



Central Care Cancer Center was awarded the 2016 Champion of Farmworker Health Award from the Kansas Department of Health and Environment's Kansas Statewide Farmworker Health Program.



Physicians at Central Care Cancer Center discuss their concerns with a patient. Physicians, nurses, financial counselors and staff are dedicated to walking with patients from the time of diagnosis, providing guidance for treatments, financial options and more.

KSFHP Award Highlights Central Care Cancer Center's Commitment to Patients

BY SARAH GOODING

AT CENTRAL CARE CANCER CENTER, A CANCER DIAGNOSIS COMES WITH A SUPPORTIVE TEAM OF PROFESSIONALS WHO ARE WHOLEHEARTEDLY DEDICATED TO HELPING PATIENTS THROUGHOUT THE JOURNEY AHEAD.

CENTRAL CARE CANCER CENTER'S team, including oncologists, nurses and financial counselors, helps cancer patients, caregivers and families cope with the disease throughout the patient's journey, maximizing the patient's treatment benefits with access to resources including education, nutrition, clinical trials, support groups and financial guidance.

This dedication was recently celebrated by the Kansas Statewide Farmworker Health Program (KSFHP), which recognized Central Care Cancer Center with 2016's Champion of Farmworker Health Award.

"I was touched by the story of a client of ours with younger children who was diagnosed with cancer," says Heather Driver, the KSFHP administrative specialist who nominated Central Care Cancer Center for the award. "Central Care Cancer Center helped our client qualify for affordable chemo medicine and is accepting our vouchers to offset the rest of the cost."

This is part of Central Care Cancer Center's mission.

"We see everybody," says Mark Fesen, MD, a medical oncologist with Central Care Cancer Center. "You walk in,

we see you, we find a way to care for you. We do our best to find any and all resources to treat you."

This includes efforts by the physicians to enroll patients in clinical trials through partnerships with the Midwest Cancer Alliance (MCA) outreach division of the University of Kansas Cancer Center.

"We try to access as many nationwide clinical trials as we can for our cancer patients, so they can enroll in these cutting-edge studies close to home," Dr. Fesen says. "There are very exciting new technologies, where there is personalized medicine involved, through the MCA."

Wendy Leith, Director of Billing, says Central Care Cancer Center's six financial counselors assist patients by helping them understand their insurance plans, coverage and billing, and also help seek out programs and grants such as KSFHP.

"If there's a financial need, they sit down with the patient and go over their income and expenses," Leith says. "Most of the counselors know what kind of foundations are available for specific types of cancers."

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— BRENDA BERNARD, CHIEF NURSING OFFICER FOR CENTRAL CARE CANCER CENTER

In 2016, financial counselors helped Central Care Cancer Center’s patients find over \$9.5 million in assistance.

“A lot of patients have told us they wouldn’t have been able to have treatment without those funds,” Leith says.

This was the situation with Driver’s client.

“I think it’s so wonderful that they worked with us to create an option for our client to get the treatment needed to get well and have a chance at being there for the children for so many years to come,” Driver says. “We are helping save lives through this partnership.”

Meanwhile, programs such as KSFHP help Central Care Cancer Center continue to fulfill its mission.

Staffing full-time specialists in rural hubs, particularly in the western half of Kansas, has been a priority for Central Care Cancer Center as it has grown in the 20 years since Claudia Perez-Tamayo, MD, founded it in Salina.

“We like to focus on areas that are underserved,” says Brenda Bernard, Chief Nursing Officer for Central Care Cancer Center. “We focus on where that need is and identify that need and try to provide the service in that community.”

Central Care Cancer Center’s physicians also are members of the communities they serve and are available to their neighbors day and night.

“Having physicians full time who live in these rural communities is very important,” Bernard says. “Patients are able to have access to care quickly and to be seen in a timely manner. I think the patients also are able to build a bond with these physicians. They’re a part of their community.”

Dr. Fesen says in Central Care Cancer Center’s more rural settings, most of the patients have their physicians’ cellphone number and build relationships along the way.

“We’d rather see someone and be involved and make sure things are evaluated and done thoroughly, and if they need care elsewhere, we’ll refer them on and be involved and be their friend,” Dr. Fesen says. “Then we will take care of them when they get back home.”

“Those patients who are oftentimes the most needy have challenges getting other care, so they frequently need us to spend more time with them and devote time to getting them care for other diseases unrelated to what we’re treating them for,” he continues. “But, they’re also the most rewarding patients,

and the most appreciative and helpful and enthusiastic about receiving their care.”

Central Care Cancer Center has full-time specialty cancer care locations in Colby, Dodge City, Emporia, Garden City, Great Bend, Liberal, Newton and Wichita, as well as satellite centers in Council Grove, Iola, Scott City and Winfield. The organization also has Missouri locations in Bolivar and Buffalo.

For more information, please visit www.cccancer.com. To schedule an appointment, please call 800-592-5110. ■



Resty Tibayan, MD, receives a hug from his patient. In many of Central Care Cancer Center’s communities, physicians and patients become friends throughout the course of treatment.



Medical oncologist Mark Fesen, MD, FACP, enjoys a laugh with his patient in Great Bend. Central Care Cancer Center is committed to providing full-time cancer care in rural communities across Kansas.