

I CAN

NEWSLETTER

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FEATURE ARTICLE

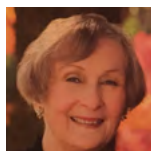
NEXT-GENERATION CANCER CARE: PATIENT-CENTERED, INNOVATION-DRIVEN

New immunotherapy and targeted therapies. Latest generation, ultra-precise radiation technology. A diverse team of deeply experienced, knowledgeable oncology specialists. Where can I get access to leading-edge cancer treatment like this without profoundly disrupting my family, work, and life?

For more than three decades, Texas Oncology has focused on being the answer to that question, for patients in rural towns, suburbs, and big cities. The pioneering practice offers a community-based approach to cancer care that delivers revolutionary treatment options driven by a robust clinical research program, with a commitment to innovation, and offering the most advanced specialty services like Texas Center for Proton Therapy.

Local is the ‘Lab’

Cancer breakthroughs don’t come easy. They require brilliant scientists, experienced physician teams, and, importantly, patients confronting uniquely challenging cancers. With 50,000 new patients seen each year, Texas Oncology is helping develop new cancer treatment innovations through research, creating hope for patients in communities across the state. At any given time, more than 100 national clinical trials are open throughout the network, involving approximately 2,000 patients annually. To date, the practice has played a role in developing nearly 70 FDA-approved cancer drugs.



Meriam Eakin
Chronic lymphocytic leukemia patient,
Texas Oncology–Tyler

For example, a retired librarian and a football coach in Tyler agreed to participate in a recent clinical trial for a leukemia medication that was eventually approved by the FDA.

“I liked the idea of pills over drip chemotherapy,” said Meriam Eakin. Now 83 years old, she is in remission thanks to the clinical trial that helped confirm the effectiveness of a treatment solution now available to others.



Danny Palmer
Chronic lymphocytic leukemia patient,
Texas Oncology–Tyler

Meriam, Danny experienced a surge of energy. **At age 67, Danny said, “It’s like I’m 35 years old.”** Danny and Meriam continue to take the medication for preventive measures.

Immune Systems Go

Making the ordeal of cancer treatment less of an ordeal is the common goal of all cancer fighters. That’s why there’s much excitement among oncologists, researchers, patients, and media around breakthrough immunotherapy. One of the most promising advancements in cancer care, this new form of treatment unleashes patients’ own immune systems to better detect and kill cancer cells, sometimes in combination with traditional chemotherapy. Texas Oncology physicians are prescribing a number of immunotherapy drugs at locations across the practice – after having helped develop some of them in clinical trials, such as the new lung cancer medication nivolumab.

“I’m hopeful that immunotherapy will substitute chemotherapy for many cancer types in the future. Even if it doesn’t cure the patient, years of life can be added with minimal toxicity. ***It’s the quality of life we care about, not just simply living.***”



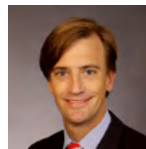
Dr. Carlos Encarnacion
Medical Oncologist, Texas Oncology–Waco

Danny Palmer, head football coach at Tyler Junior College, felt extremely fatigued at the time of his diagnosis. After less than three months on the same drug as

Doing More in the OR

Another area of cancer treatment innovation is pre-operative chemotherapy. Improvements in chemotherapy have increased surgery success rates, according to Dr. Jeffrey Lamont.


“We’re pushing the envelope in terms of curative surgery by shrinking tumors before and then getting more patients in the operating room to remove the cancer. Although we’ve always used chemotherapy before surgery, we’re now using a more aggressive chemotherapy regimen, and it’s helped our surgical outcomes immensely.”



Dr. Jeffrey Lamont
Surgical Oncologist,
Texas Oncology–Baylor Charles
A. Sammons Cancer Center

All Over the Cancer Map

Texas Oncology is also involved in cancer research initiatives that benefit the cancer community at large, including The Cancer Genome Atlas, developed by the National Cancer Institute. This initiative helps practitioners identify and map cancer mutations and their frequency through the collection of more than 10,000 cancer specimens.

“The Texas Oncology–Tyler practice has been one of the leading community cancer centers participating in this project, contributing approximately 700 specimens thus far. The goal is to identify how cancer cells work, how they survive, and their vulnerabilities ***so we can more accurately target and destroy cancer cells.***” 



Dr. Donald Richards
Medical Oncologist, Texas Oncology–Tyler

Robotic Surgery – Tiny Incisions, Big Benefits

Eliminating cancer cells without damaging the surrounding healthy cells is the vexing challenge of all forms of treatment. Just as new medicines are evolving, technological innovations including robotic surgery are helping deliver overall better cancer care to patients. Using miniature surgical instruments guided by a surgeon, this minimally invasive surgery is making the impossible possible.

“Robotic surgery allows you to **do more for your patients, with more precision.** And that’s what we care about.”



Dr. Paul Loar
Gynecologic Oncologist, Texas Oncology–Austin North

Robotic surgery not only improves access to previously inoperable sites,



Sandy Fivecoat with her husband, Bill Fivecoat
Uterine cancer patient, Texas Oncology–Austin North

but also brings enduring life-changing benefits to patients. Patients experience less pain, are at less risk for infection, can recover more quickly, and can often avoid damaging vital organs and nerves.

For patients like Sandy Fivecoat, from Austin, robotic surgery technology in the hands of a highly skilled surgeon saved her life and her quality of life. Fivecoat joined a tap dancing class after treatment.

