

Billings Clinic, Billings, Montana Billings Clinic Cancer Center

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Background

The Billings Clinic campus in central Billings, Montana consists of a 272-bed trauma hospital and Billings Clinic, the state's largest multispecialty medical group practice with 287 physician and non-physician providers. The hospital annually serves 14,000 inpatients and facilitates more than 62,000 outpatient visits for residents of Montana, the western Dakotas, and northern Wyoming and Idaho – a region in which there is no NCI-designated Cancer Center. The Clinic serves this vast area through primary and specialty care clinics in 10 remote locations and has collaborative partnerships with several critical access hospitals. The Billings Clinic Cancer Center serves an average of 1,300 new cancer patients each year.

Patient Service Area

Billings Clinic serves an expansive, medically-underserved rural area encompassing 40 counties – many of which are as large as whole states and lack a single primary care physician. Most of the residents live in remote, frontier communities where lack of access to medical care is a significant disadvantage. Characterized by low-wage seasonal workers, Montana has the 10th highest uninsured rate, 10th lowest per capita income, and a poverty rate that is higher than the national average (14.3 percent compared to 13 percent nationally). The Clinic's service area includes three American Indian Reservations and a total American Indian population of 56,000, or 4 percent of the population. The region has higher than average rates of oral and skin cancer.

Access and Outreach Initiatives

Distance to care is a major barrier to receiving cancer services in the Billings service area. The Billings Clinic Cancer Center operates the most extensive clinical outreach programs in the region, created to bring cancer care closer to the individual's home. Billings Clinic physicians travel up to 350 miles to treat cancer patients at any one of the 10 outreach sites across Montana, Wyoming, and North Dakota, conducting nearly 90 outreach clinics on-site in 28 rural and tribal communities each year. In addition, the Billings Clinic's Eastern Montana Telemedicine Network links these 28 rural healthcare facilities to the Billings Clinic. The Cancer Center is working to bring clinical trials and new therapies, now available only in Billings, to its outreach clinics.