THE YEAR IN REVIEW

The Blount Memorial Cancer Center treats people from across East Tennessee and throughout the region. But our primary focus always has been and always will be meeting the specific cancer-care needs of our community. We are committed to ensuring that our neighbors can access the latest cancer screenings, diagnostic tests, treatments and survivorship support right here in Blount County.
A MESSAGE FROM THE MEDICAL DIRECTOR

We can reach out to the appropriate specialist at the Mayo Clinic for a second opinion, electronically sending X-rays and biopsy results for the specialist to review and render an opinion about some aspect of a patient’s care. We also can present particularly challenging or difficult cases to the Mayo Clinic tumor board, getting the benefit of all of the Mayo Clinic expertise and recommendations about how they might manage a particular patient’s case. This affiliation is going to be an invaluable resource for our patients here, particularly in a dynamic field like oncology, which changes so quickly.

Since 1996 when Blount Memorial first became an accredited cancer program through the Commission on Cancer (CoC), a program of the American College of Surgeons, we have been continuously working to ensure that the cancer care available right here in Blount County meets the highest quality standards. The CoC has adopted a panel of clinically proven, specific quality measures for different kinds of treatment. I am happy to report that we are meeting all of those measures, helping ensure that everyone being treated for cancer at Blount Memorial is offered the evidence-based, optimal care that they deserve and that has been proven to improve outcomes.

To maintain CoC accreditation, the Blount Memorial Cancer Center is required to conduct quality studies and implement quality improvements. One improvement implemented in 2019 was for patients with locally advanced lung cancer. There have been recent studies indicating that these patients should be given radiation and chemotherapy treatments at the same time [an approach called concurrent chemoradiation], preferably starting on the same day. An internal review initiated by the Blount Memorial Oncology Committee showed that we weren’t quite meeting this standard with every patient, so we made a concerted effort in 2019 to ensure that lung cancer patients received chemo and radiation together. We achieved 100 percent compliance, meaning that all of our patients with locally advanced lung cancer started their treatments at the appropriate time.

Another Cancer Center improvement in 2019 that I would like to highlight relates to people with cancers of the oropharynx, which includes the back of the throat, including the base of the tongue and tonsils. This type of cancer, called oropharyngeal cancer, often is associated with HPV, or the human papilloma virus. When people have a cancer in this part of the body, it’s important to conduct a biopsy to determine if HPV is present.

The presence of HPV affects the prognosis and staging, and really directs the treatment. Patients with HPV-related oropharyngeal cancer do much better than what we had seen in years past, and there’s a lot of ongoing research to see if we can cut down on the intensity of treatment and chemotherapy for these patients. That’s why a biopsy and follow-up lab testing is so important. All of our patients were having the biopsy, but the additional lab testing wasn’t something we’d routinely been doing. Now we are at 100 percent for every patient diagnosed with a cancer of the tonsils or back of the tongue.

A final noteworthy 2019 achievement I would like to mention is Blount Memorial’s collaboration with the Mayo Clinic Care Network. This affiliation is especially helpful for oncology program and our cancer patients due to the expertise of the Mayo Clinic. We can reach out to the appropriate specialist at the Mayo Clinic for a second opinion, electronically sending X-rays and biopsy results for the specialist to review and render...
an opinion about some aspect of a patient’s care. We also can present particularly challenging or difficult cases to the Mayo Clinic tumor board, getting the benefit of all of the Mayo Clinic expertise and recommendations about how they might manage a particular patient’s case. This affiliation is going to be an invaluable resource for our patients here, particularly in a dynamic field like oncology, which changes so quickly.

I hope you will take the time to review the rest of this report, which highlights other 2019 notable events and advances. I also wanted to mention that I am planning to retire sometime in the coming year. At that time, Blount Memorial surgical breast oncologist Dr. Randal Croshaw will become the director of the Oncology Committee, and therefore, Cancer Center medical director.

As I close out my 30-year medical career at Blount Memorial, it gives me great satisfaction to see all of the progress that has been made in the cancer care program. I feel very blessed and very privileged to have been part of that whole process. There’s a great team here, and I could not have had a better career than what I’ve had at Blount Memorial. I sincerely never wanted to go anywhere else. It has been a tremendous privilege to take care of the people in this community and to be part of this community, particularly here at Blount Memorial.

