

# TREATING CANCER CLOSE TO HOME

**Southeast Georgia Health System Cancer Care Centers** offer personalized cancer care.

In the past decade, cancer treatments have advanced with astonishing speed, improving the caliber of care available at many medical facilities. Southeast Georgia Health System is no exception. Committed to providing the latest technology and best care to the

patients and communities it serves, the Health System's Cancer Care Centers offer comprehensive cancer treatment within the disciplines of surgery, medical oncology, and radiation oncology, as well as innovative immunotherapy, chemotherapy, and genomic testing. With two convenient

locations—one at a 300-bed hospital in Brunswick and the other at a 40-bed acute care hospital in St. Marys—the Cancer Care Centers offer patients easy access to advanced healthcare, all within a personalized setting close to home.

## Destroying Cancer Cells

Treating cancer requires a calculation of collateral damage. How much of the tumor can be destroyed without harming the healthy cells around it? "Treating what you need to treat and sparing what you don't while limiting side effects is the goal of cancer care," says Timothy A. Jamieson, M.D., Ph.D., a board-certified radiation oncologist and medical director of the Health System's Cancer Care Centers and CyberKnife® program. To minimize damage to healthy cells, treatments such as chemotherapy and radiation are typically spaced apart in doses that are tolerable to the human body yet robust enough to kill cancer cells.

Thankfully, new technologies provide better accuracy and fewer side effects. Among them is the noninvasive CyberKnife Robotic Radiosurgery System that treats prostate, lung, brain, and liver cancers, as well as acoustic neuroma, recurrent disease, and metastatic disease. CyberKnife also shows promise for early-stage breast cancer, along with other tumors that are inoperable or complex. The innovative system deploys a beam of radiation that attacks cancer cells with submillimeter precision. Its accuracy allows for higher doses and substantially shortened treatment time. "Because the fields are very tight around the tumor, this technology provides increased patient protection," explains Dr. Jamieson. "It automatically tracks the targeted area and projects beams of intense energy directly to cancerous cells."

The benefits of this precision are two-fold. Less collateral damage means fewer side effects and less disruption to the patient's daily activities. It also allows for a more compressed schedule of higher doses,



Southeast Georgia Health System's CyberKnife Robotic Radiosurgery System team includes R. David McNally, Ph.D., DABR; Julie B. Small, FNP-C; Timothy A. Jamieson, M.D., Ph.D.; Brenda C. Vashaw, RN, OCN, BSN; Kenyon M. Meadows, M.D.; and Bruce G. Tripp, M.D.

Photos by Chris Moncus Photography



Board-certified medical oncologist Abraham Cheong, M.D., speaks with a patient at the Brunswick Campus.

giving the cancer less time to repair in the interim. Most CyberKnife treatments can be delivered in five consecutive days, whereas traditional radiation might require nine weeks of treatment.

Perhaps more importantly, CyberKnife kills cancer cells while doing less harm to the patient. A recently published randomized trial compared five days of conventional radiation treatment against CyberKnife treatments on breast cancer patients and showed that, while both treatments yielded similar outcomes, CyberKnife caused far less toxicity in patients.

Of the more than 200 CyberKnife machines deployed around the country, the Health System's Brunswick Campus is the only location in Georgia offering the most updated version—the M6 series with multileaf collimation (MLC) technology. The M6 series, featuring enhanced precision that shortens treatment times, has replaced the original CyberKnife technology the Health System has used since 2011.

## Brave New Therapeutics

The accelerated development of cancer treatments is exciting for everyone—including the oncologists who administer them. "In just 60 years or so, we've gone from treatments that 'carpet bomb' cancer and cause collateral damage to the equivalent of deploying precision-guided munitions," says Abraham Cheong, M.D., a board-certified medical oncologist with Southeast Georgia Physician Associates—Hematology &

Oncology. "That's the incredible thing about this field."

Among the most exciting of these are immunotherapies. This new class of drugs awakens the body's immune system to recognize cancer as the true enemy so that it can mount an effective attack. When immunotherapies work, the body's response can be dramatic.

Remarkably, most patients who receive these treatments experience minimal side effects. "For the majority of patients treated with immunotherapies, their clinical course is a lot easier compared to the toxic treatments of the past," describes Dr. Cheong. "It makes you feel like a hero when you're able to provide patients with a treatment that enables them to go in remission, when, just a few short years ago, that wasn't even possible."

As with CyberKnife, the Health System's immunotherapy program is proof that a community hospital can offer highly advanced technologies and treatments. "There's this misconception that only big hospitals in larger cities offer the newest treatments," says Dr. Cheong. "It's just not true. Advances in oncology mean that newer therapeutics are being made available every day, and the Health System leadership team is committed to ensuring the communities we serve have access to advanced cancer care."

## Treating One and All

Caring for cancer patients requires many moving parts. Doctors, nurses, pharmacists, technicians, assistants,

administrators, housekeeping, and food service personnel are all part of the dedicated team of professionals at the Health System prioritizing the well-being of cancer patients.

For those traveling from afar to receive cancer care at the Brunswick Campus, the Health System's Foundation offers accommodations at Nunnally House, a residential house gifted to the hospital by philanthropist Hugh Nunnally and his family. Located adjacent to the Health System, the beautiful residence features 40 furnished guest rooms with queen beds, cable TV, and a kitchenette, as well as housekeeping, a shared kitchen, and a business center. "It's a convenient place for cancer patients to stay while receiving their treatment," Dr. Jamieson says. "It provides comfortable accommodations for people who may not be able to afford the expenses of a hotel or the inconvenience of a long drive."

That mindful approach to care, coupled with cutting-edge technologies and treatments, makes the Health System Cancer Care Centers a welcome harbor for cancer patients in the region. "We offer that extra level of personal touch that larger urban hospitals can't offer," says Dr. Cheong. "Here, each patient is uniquely individual, as are the cancers we treat."



**SOUTHEAST GEORGIA  
HEALTH SYSTEM**

CANCER CARE CENTERS

### Brunswick Campus

2500 Starling Street  
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Brunswick, GA 31520  
912-466-5100

### Camden Campus

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[sghs.org/cancer](https://sghs.org/cancer)