New Prostate Health Center
Offers Free PSA Screening

PROSTATE CANCER IS A KILLER

The prostate gland, seat of problems for millions of men, is a walnut-sized organ that sits in front of the rectum, right below the bladder. Its job is to help produce seminal fluid to transport sperm.

Prostate cancer, with an exceptionally high incidence in North Carolina, claims over 30,000 lives nationally each year, according to the American Cancer Society. It is often asymptomatic for years before life-threatening issues arise—which supports the need for annual exams.

And it is the most common type of cancer found in American men, other than non-melanoma skin cancer. Nearly 220,000 new cases are diagnosed annually, and more than two million men are living with the typically slow-growing disease.

Dr. Kevin Khoudary notes that risk factors for prostate cancer include age (especially in men 65 and older); race (the cancer strikes African-American men twice as often as Caucasian men); family history, and certain high-fat diets that appear to stimulate the disease.

Early detection is the most effective way to deal with prostate cancer, says Dr. Khoudary, “and the American Cancer Society recommends an annual DRE—a digital rectal exam—and PSA blood test for men 50 and older who have a life expectancy of at least 10 years, and younger men who are at high risk for prostate cancer who are African-American, or the close relative of a male with prostate cancer.”

After five years of planning and building, the Prostate Health Center on Sunnybrook Road, in southeast Raleigh, opened this past May.

“We are now starting to see more and more patients, with the expectation we will continue to build our daily treatment volume,” reports Dr. Kevin P. Khoudary, medical director of the facility and passionate architect of its service delivery capabilities.

“We exist to perform two main tasks,” he notes. “First, and the loftier of our goals, is our desire to assist in a shift in the demographics of North Carolina. Our state is persistently in the top two or three states in death from prostate cancer. And there are counties in our state which are the highest in the world for death from prostate cancer.

“I’m a surgeon by nature and by training, and thus when I look at a problem my strong inclination is to find a way to fix it. I conceptualized a center where patients and practitioners have a single focus, and that is the treatment of prostate cancer.

“The plan evolved to take the three main specialties that treat prostate cancer and bring them together in one building,” Dr. Khoudary explains. “So we have urologic surgeons in this building, and radiation oncologists, and medical oncologists. We have these three specialties in this one facility offering patients a much more global perspective on their best option for treatment of their prostate cancer.

“When looking for a cancer center for radiation treatment, one of the most important considerations is the precision and accuracy of the beam. The tighter control of more advanced systems provides the patient with fewer side effects. In our new center, we have the most sophisticated technology in Wake County.

“One of the risks of radiation treatment of the prostate is injury to surrounding tissues—the bladder and rectum in this case. Although capable of performing complex brain radiotherapy, we are using very advanced technology to specifically treat prostate cancer and provide our patients with the best care possible with the least side effects.

“And we’re located in this southeast part of Wake County with intention, so that we can reach out to the main demographic that does not get ready access to certain types of treatment.”

Radiation therapist Bill Stevens, right, and radiation oncologist Dr. John Leung, use a thermoplastic mold to support the back, pelvis and thighs of this patient prior to a CT scan of the pelvis. The scan is used to create a computer-generated 3-D image of the pelvic anatomy, including prostate gland, bladder, rectum, and pelvic bones.

The CT scan’s simulator rays provide a picture of the tumor site, studied by Dr. Leung, to determine most effective use of radiation.

main demographic that does not get ready access to certain types of treatment. We selected an area accessible to all with a high population of indigent and African-American men—who are twice as likely to suffer with prostate cancer as Caucasian men—provide them with free prostate screening tests, and offer them the best possible care if they do indeed have prostate cancer. The Center pursues the best treatment for the individual patient regardless of race or financial means.”

**TREATMENT OPTIONS**

The new 12,315 square-foot single level Center “is structured in such a way that there are three main limbs to the building,” Dr. Khoudary says. “One area is the chemotherapy wing, another is the radiation wing, and the third is clinical office spaces for patient care. We have a social worker and a dietitian joining the staff, as well as a support and outreach team, the North Carolina Minority Action Team.”

These volunteers, most of them survivors of prostate cancer, “have essentially been operating out of the trunks of their cars for the last decade. They go to churches and barber shops, wherever they can provide ground-level education about the dangers of ignoring the prostate and the risks of prostate cancer. They do a remarkable job in creating interest in an important life-saving topic. They have a home now—in this new building.

“My goal,” he says, “is to provide social service outreach so we have the ability to help people get Medicaid support, if needed, if they’re diagnosed with prostate cancer. To this point, most of our patients have been referred here by family physicians or urologists, but we welcome people coming directly off the street. If they wish, they can receive free screening and full urological services.

“Most of the patients we see now are coming for daily radiation treatments for eight weeks. Soon we will begin our chemotherapy project—using medications to destroy cancer cells—and we’re working to get more general urology services here, as well. We do not do surgery here, and of course radical prostatectomy—removal of the prostate gland and surrounding tissue and structures—may be recommended in selected, advanced cases, and are appropriately referred.”

About half of the Center’s patients benefit from radiation treatment, Dr. Khoudary notes. “I hope our system gets overwhelmed,” he said. “Our goal is a demographic shift. A reputable source reported, earlier in this decade, that minorities in our state experienced 67.2 deaths from prostate cancer per 100,000 men, and white men, 24.8 deaths per 100,000.”

**FREE SCREENING**

The Prostate Health Center is offering a free prostate cancer screening and general education program on Sept. 14, at the Center at 117 Sunnybrook Road, Raleigh, NC. More information: call 919-334-3950.

**KEY CONSULTANTS**

Dr. Khoudary notes that his colleagues in Associated Urologists of North Carolina “have played a critically important supportive and collaborative role over the past half-dozen years as the idea for the Raleigh-based Prostate Health Center developed and became a reality.” His urologist colleagues include Scott Baker, MD; Marc Benevides, MD; Brian Bennett, MD; Tim Bukowski, MD; Norm Goldbach, MD; Mark Jaiikut, MD; John Kaspar, MD; Dan Khera-McRackan, MD; Will Kizer, MD; Doug Leet, MD; Mark McClure, MD; Joey Neighbors, MD; Kevin Perry, MD; Steve Shaban, MD; and Frank Tortora, MD.

Reach AUNC offices as follows: Cary Urology, 919-467-3203; North Carolina Urological Associates: Cary / Urology Care: Wake Forest / Urology Center of Raleigh: 919-758-8677.

**Matt Smith, the medical dosimetrist, plays a critical role in determining the precise level of radiation that will be delivered to the patient.**

Putting the extraordinary Linear accelerator to work, the patient receives a radiation treatment that typically lasts about 15 minutes. Overseeing the process are radiation therapists Laura Sallery and Ray Thompson, and medical physicist Dr. Eric Lucas.

**For more information about prostate health and comprehensive services, contact:**

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