy Medical Center, the independent Community Cancer Center is a registered nonprofit that owns the three-story building. On the first floor, radiation oncology services are provided through a medical services agreement with Roseburg Radiation Oncology, a practice that employs three radiation oncologists. The cancer center's staff of 24, including two medical physicists, two medical dosimetrists, and five radiation therapists, works with Roseburg Radiation Oncology to operate the radiation equipment.

The second floor houses two outside nonprofit organizations, Camp Millennium and Douglas County Cancer Services, which are staffed almost entirely by volunteers and provide cancer patients with access and referrals to supportive services free of charge. The second floor also houses a Mercy Medical laboratory, which provides easier use for patients requiring laboratory services.

The third floor of the building is leased to Steelhead Oncology, a medical oncology practice that provides chemotherapy and hematology services. All programs come together to provide co-located comprehensive cancer services to patients, according to Tammy Turner, BBA, RT(R)(T), Community Cancer Center executive director. The programs work collaboratively to care for patients, and nearly all referrals to the cancer center come from their immediate community.

Community Cancer Center has a 50-year ground lease with Mercy Medical Center. As Turner explains, "Mercy Medical owns the



land, we own the building.” The two entities have a no-compete clause, meaning that Mercy Medical does not offer any oncology services.

Advanced Radiation Services

In the face of its geographic and demographic challenges, the Community Cancer Center is able to deliver quality care while also servicing a high volume of patients. The cancer center sees between 30 and 40 patients a day on their treatment machines, with the top treatment sites being breast, prostate, and lung. Community Cancer Center has two linear accelerators, and to bolster the success of its oncology services, the cancer center includes nutrition services from a registered dietitian for every patient on treatment.

“Time is of the essence when you’re treating patients on the table with radiation therapy,” says Turner. For Community Cancer Center, time played a huge factor in its decision to purchase a TrueBeam linear accelerator in 2015, which reduced treatment times from between 10 and 30 minutes to less than 5 minutes. The machine allowed the center to incorporate stereotactic body radiation therapy through RapidArc, which has grown their stereotactic body radiation therapy services by 50 percent in the last year. As treatment continues to advance, Community Cancer Center has kept up with the demands for greater expertise by adding an additional medical physicist to their staff.

The cancer center’s accelerated partial breast irradiation program has been highly successful as well, reducing a month-long treatment to just five days. Collaborating with local surgeons, Community Cancer

Center can target treatment of early stage breast cancer patients while minimizing damage to healthy tissue. The cancer center was named a Center of Excellence in accelerated partial breast irradiation for its efforts.

Says Turner, “Being a nonprofit and such a small organization and being able to provide this advanced technology in our community is a huge success.”

Community Support and Outreach


Community Cancer Center has a robust outreach and supportive services program that complements its oncology services. Managed by Angelia Freeman, BSBA, these programs recruit community volunteers who share the same passion for quality cancer care and healthy lifestyle changes.

To educate Douglas County on the dangers of smoking and to curb its high lung cancer rates, the cancer center’s Nicotine Awareness and Tobacco Education (N.A.T.E.) program goes to local schools and engages with students aged between 11 and 14 to discuss the risks of nicotine and how tobacco products are marketed to target youth. Some of those students then participate in the N.A.T.E. Jr. program, visiting fellow children aged 6 to 10 in a peer-to-peer coaching environment and sharing the N.A.T.E. message. Though the goal was to reach only 20 children in 2016–2017, the program ended up reaching 614 children in its first year.

Tobacco cessation classes are also offered at Community Cancer Center and are led by volunteers. Twice a year, the cancer center offers the American Cancer Society’s

eight-week-long FreshStart program to smokers looking to quit; the center runs its own cessation classes once a week year-round. Cancer support groups are offered four times per month and encompass all cancer types. Sessions are designed as an interactive experience to bolster self-advocacy skills and are divided into three segments: testimonial, education and advocacy, and survivorship skills.

Community Cancer Center has a volunteer-led transportation program for patients who do not have the ability to travel to and from radiation appointments. The cancer center is also a participant in the newly launched Step It Up! Survivors program, an evidence-based exercise program made possible by a grant from the Knight Cancer Institute. Community Cancer Center has established eight walking sites throughout Douglas County for the free program, which seeks to fight obesity, foster social support for patients, and get the community involved.

As a cancer center founded by community, it’s fitting that community remains a central focus of its operations. 

Select Support Services

- Smoking cessation classes
- Look Good, Feel Better
- Support groups
- Nutrition services

Number of new analytic cases seen in 2017: 430

