
Mobile Cancer Centre Takes Care Services to Survivors



The increasing number of cancer survivors poses a challenge for easily accessible follow-up care. Cancer survivors must deal with ongoing issues such as adequate nutrition, pain management, muscle weakness, problems with range of motion, fatigue, anxiety and depression. Beginning in April, a custom-designed Mobile Cancer Survivor Clinic will deliver follow-up and screening services to underserved communities in North Texas.

The mobile clinic is a \$1.1 million collaboration between UT Southwestern's Moncrief Cancer Institute in Fort Worth and the Harold C. Simmons Comprehensive Cancer Center in nearby Dallas. The mobile clinic will serve patients in a rural region of Texas where 55 percent of citizens are considered medically underserved — and where a third of cancer survivors may be at risk of not adhering to follow-up appointments due to poor transportation options and a lack of facilities.

"Our collaboration brings the expertise of top physicians in the cancer field to those who have the most difficulty accessing services," said James K. Wilson, Associate Dean of Oncology Programs, Professor and Director of the Harold C. Simmons Comprehensive Cancer Center and a Professor of Internal Medicine.

The Mobile Cancer Survivor Clinic is 13.5 feet high and 75 feet long. It is equipped with a reception area, two private examination rooms, an exercise room with an elliptical machine for one-on-one training, and a 3D mammography suite. It is staffed by a physician assistant, a registered dietician, a certified cancer exercise therapist, and a registered nurse navigator who identifies and coordinates resources.

According to the National Cancer Institute, there will be approximately 18 million cancer survivors in the United States by 2022, making up more than five percent of the national population. The bilingual mobile clinic will target an area measuring more than 7,000 square miles in nine counties where an estimated 15,000 cancer survivors are uninsured and/or underserved in terms of access to medical facilities and cancer experts.

The mobile clinic's supervising physician is Dr. Keith Argenbright, Director of the Moncrief Cancer Institute and Associate Professor of Clinical Science at the Simmons Cancer Center. He commented on the expanded reach of cancer survivor services offered by the mobile clinic, which is digitally connected to fixed care facilities.

"This new mobile clinic extends the reach of Simmons Cancer Center in North Texas. The clinic's state-of-the-art telecommunication capability will enable UT Southwestern physicians in other locations to provide consultations for patients through secure videoconferencing technology," Dr. Argenbright said.

The mobile clinic will deliver cancer expertise to the doorsteps of survivors who cannot easily access urban medical centres. "We are committed to making it possible for even those who live at a distance from our facilities to benefit from the research, genetic counselling, and other services that would not otherwise be available in these communities," said Dr. Daniel K. Podolsky, President of UT Southwestern.

"Consistent follow-up and yearly cancer screenings enable the identification of new cancer diagnoses or recurrence at an earlier stage of disease, decreasing the financial burden and improving the potential for recovery and long-term survival," added Dr. Wilson.

Image Credit: UT Southwestern Medical Center

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