“I absolutely would not do this kind of surgery any other way. I only have three very small spots on my abdomen, and had no complications. Dr. Loar saved my life. I was the beneficiary of very early detection and excellent medical care.” ★

Forward Thinking to Reverse Cancer

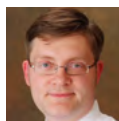
Delivering high quality cancer care without compromise means constantly learning and evaluating the newest treatment options. As a patient-centered practice, Texas Oncology is continually updating its repertoire of services. An example of an up-and-coming therapy that Texas Oncology has supported since early clinical trials is CAR-T cell therapy, a form of immunotherapy. In CAR-T therapy, T-cells from a patient’s blood are removed, genetically reprogrammed to grow cancer-fighting proteins, and then infused back into the patient – arming the patient’s own immune system to attack cancer.

“When we first learned about CAR-T therapy, we formed a working group to explore its possibilities,” said Dr. Jason Melear, medical oncologist

at Texas Oncology–Austin Midtown. “We proactively developed plans to implement it in local practices and explored guidelines needed to equip our staff.”

On a fast track for FDA approval, this innovative therapy is expected to be available at many Texas Oncology practices by the end of the year.

“We are very forward-thinking in our oncology care. We try to stay ahead of the curve, keeping a pulse on upcoming treatments and techniques before they hit the market.” ★



Dr. Jason Melear
Medical Oncologist,
Texas Oncology–Austin Midtown



Team You

Cancer is not just a medical challenge. It impacts every aspect of patients’ lives, including families and loved ones. That’s why Texas Oncology focuses on a team-based approach. From brief experiences with lab technicians, to in-depth discussions with financial counselors, to daily contact with dedicated oncology nurses, patients benefit from an integrated, informed, and empowered team. This helps ensure that care decisions take into account the total picture of a patient’s circumstances.

“By gathering input from every member of the team, I’m able to get a total picture of the patient’s needs – we have such smart, committed people who aim to continually improve patient care. For example, through this team approach, we recently discovered a ‘red tape’ problem with patients getting prescribed antibiotics in a timely manner. So we put in place a streamlined process to enable patients to receive this medicine at our onsite pharmacy. Problem solved.”



Dr. Thomas Fisher
Medical Oncologist,
Texas Oncology–San Antonio
Southeast

This approach encourages an open dialogue – and respect for patients’ values and concerns – that leads to improved solutions for those fighting cancer and a better overall patient experience. ★

About Texas Oncology

As an independent oncology practice, Texas Oncology is comprised of more than 420 physicians and more than 175 sites of service throughout Texas and southeastern Oklahoma and is a pioneer in community-based cancer care. Patients are treated with today's most advanced, effective cancer technologies and treatments, and have the opportunity to take part in some of the most promising clinical trials in the nation for new drugs and treatments for a broad range of cancers, near the critical support of family and friends.

[Texas Breast Specialists](#), [Texas Oncology Surgical Specialists](#), [Texas Urology Specialists](#), [Texas Interventional Radiology Center](#), and [Texas Center for Proton Therapy](#) are a part of [Texas Oncology](#).

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Getting Well is Getting Better

You might not think of suburban Bedford, Texas, as a hotbed of advanced cancer research. But you'd be wrong about that. After a stage IIIC ovarian cancer diagnosis, patient Darlene Legge underwent surgery, followed by chemotherapy, but the cancer never went away. Legge's oncologist, Dr. Mark Messing, recommended a clinical trial involving combination therapy: chemotherapy paired with immunotherapy, which enhances the effectiveness of the patient's immune system to identify and kill cancer cells.

"Darlene's been on this treatment regimen since June 2016 and she is doing extremely well, with minimal toxicity and almost no side effects. **Immunotherapy allows us to attack the cancer in a totally different way** through maintenance therapy for recurrent cases like Darlene's, if frontline chemotherapy doesn't result in cure."

When comparing her experience with the first round of treatment to the clinical trial, Darlene said, **"I have more energy with this regimen versus chemotherapy only and significantly fewer side effects, like nausea. It's amazing how much treatment has improved and isn't as toxic to the patient anymore. I just consider myself lucky to be in the right place at the right time regarding this new form of cancer treatment through a clinical trial."** 




Dr. Mark Messing
Gynecologic Oncologist, Texas Oncology–Bedford

Liquid Biopsy – A New Perspective on Biopsies

Traditional biopsies obtain genetic cancer information via tissue from the tumor. However, some cancers, such as lung or metastatic breast cancer, are located in areas of the body that pose risks to the patient if a traditional biopsy were to be administered. Liquid biopsies provide a less invasive way to obtain that genetic blueprint of the cancer through a simple blood draw.

In addition, the liquid biopsy procedure itself is quicker and can be done earlier, helps patients avoid unnecessary testing, and the testing turnaround time is faster, allowing the physician to quickly prescribe the most effective treatment for the patient's cancer. Texas Oncology is leveraging the one FDA-approved liquid biopsy test available today.

"My patients have been very receptive to the use of liquid biopsies, since it may help them avoid undergoing a traditional biopsy. Although new to market, as the test becomes more sensitive, I anticipate liquid biopsies will become more common. **It's important for oncologists to keep up with new tests and treatments**, as these directly affect patient outcomes and the advancement of cancer care." 



Dr. Thomas Aung
Medical Oncologist,
Texas Oncology–Cedar Park
and Marble Falls