One of my beliefs when I came to Blount Memorial—back when we didn’t have radiation or a formal cancer program—was that, with proper effort and support, we would be able to provide cancer care right here that was comparable to what people would get if they went to Knoxville. I truly believe we’ve been able to do that. As a result, we have had tremendous growth and development in the program. I was happy to be a part of it, but it was a real team effort. So many people worked to make that happen and will continue to work to ensure that each patient treated at the Cancer Center receives the most-advanced and highest-quality cancer care.

Dr. Albert Petty
Radiation oncologist
Cancer Center medical director
STATE-OF-THE-ART CANCER CARE

Blount Memorial’s commitment to continuous improvement brings the most-advanced cancer treatments and technologies to Blount County.

Robotic-Assisted Prostate Procedures Return

Minimally invasive da Vinci® Prostatectomy reduces recovery time.

Blount Memorial once again offers the da Vinci® Prostatectomy (dVP) to qualified patients with prostate cancer. Board-certified Blount Memorial urologic surgeons perform the minimally invasive procedure using the da Vinci® Si, the world’s only robotic surgical system with 3D high-definition vision. The sophisticated system provides surgeons with enhanced vision, control and precision.

Using a robot-assisted procedure to remove the cancerous prostate gland and related structures reduces recovery times and chance of infection, shortens hospital stays and allows patients to return to work earlier. Specific options available to individual prostate cancer patients vary depending on a number of factors.

For more information or to schedule an appointment with a Blount Memorial urologist specially trained in the da Vinci® Prostatectomy, call East Tennessee Medical Group Surgery and Urology at 865-980-5260.

New Wide-bore CT Simulator Improves Patient Experience

A CT simulator is a specialized CT scanner that takes multi-slice images of bones, tissues and blood vessels. The images are then used to “map” of the area of the body to be treated and design the best and most precise radiation therapy treatment plan. Since treatment is not actually being administered, the process is called simulation.

With its wider opening, the new wide-bore CT simulator makes it easier to comfortably position larger patients, people who are claustrophobic, the elderly, or anyone who may have difficulty holding their arms above their heads.

The new scanner also allows physicians to precisely see where a tumor is located, providing an additional way to narrowly target the tumor with radiation without harming surrounding healthy tissue and critical structures.

Blount Memorial Cancer Center’s Mayo Clinic Care Network affiliation benefits patients.

In September 2019, Blount Memorial Hospital joined the Mayo Clinic Care Network—a group of more than 40 independent health care systems across the United States and in Asia, Mexico and the Middle East—that have special access to Mayo Clinic’s knowledge and expertise. Combining their understanding of their patients’ medical needs with world-class Mayo Clinic expertise helps Blount Memorial physicians ensure that patients get exactly the care they need, close to home.

For patients who are diagnosed with cancer at Blount Memorial and/or who are treated at the Cancer Center, in particular, the hospital’s affiliation Mayo Clinic Care Network offers three major benefits:

1. Blount Memorial cancer care physicians can contact Mayo Clinic specialists via eConsults for second opinions on any case when they believe additional input would benefit their patients.

2. In addition to the Cancer Center’s weekly multidisciplinary Tumor Conference team meeting to evaluate each new patient’s type of cancer and recommend the most-appropriate treatment, Blount Memorial physicians can present cases before the five distinct Mayo Clinic eTumor Board conferences. These live, multidisciplinary, multi-site discussions offer informal advice regarding diagnostic tests and treatment options for complex cancer cases.

3. As a member of the Mayo Clinic Care Network, Blount Memorial has access to AskMayoExpert, a point-of-care tool offering concise clinical information on hundreds of medical conditions that includes medical protocols, treatment recommendations and medical references.

Learn More For more information on the Mayo Clinic Care Network, visit mayoclinic.org/care-network.
Blount Memorial Hospital was built by donations from the people of this community to provide for their health care needs without having to leave home. The mission of all that are a part of this hospital and cancer center is to provide the highest-quality care available to our families and the people of this community. Our recent collaboration with the Mayo Clinic is only the latest example of initiatives undertaken to constantly improve the services that we provide.

It is an honor to be asked to assume the helm of the leadership committee that ensures that Blount Memorial Hospital and the Blount Memorial Cancer Center are providing the highest-level of care to our cancer patients as demonstrated by our continued accreditation by the American College of Surgeons Commission on Cancer. Dr. Petty realized the importance of pushing ourselves to meet these standards, and those of us that follow in his footsteps will strive to deliver the ever advancing best available care.

