

The expansion of the **Nepean Cancer Care Centre** will soon be complete and patients will have access to additional chemotherapy and radiation treatment services. We spoke with Operations and Services Development Manager, **Leanne Hunter** and Director for Radiation Therapy, **Kevin Van Tilburg** from Nepean Cancer Care Center to find out what the service expansion means for staff and patients.

What are some of the challenges you face with the current Cancer Care Centre?

Leanne: The size of our facility makes it challenging for staff to treat and care for the high number of patients and families coming through the doors every day.

Despite these constraints, chemotherapy nurses are doing an amazing job caring for between 50 - 60 patients every day, which is significantly more than similar sized cancer centres in the region.

Demand for our services continues to increase so these interim improvements are essential to meet the current needs of patients with cancer.

What has the planning and design process been like?

Leanne: Nurse unit managers, front line staff, heads of departments and allied health team members have been involved in the design process to ensure we build a facility that will meet the various needs of patients and families.

Kevin: I've installed new radiotherapy machines (linear accelerators) before, but being involved in the design of a radiation therapy bunker was a new experience for me.

As part of the planning and design phase, we consulted with other cancer care centres and our Sydney West Radiation Oncology Network to help us select the best technology and vendors.



Left to right: *Kevin Van Tilburg, Director Radiation Therapy, Rachael McDonald, Project Officer, Nepean Redevelopment and Leanne Hunter, Operations and Services Development Manager.*

What new technology is Cancer Care receiving?

Kevin: Cancer Care currently has two linear accelerators that provide radiation therapy to patients. While these two machines have been upgraded in the past, our new linear accelerator features Brainlab™ technology (ExacTrac) that will allow us to provide more flexible treatment options and pinpoint tumors more accurately so healthy tissue is less affected.

Having an third linear accelerator will also allow us to treat an additional 400 patients every year which equates to approximately 7000 additional treatment sessions.

How will patients and staff benefit from the expansion of services?

Leanne: Our staff are passionate about providing patient-centred care and having additional space and treatment services will definitely improve the patient experience and lead to better health outcomes.

The new radiation therapy bunker and chemotherapy treatment spaces will make such a big difference. Our medical physicists are particularly excited to have access to the new linear accelerator technology.

Working during the construction period has had its challenges but everyone understands that the end result will definitely be worth it.

Kevin: Approximately 15 percent of our patients come from regional and rural areas of NSW, so this expansion of service will have a positive impact across the state.

Our team is keen to start using the new machine, but first our medical physicists are working long hours to ensure it is properly installed and tested. It will be very rewarding to receive our first patients in the coming months.



The project team is working closely with the experienced radiation therapy team at the Nepean Cancer Care Centre to commission the new linear accelerator.



Some of our valued Cancer Care staff. Left to right: Lara Krejci, Kaisha Fabian, Leanne Hunter, Rachael McDonald, Kevin Van Tilburg, Jodie McMurray and Dawn Hutley.

What are you most looking forward to?

Leanne: We had a lot of positive feedback when we opened the new clinic rooms earlier this year, and everyone is excited to see the new chemotherapy and radiation therapy services open in a few months' time.

All the staff who were involved in the planning and design of the new facilities still had their regular jobs, so we are also looking forward to getting back to business as usual!

Everyone has worked so hard and it's great to see all that effort pay off.

Kevin: Having the increased capacity and working with a more advanced machine will be very beneficial for our staff and patients.

The design and construction process has been very comprehensive and time consuming so it will be great to finish the project and see the first patients walk through the door.
