



## Collaborative Care

### Competing practices join forces to create state-of-the-art Partners for Urology Health

By Mark Watt | Photos by Bill Webb

For years, the two major urology practice groups serving the Greater Youngstown area have operated independently as direct competitors. That has changed to a degree with the opening of Partners for Urology Health, a \$9 million facility at 6262 Mahoning Avenue in Austintown. Pooling resources to provide some of the most advanced technology available today for their patients, those two practice groups – N.E.O. Urology Associates, Inc. and Advanced Urology – have teamed up with Humility of Mary Health Partners health system to bring operations under one roof.

“They are natural competitors because they are the two major health groups in the area,” says Margaret Baker, director of oncology services for Humility of Mary Health Partners (HMHP). A region of Catholic Healthcare Partners, Humility of Mary Health Partners operates hospice programs, continuing care facilities and hospitals/health centers, including St. Elizabeth Health Center in Youngstown. “Both of the urology practices had separately come to us with interest in doing a joint venture of some kind and eventually it was decided that bringing all three of these entities

together would be advantageous for our patients. The two practices continue to operate separately but now have access to the same, shared state-of-the-art technology.”

The result of that joint venture is a modern, 13,000-square-foot, one-story facility that operates essentially as a one-stop shop for patients in the region with urological medical conditions, particularly prostate cancer. Designed by Strollo Architects and constructed by Alex Downie & Sons Co., the Urology Center of Excellence provides patient consultation, testing, labwork, diagnosis

and treatment in one centralized space. Included is a CT scanner and a \$2 million linear accelerator, which is a system used to treat cancer patients with precisely aimed high-energy x-rays.

Why build a urology-specific facility? A key driver for the project is an increased incidence rate of prostate cancer cases in the area, Baker says. According to a report issued by the American Cancer Society in 2008 (“Ohio Cancer Facts & Figures 2008”), the rate of new prostate cases in Mahoning County (190.8 per 100,000 individuals) is higher than the state average (145.7 per 100,000).



**CREATING CONTINUITY** The new urology center works from a palette of materials found at other Humility of Mary Health Partners facilities. For example, a bowed canopy entrance supported by exposed steel beams mimics a similar canopy entrance at a diagnostic center next door.

Additionally, prostate cancer has been one of the most common types of cancer in HMHP facilities overall in recent years, she says.

In 2007, after an agreement had been reached between HMHP and the two urology practice groups, Strollo Architects was brought aboard to begin design work for the facility. "We have done a number of these types of radiation treatment facilities and other medical facilities in the past so we were able to bring that experience to the table here," says Rodney Lamberson, AIA, ACHA, NCARB, vice president and

principal of Strollo Architects. After a space-planning program was completed, the working group solicited proposals from several general contracting companies, including Alex Downie & Sons Co., which ultimately won the bid.

The project was fast-tracked with ground breaking in late June 2009, explains Tom Downie, superintendent with Alex Downie & Sons Co., who worked with one of his brothers, Alex Downie, P.E., LEED AP on the project.

"Time was certainly a challenge, but our job was made a lot easier because of very clear and precise drawings from

Strollo Architects, a lot of great work from our subcontractors and great teamwork overall," Downie says. "When you're doing a job fast like this, you need to get answers to questions quickly and we were able to get answers from the owner and the designers immediately. That's vital."

The project was completed in late February 2010, eight months after shovels first hit the ground.

### "Comfortable and familiar"

From the guest parking lot to the south of the facility, patients enter the

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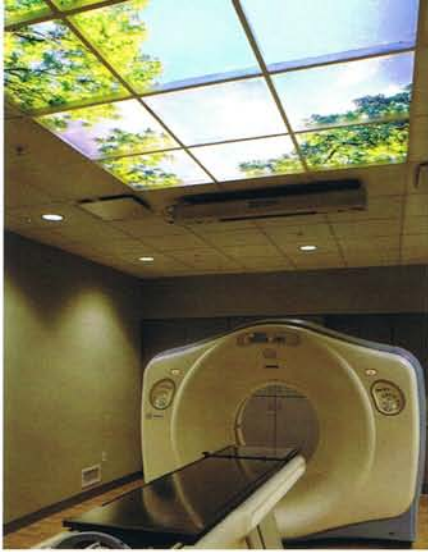
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**OUTSIDE INFLUENCE** Backlit decorative ceiling panels, featuring an image of tree branches and a blue sky, create a comforting atmosphere in the CT room.

Urology Center of Excellence through a glass and aluminum framed atrium space and into a towering corridor that splits the interior space into two separate masses.

The east half of the new building includes patient intake areas, reception space, laboratory space, exam rooms and procedure rooms, utilized by the two separate urology practices. Organized as a mirror image of each other, the urology practices' spaces are joined by a shared break room and small meeting area.

Across the corridor to the west is the radiation therapy department, including administrative offices, exam rooms and a consultation room. A CT room includes backlit decorative ceiling panels featuring an image of tree branches and a blue sky. This feature is intended to provide a comforting atmosphere for patients who may be required to lay motionless on a CT bed for 20 to 40 minutes at a time.

Radiation treatment takes place in a seven-foot-thick concrete vault in the northwest corner of the building, accessed via a two-foot-thick lead door. Inside is the Elekta Linear Accelerator with VMAT (volumetric modulated arc therapy) technology. An advanced Calypso motion tracking system allows the therapists to observe patients' movements; if the patient moves more than four millimeters, the system shuts down to prevent radiation damage.