My role as a cancer surgeon provides me the unique privilege of helping many individuals in a way that goes beyond any procedure that I may offer them. What people tend to need most at the time of a diagnosis of cancer is an understanding of what they are dealing with, what their treatment choices are and what those treatments will be like. We provide education and guidance, along with genetic counseling and testing, and cosmetic surgical procedures, as needed, to customize a treatment plan for each individual we encounter.

Dr. Randal Croshaw
Surgical breast oncologist
Incoming Cancer Center medical director

ACHIEVEMENTS

Cancer Center tumor registrar Tonya Davis-Myers was elected by her peers as the 2020 president of the Tennessee Oncology Data Analyst Association.

As tumor registrar, Davis-Myers keeps track of all patients who are diagnosed with cancer at Blount Memorial by collecting, summarizing and protecting the confidentiality of patient data. The compiled data, or tumor registry, includes demographic information (such as age, sex and race), diagnosis, treatment, disease recurrence and survival.

Keeping a tumor registry provides Blount Memorial’s cancer care team with the statistics and insights needed to help decrease illness and death associated with cancer, improve quality of patient care, improve cancer control efforts, participate in research, increase public awareness of cancer prevention, and educate the public and health care providers on current information and trends.
COMMUNITY OUTREACH ACTIVITIES  Screening Outcomes and Guidelines

Blount Memorial Cancer Center Community Outreach efforts reached thousands of people through education programs, financial assistance and awareness campaigns about cancer risk, prevention and screenings.

19 BREAST CANCER
women participated in the Mammograms in the Moonlight after-hours event at the Blount Memorial Breast Health Center. Of the 19 women who had mammograms, one was identified for follow-up testing.

Screening Guidelines: Mammography is the best tool available to screen for breast cancer and has helped reduce the breast cancer death rate in the United States by 30 percent. Women should receive an annual mammogram starting at age 40, or by age 30 if they have a family history of the disease, certain BRCA1 or BRCA2 gene mutations, or other risk factors.

Source: American College of Radiology and Society of Breast Imaging

54 PROSTATE CANCER
men participated in the free September prostate cancer screenings at the CareToday Clinic at East Tennessee Medical Group in Alcoa. Of the 54 men tested, three were found to have elevated PSA (prostate-specific antigen) levels and were recommended for follow-up exams.

Screening Guidelines: Men should talk with their doctor about whether to be screened for prostate cancer. The decision should be made after getting information about the uncertainties, risks and potential benefits of screening. The discussion should take place at age 50 for me who are at average risk for the disease, at age 45 for men at high risk (such as African Americans and men who have a first-degree relative diagnosed before age 65) and at age 40 for men with more than one first-degree relative who had prostate cancer at an early age.

Source: American Cancer Society and National Cancer Institute

353 LUNG CANCER
people at high risk for lung cancer (primarily current and former heavy smokers) who got a lung cancer screening using low-dose CT (computerized tomography) scanning in 2019. Of the people screened, four were diagnosed with cancers and 10 required immediate follow-up testing.

Screening Guidelines: Lung cancer screenings are available to adults ages 55-74 who:

• are current heavy smokers with a smoking history of 30 years (one pack per day for 30 years or two packs per day for 15 years)
• are former heavy smokers who have quit smoking within the last 15 years
• have no previous diagnosis of lung cancer, pulmonary nodules or related symptoms such as shortness of breath, unusual or persistent chest or back pain, and coughing up blood
• have not had a chest CT within the last 18 months
• have a written order from a physician or other health care provider

Source: American College of Radiology

62 SKIN CANCER
people participated in the March free skin cancer screening at the Blount Memorial Cancer Center. Of 62 participants, nine were recommended for biopsies and 26 were urged to have follow-up exams.

Screening Guidelines: Regularly checking your skin (especially moles) is key to detecting skin cancer in its earliest, most-treatable stages. If you notice anything on your skin changing, growing or bleeding, see a dermatologist.

Support Groups/Education  # of participants
Breast Cancer Support Group  195
Head and Neck Resource Support Group  55
Lymphedema Support Group  98
Prostate Cancer Support Group  18

Health Fairs, Screenings  # of participants
Arconic Employee Fairs  195
Blount County Health Fair  350
Surf Riders Sun Safety Program  121