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NCI Launches a Pilot of its Community Cancer Centers Program to Bring Quality Cancer Care to All

The National Cancer Institute (NCI), part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), today launched the three year pilot phase of a new program that, if fully implemented, will help bring state-of-the-art cancer care to patients in community hospitals across the United States.

The National Cancer Institute Community Cancer Centers Program (NCCCP) is designed to encourage the collaboration of private-practice medical, surgical, and radiation oncologists -- with close links to NCI research and to the network of 63 NCI-designated Cancer Centers principally based at large research universities. Evidence from a wide range of studies suggests that cancer patients diagnosed and treated in a setting of multi-specialty care and clinical research may live longer and have a better quality of life.

The pilot program will research new and enhanced ways to assist, educate, and better treat the needs of underserved populations -- including elderly, rural, inner-city, and low-income patients -- as well as racial and ethnic groups with unusually high cancer rates.

The three year pilot will begin at eight free-standing community hospitals and six additional hospitals operated by health care systems. The sites will be funded for a collective total of \$5 million per year. An NCI panel of experts and an independent group of outside experts will set milestones, monitor progress, and evaluate success of the three year pilot and then issue recommendations for a full-fledged program.

The hospitals, their locations, and their cancer centers are:

- Billings Clinic, Billings, Mont. (Billings Clinic Cancer Center)
- Hartford Hospital, Hartford, Conn. (Helen & Harry Gray Cancer Center)

- St. Joseph’s / Candler, Savannah, Ga. (Nancy N. and J.C. Lewis Cancer & Research Pavilion)
- Our Lady of the Lake Regional Medical Center, Baton Rouge, La. (Our Lady of the Lake Cancer Center and Mary Bird Perkins Cancer Center)
- Sanford USD Medical Center, Sioux Falls, S.D. (Sanford Cancer Center)
- Spartanburg Regional Hospital, Spartanburg, S.C., (Gibbs Regional Cancer Center)
- St. Joseph Hospital, Orange, Calif. (St. Joseph Hospital Cancer Center)
- Christiana Hospital, Newark, Del. (Helen F. Graham Cancer Center at Christiana Care)
- Ascension Health of St. Louis, Mo.
 - St. Vincent Indianapolis Hospital, Indianapolis, Ind. (St. Vincent Oncology Center)
 - Columbia St. Mary’s, Milwaukee, Wis. (Columbia St. Mary’s Cancer Center)
 - Brackenridge Hospital, Austin, Texas (Shivers Center)
- Catholic Health Initiatives of Denver, Colo., will operate sites at:
 - Penrose-St. Francis Health Services, Colorado Springs, Colo. (Penrose Cancer Center)
 - St. Joseph Medical Center, Towson , Md. (St. Joseph Cancer Institute)
 - A coordinated regional program in Nebraska sponsored by Good Samaritan Hospital in Kearney (Good Samaritan Cancer Center); St. Elizabeth Regional Medical Center in Lincoln (St. Elizabeth Cancer Center); and St. Francis Medical Center in Grand Island (St. Francis Cancer Treatment Center).

NCCCCP pilot sites will study how community hospitals nationwide could most effectively develop and implement a national database of voluntarily-provided electronic medical records accessible to cancer researchers. The sites will also study methods of expanding and standardizing the collection of blood and tissue specimens voluntarily obtained from patients for cancer research.

“The comprehensive management of easily transferable medical information and its secure exchange between health care consumers and providers is a key issue,” said Michael O. Leavitt, Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services. “The NCCCCP pilot program holds great potential to inform us on the best ways to further the important adoption of electronic medical records at the community level.”

“A key component of the NCI Community Cancer Centers program will be education,” said NIH Director Elias A. Zerhouni, M.D. “Studying new ways to help patients and members of the community better understand the lifestyle issues that affect cancer risk could pay dividends for many diseases.”

“It is becoming clear that one of the greatest determinants of cancer mortality in the years ahead will be access to care,” said NCI Director John E. Niederhuber, M.D. “This program will succeed if it can bring the benefits of our latest science to people in the communities where they live.”

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For a Q&A on the NCCCP, please go to <http://www.cancer.gov/newscenter/pressreleases/NCCCPQandA>.

For more information about cancer, please visit the NCI Web site at <http://www.cancer.gov>, or call NCI's Cancer Information Service at 1-800-4-CANCER (1-800-422-6237).