



Complete Cancer Care – And More

Cancer Care and Research Come Home to Central Illinois With the SIU Cancer Institute

Imagine a place where cancer patients could see an oncologist, undergo tests, receive the results and discuss treatment options all at the same site in the same day. Imagine a place where the most talented researchers pursue the most innovative cancer research methods and easily confer with clinical colleagues. Imagine a place where cancer care means more than just the best treatments available, but also means emotional support for patients and their families.

Imagine no more; it's becoming a reality with the SIU Cancer Institute.

"The School is at a point in its history where we've fulfilled the first part of what the state of Illinois asked us to do, which is educate physicians for downstate Illinois," says Carl J. Getto, M.D., dean of the School of Medicine. "Now our job is to help those physicians do a better job. When we asked what they needed, cancer services were at the top of the list."

With this challenging new venture, SIU expands on the excellent efforts of its physicians, researchers, staff and graduates to provide a multidisciplinary, team approach to cancer

research and cancer care. At the SIU Cancer Institute, patients will benefit from the latest advances in cancer research. They will receive comprehensive care, from diagnosis and treatment to recovery, rehabilitation and follow-up all at one site.

Filling a Void

By 2005, many reports indicate that cancer will supersede heart disease as the nation's number one killer. Already, approximately 10 million Americans are living with cancer.

With many advances made in can-

cer treatments, people are living longer and fuller lives with the disease. Better drug therapies mean reduced side effects; some chemotherapy treatments now can be as mobile as a fanny pack; and new approaches like photodynamic therapy and stem cell research promise even better methods of treating cancer in the future.

But for some people, these emerging technologies and treatments will offer little help. Those living in rural areas sometimes have difficulty accessing state-of-the-art cancer treatments, and the time, cost and hardships of traveling to those treatments mean that many do not receive the treatment options more readily available in a large city. Research shows that these are the same people who often are diagnosed with advanced-stage cancer, making treatment more difficult. These are the people who need special help. These are the people the SIU Cancer Institute endeavors to serve.

While a broad range of clinical care services already exists in downstate Illinois, the Institute will enhance



cancer diagnosis and treatment methods and share prevention and education outreach programs throughout the region.

Efforts Under Way

In July 2000, the Illinois General Assembly awarded the School a \$1 million planning grant to begin work on the SIU Cancer Institute.

These dollars have helped to define the research and clinical services for the Institute and launch national searches for an administrative director and a medical director.

"The legislators, Governor George Ryan and his staff have just been wonderful," says Dr. Getto. "They have seen the value of a cancer institute, and I'm really impressed that they are so supportive and far-sighted."

In February, Gov. Ryan included in his budget proposal for the next year \$14.5 million for construction of a building to house the SIU Cancer Institute, as well as grants and permanent funding for program development totaling approximately \$2.5 million. Efforts are under way to secure a site and develop architectural specifications. While a site has not been pinpointed yet, Dr. Getto says the building will be between the two teaching hospitals in Springfield: St. John's Hospital and Memorial Medical Center, both of which are within walking distance of SIU School of Medicine.

The strong partnership SIU has with these hospitals will continue at the Institute. "We don't see the Institute in competition with the other cancer services in Springfield," stresses Dr. Getto. "We see ourselves

as complementing the cancer care provided by St. John's Hospital, Memorial Medical Center and all the physicians in the community."

Reaching far beyond the city limits of Springfield, community partnerships with local hospitals and other community providers in downstate Illinois will allow those centers to share technology, broaden research and enhance treatment options. The Institute will expand regional cancer partnerships to make state-of-the-art clinical research trials and treatment protocols available in downstate Illinois.

Innovative Research

Research will be a key focus of the Cancer Institute, with exciting studies of basic science theories, new drugs,

treatments and participation in more clinical trials.

Edward Moticka, Ph.D., associate dean for Research and Faculty Affairs, plans to recruit new researchers in the coming year to widen the scope of cancer studies at SIU. "Better resources at the Institute mean we can diversify research and experimental treatment protocols that can be translated to patients more quickly," he says.

The Institute will pursue what Dr. Moticka calls "the future of research": cancer genetics, pre-clinical cancer modeling, cancer imaging technologies, cancer detection, diagnosis, treatment and prevention. He will recruit more geneticists as the Institute grows. Dr. Getto adds, "Focusing on cancer genetics is a wonderful example of what this kind of center can bring to the region."

The Institute also will help the region by striving to become designated as a National Cancer Institute (NCI) Cancer Center. The Cancer Centers Program supports academic and research institutions throughout the U.S., helping provide access to state-of-the-art technologies, scientific leadership, research resources and grants.

Approximately 60 NCI-designated cancer centers are at work in the United States. Two exist in Illinois, but both are located in Chicago, hundreds of miles away from the 3.4 million residents of downstate Illinois. This designation will bring a broad scope of the most sophisticated research projects within SIU's reach.

Finest Patient Care

At the SIU Cancer Institute, teams of medical professionals, including physicians, researchers, nurses and social workers will provide the most effective, cost-efficient patient care at one location. State-of-the-art examination rooms, basic laboratories, and facilities for chemotherapy and other

outpatient procedures will be available at the Institute, "everything short of what you'd need to be in a hospital for," says Dr. Getto. And all efforts will be coordinated with the patient's primary care physician.

This comprehensive collaborative approach already is in action at the School of Medicine. Many oncology clinics have relocated to the Institute's interim site to facilitate the team-oriented treatment.