"The technology is absolutely state of the art," Lamberson says. "There aren't any other facilities like this in Western Pennsylvania or Northeast

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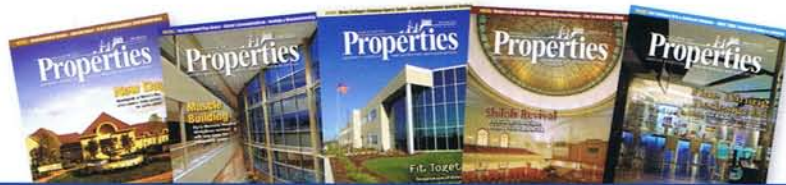
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**NOD TO NATURE** Soothing shades of blue and green plus nature-themed decor help to create a peaceful atmosphere.

Ohio that have all of these resources under one roof.”

Presenting a unique challenge for the construction team was the installation of the concrete vault housing the linear accelerator. Downie says special techniques were required to provide lasting protection from radiation. To ensure proper curing of the concrete to create the vault, probes were inserted into the concrete and used to monitor the temperature through the installation process.

“It has to be a continuous pour in the vault,” says Baker, of HMHP. “Otherwise, the radiation will leak through any seam in the concrete.”

Outside of the radiation therapy department is a waiting area, including an education/work area where patients can check email or do research if desired. Baker notes that patients undergoing radiation therapy visit the facility five days a week for nearly nine weeks, which means for a lot of time spent in the new building. “They end up having an intimate relationship with the building and the staff,” she says. “We want it to be comforting.”

That drove the interior design, according to Lamberson who describes the spaces as “comfortable and familiar.” Soothing shades of blue and green blend

with faux bamboo flooring. Adorning walls are nature photos, many of which were taken at nearby Mill Creek MetroParks, while a nature-themed mural in the radiation therapy department was created by photographer Tony Mancino. Clerestory windows, transoms and interior glass paneling allow natural light to penetrate deep into the building, while frosted glass is utilized to provide privacy in some spaces.

Lamberson notes that the project team is pursuing LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification from the U.S. Green Building Council. “When we were initially doing the programming and conceptual part of the work, we decided that targeting LEED certification was an opportunity we couldn’t miss,” he says.

Sustainable features include low VOC (volatile organic compounds) furnishings, low emissivity glazing and recycled content materials used throughout. Carpet tiles and welded seam sheet vinyl flooring provide durability and maintenance efficiency. A steel-framed bar joist roof structure is topped with a white TPO (thermoplastic olefin) roof. Additionally, a changing room/shower area and bike rack encourage employees to walk or bike to work, while preferred parking is provided for low-emissivity vehicles or carpooling vehicles.

### Made to match

Architecturally, the façade of the new building features clean, simple horizontal lines created with aluminum paneling, aluminum glazing and glass curtainwall. Breaking the horizontal plane and jutting out from the rectangular structure is a bowed canopy entrance supported by exposed steel beams. This mimics a similar canopy entryway next door at HMHP’s St. Elizabeth Emergency & Diagnostic Center, a building erected five years ago by the same design and construction team of Strollo Architects and Alex Downie & Sons Co.

For continuity, the new urology center works from a palette of materials and features found at a variety of other HMHP facilities, Lamberson says.

“Some years ago we designed [the St. Elizabeth Boardman Cancer Center

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for HMHP] at a 38-acre campus in Boardman," Lamberson says. "For that building, we introduced a set of materials that has been used repeatedly since. For instance, we selected a brick style that has been around for years and should be produced long into the future. We want to make sure that if we build something [for HMHP] in five or 10 years we can count on using the same products."

In fact, the Urology Center of Excellence and the emergency and diagnostic center next door may be early steps toward building an entire campus of related medical facilities, Lamberson says; the property previously was used as a farm and stretches 10 1/2 acres north from Mahoning Avenue.

That possibility of future expansion helped to drive the design of the urology facility. Specifically, the main corridor within the facility could be extended north to accommodate a building addition if desired.

"Fairly readily, we could add another component to that end of the building," Lamberson says. "I do medical buildings often and the one thing that is constant about them is that nothing stays the same. There's always some new technol-



ogy or need for a new or different space. This building is ready for that. The organizational structure is there."

### Settling in

As the staff continues settling in, Tom Downie and the construction team are making finishing touches on the facility. "It's been a pleasure working with Strollo Architects and the hospital," Downie says. "[Marge Baker], in particular, has been instrumental in making the transition into the space as smooth as possible."

**LETTING IN THE LIGHT** A combination of clerestory windows, transoms and interior glass paneling allow natural light to penetrate deep into the building.

Lamberson says that the project depended on a cooperative effort between everyone involved. "It was a very aggressive schedule and if anyone dropped the ball we would be in trouble," he says. "We didn't have to worry about that though. It went great."

Dr. Mark Memo, DO, with NEO Urology, says that both of the urology practices and Humility of Mary Health Partners are pleased with the results.

"It has been great working together as a group to bring the best treatment available to our patients," Memo says. "We are very happy and we're seeing a huge influx of patients from the community."

Baker, who recently moved her office to the facility, says she continues to receive compliments from visitors to the Urology Center of Excellence.

"It's a great feeling when patients walk in and come up to the window and the first thing they say isn't: 'Hi, I'm here for an appointment,' she says. "Instead, it's: 'Wow, this building is beautiful.' And it is. We're very happy here." **P**



Partners for Urology Health  
Designed by Strollo Architects & built by Alex Downie & Sons Co.

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