

A new day for cancer patients, at Duke and beyond

November 4, 2010, marked two historic milestones for cancer care and research at Duke Medicine.

First, at an afternoon gathering of cancer survivors, faculty, staff, and friends, we celebrated the “topping out” of the new Duke Cancer Center building, which will open to patients in 2012. The sight of a giant crane lifting the final beam seven stories in the air to complete the steel framework of the new facility was truly awe-inspiring. Even more inspiring, to me, was the fact that more than 1,000 members of the Duke cancer community had made a point of signing their names to the beam before it was placed. Those signatures are a tangible reminder that it is people who are at the heart of this new building—the many patients we serve, and the deeply committed team of people who are dedicated to making Duke a place of healing and hope for decades to come.

People are also at the heart of another milestone we celebrated on November 4: the official launch of the Duke Cancer Institute (DCI). In the planning stages for more than a year, the DCI is a bold new approach to cancer research, clinical care, and education designed to deliver scientific breakthroughs from the laboratory to cancer patients even faster.

The need to accelerate progress against cancer is clear. It has been almost 40 years since the National Cancer Act declared our nation’s war against this devastating disease. While medicine has made great strides over those decades, there are still too many people whose cancer cannot be effectively treated, or who do not even have access to the best treatments. At the same time, the burden of cancer continues to grow: in North Carolina, the rate of new cancer cases is expected to climb by 16.5 percent from 2009 to 2014, while the United Nations projects a doubling of cancer deaths worldwide by 2030.

These great needs have driven us to ask what we as an institution could do to maximize our impact on cancer. Cancer care and research have been a deep strength and ongoing commitment at Duke—we were named one of the original eight comprehensive cancer centers by the National Cancer Institute in 1972, and today we rank among the very best cancer hospitals nationwide—but we believe that we can and should do more.

Toward that end, we convened a blue-ribbon panel of the best and brightest minds in cancer nationwide to envision the optimal environment for advancing cancer care, training, and research. We also analyzed the best practices of other leading cancer centers, and conducted many meetings with Duke faculty and staff to seek ideas and input. From this intense

study and discussion came the plan to revolutionize the way we marshal Duke’s efforts in the war on cancer: the Duke Cancer Institute.

The institute is the first of its kind at Duke, a single organizational structure that breaks down traditional departmental boundaries to unite and align all those dedicated to cancer care, research, and treatment toward a shared goal: accelerating the translation of scientific breakthroughs to improve patients’ experience and outcomes. The DCI will organize more than 300 cancer physicians and scientists and 500 clinical staff from across Duke into teams focused on addressing the unique challenges of specific cancer types, such as breast, lung, and prostate cancers.

The DCI represents our highest commitment to transforming cancer care and research. Altogether, we will



The 267,000-square-foot Duke Cancer Center building is scheduled to open in 2012. Read more on page 3.



Victor J. Dzau at the Duke Cancer Institute launch, November 4, 2010

invest nearly \$400 million in this initiative, including funding to construct our new cancer building, enhance and expand our clinical services, invest in state-of-the-art technologies, and recruit even more world-class physicians and scientists. A nationwide search for the executive director is now under way, with Pharmacology and Cancer Biology chair Anthony Means, PhD, and Radiation Oncology chair Christopher Willett, MD, serving as interim co-directors.

Through these significant investments, and through the passion and dedication of our entire cancer team, we intend to realize our vision of improving care and finding cures for patients in our community and around the world. We are excited about this new day in cancer care and research, and look forward to sharing our progress with you in the months and years ahead.

Watch a video about the Duke Cancer Institute at cancer.duke.edu.

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