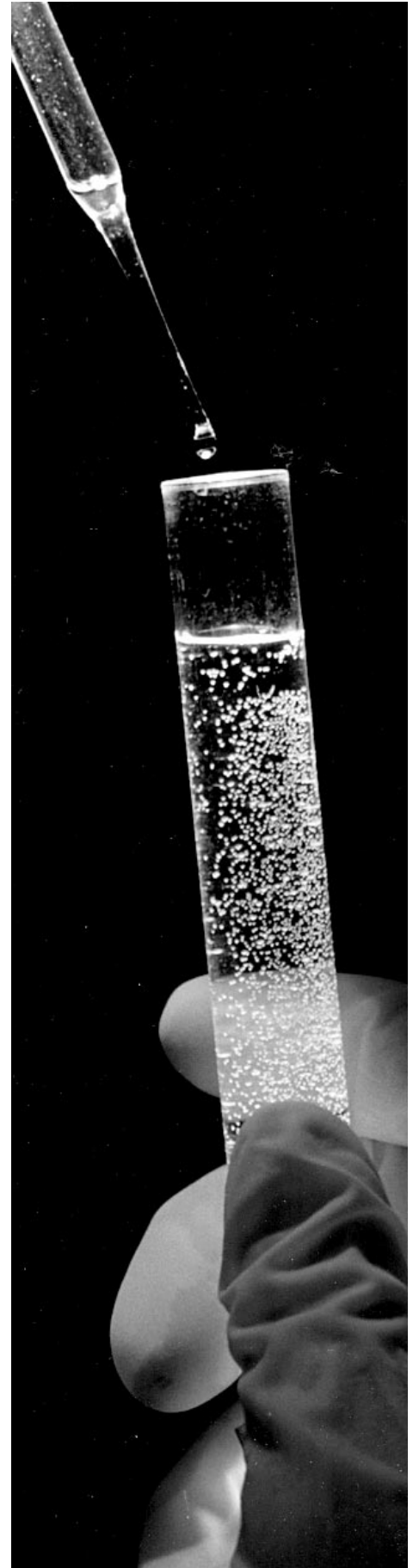
The approach builds on the efforts of The Breast Center at SIU, which has successfully and efficiently applied the multi-disciplinary, comprehensive, one-visit concept of patient care, involving community specialists, primary care physicians and SIU faculty. Says Dr. Getto, "The Breast Center is a model that we would like other cancer clinical services to follow."

Gary Dunnington, M.D., chair of the School's Department of Surgery, hopes to implement more innovative treatments for the Institute, including procedures such as Gamma Knife™ surgery, a computerized imaging and radiation technique performed by a neurosurgeon to remove brain tumors. Positron Emission Tomography, a medical imaging technique that uses small amounts of radioactivity to help in the diagnosis of cancer, is another possibility.

"We want patients in central and southern Illinois to feel confident that there is no benefit to driving to St. Louis or Chicago. We can provide the most efficient and cost-effective care within the region and give patients confidence in knowing that they're getting the absolute best care possible," says Dr. Dunnington.

Interactive Education

As a medical school, education is a top priority for SIU, and The Cancer Institute will enhance the students' learning as well, says Dr. Getto. "The students will see more cancer





Dr. Gary Dunnington and Dr. Pradboh Shah discuss surgical and medical options for cancer patient care.

patients as part of their clinical curriculum, help treat more kinds of cancer and have more of an opportunity to see patients from diagnosis through treatment.”

In addition, the Institute will recruit more cancer experts to teach the students and will develop new fellowship programs in medical oncology and surgical oncology to provide further training for physicians. “Physicians tend to locate near where they do their residency programs,” notes Dr. Getto. “Fellowships are a way to attract cancer specialists to the region.”

Community education also is a part of the Institute’s mission. A forthcoming Web site will let the public

access information about the Cancer Institute, learn about different types of cancers and treatments, and link to other helpful cancer sites.

Support groups are another important focus of the Institute. Assistance will be available for nutrition counseling, spousal and family needs, and methods of coping with side effects and psychological pressures specific to individual cancers.

“Cancer care doesn’t end when the stitches are removed. Psychological recovery may take months,” notes Dr. Dunnington. “A lung cancer patient may have different emotional needs than a liver cancer patient. The Institute will offer cancer-specific support.”

Building on a Mission

Though the SIU Cancer Institute is just in its infancy, its goals of innovative research and care have been a part of the School of Medicine’s mission for 30 years.

In that time, SIU clinicians and researchers have made great strides in the areas of breast, ovarian, cervical and prostate cancer. The Institute moves the School to the next level of academic medical centers with endless possibilities. “The SIU Cancer Institute is an indication that the School of Medicine is maturing,” agrees Dr. Moticka.

The Institute is off to an excellent start, but Dr. Getto stresses that financial support from within the community will be an indicator of how quickly the Institute can progress. Thus far, response has been excellent, with community gifts from groups such as the Health Improvement Foundation. Formerly the Illinois Health Improvement Association, the Foundation has supported cancer research at the school for 20 years, contributing more than \$1 million.

As the staff gear up for many exciting and challenging years of building the Institute, Dr. Getto emphasizes the philosophical mission of the endeavor. “The Institute is not just a building to treat people who have an illness. It’s a multi-disciplinary program aimed at developing strategies for preventing cancer and helping people live better.”

Over the next several years, the Cancer Institute will take shape, possibly pursuing these ambitious areas of patient care and research, and undertaking other areas as well. But the degree of care, education and research that already has been a standard at SIU since its inception will expand and strengthen with the Cancer Institute and ultimately help with the national search to find a cure for cancer — and that’s better than anything imaginable. ■