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THE **NEWS CENTER** FOR THE CANCER CARE TEAM

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# Cancer Centers, Hospitals Using Gardens to Help Patients Heal

By Jane Erikson

**P**anoramic views of the Santa Catalina Mountains in Arizona north of Tucson, and courtyards and walkways landscaped with native plants and trees, will be part of the treatment regimen at the new Arizona Cancer Center outpatient facility, scheduled to open in October. Designed to maximize its desert surroundings, the center will be one of the newest examples of how health care facilities are being built

around the healing effects of nature.

The trend has emerged from more than two decades of research that show that patients who can enjoy the view of a garden outside their hospital window, and that those who can go outside and experience nature first-hand, are likely to heal more quickly than those who cannot.

One of the first studies, conducted in the early 1980s, showed that surgical patients required less pain medication, called for their nurses less frequently, and left the hospital sooner when they

could look out on landscaped yards and gardens.

Those conclusions came from reviewing the charts of 46 gallbladder-surgery patients whose data were adjusted for age, smoking history, and other factors that could affect their outcomes.

The study's principal investigator was Roger S. Ulrich, PhD, of the Center for Health Systems and Design at Texas A&M University. "Supportive gardens in health care facilities potentially can be an important adjunct to the healing

effects of drugs and other modern medical technology, and help improve the overall quality of care," Dr. Ulrich noted in a recent report.

## 4 Criteria

Gardens and other landscaped areas have the most beneficial effects when they meet four criteria, he said:

- They help the patient achieve a sense of control.
- They encourage social support.
- They offer opportunities for

Healing gardens at (right, counterclockwise) Legacy Health System's Good Samaritan Hospital and Medical Center in Portland, OR; UCSD's Mesa and Bamboo Garden; the NIH Mark Hatfield Clinical Research Center; and at M. D. Anderson's Ambulatory Clinical Building, the Grand Staircase and the second floor terrace



(G. Lyon Photography)

(G. Lyon Photography)



movement and light exercise.

■ They provide soothing distractions.

## Help with Recovery from Surgery for Invasive Bladder Cancer

A recent illustration of this process comes from Legacy Health System's Good Samaritan Hospital and Medical Center in Portland, OR, where social worker Vi Hansen, MSW, LCSW, pointed to a healing garden as having a dramatic effect on one patient's recovery following surgery for invasive bladder cancer.

The patient was obviously depressed by his cancer diagnosis, and the combination of intravenous lines and suction devices seemed to amplify his sense of doom, Ms. Hansen said. For nearly two weeks, the patient refused to leave his room, even after antidepressants and having counseling, as well as much encouragement from his wife and hospital staff.

Then one day Ms. Hansen asked if the patient's IVs and tubes could be temporarily disconnected so he could go outside to the hospital's garden area. The nurses agreed.

longer walks. "He turned the corner," Ms. Hansen said. "He was on the road to recovery. And he was able to leave the hospital within a few days of that first visit to the garden."

## 'Life Enhancing, Life Rebuilding'

"The garden experience is life enhancing and it's life rebuilding," said Teresia Hazen, MED, a registered horticultural therapist and coordinator of therapeutic gardens for Legacy Health System.

Legacy is the only health care agency in the world to receive two Therapeutic Garden awards from the American Horticultural Therapy Association, for Good Samaritan's Stenzel Healing Garden in 1998 and for the gardens at Emanuel Children's Hospital in 2000. The Stenzel Garden also is featured in a display at the US Botanic Garden in Washington, DC. Legacy is developing plans for another healing garden at Good Samaritan's outpatient cancer clinic.

Elements of the children's garden include a yellow-brick pathway and a

seven-foot-tall Tin Man, giant sculpted turtles to climb on, and large play areas.

"We have lots of bird feeders and water features, areas where the kids can water plants, and areas full of vegetables and strawberries that the children can pick and eat if they want to," said Marceea Worobey, PT, Clinical Coordinator for Pediatric Development and Rehabilitation.

Hospitalized children quickly become deconditioned, so the hospital's garden also includes uneven paths

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*The trend has emerged from more than two decades of research showing that patients who can enjoy the view of a garden outside their hospital window, and that those who can go outside and experience nature first-hand, are likely to heal more quickly than those who cannot.*

"I stayed upstairs and watched the patient and his wife outside in the garden," Ms. Hansen said. "His wife was on a wooden bench and the patient was lying down with his head in his wife's lap. With one hand he was holding onto his wife's hand, and with the other he was holding onto a branch from a large shrub. They were obviously having a conversation, and it seemed to be a relaxing and peaceful time for both of them."

After a short while, the couple returned to the patient's room. Ms. Hansen wrote down what the patient said to her: "The garden is an oasis of peace and tranquility. It's the first time I've felt like a human being in two weeks."

After that experience, the patient was willing to take short walks through the hospital and garden, which led to

## Gardens

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where they can practice walking and rebuild their strength, Ms. Worobey said. "We also have trikes we can take down there and balls and toys," she said. "We can do everything right there."

"Kids know they're in the hospital for a reason. Getting back to something they're used to doing, like running around in a garden or sitting in the grass or playing in the water fountain and getting a little dirty is more normal to them than being in the hospital. It's more like being at home."

Ms. Worobey described the case of a young patient who lived on a farm, where morning chores were part of his daily routine. "Part of our work was to go down every day and do some watering. That helped him feel better about being in the hospital."



**Walter Baile, MD:** "Hospitals have long been associated with sickness, death, and dying. Now we're associating patients with healing, optimism, encouragement, and social support—and patients really, really like that. Patients no longer get the 'white coat syndrome'—the anxiety of being in a sterile environment that is gloomy and demoralizing."

### Benefits to Staff as Well

Legacy staff members also benefit from the gardens. "I would have to say it has a really profound effect on me," said Ms. Hansen, who leads a breast cancer support group on days when she already has worked several hours in the acute-care setting.

"I've developed a pattern of going to the healing garden, and I sit there for about 30 minutes. I feel myself becoming more centered, becoming calmer, and that serves as a transition for me before I move on to the support group."

Ms. Worobey said she gets the same kind of benefit from the Emanuel children's garden. "Do I want to sit inside all day long or do I want to go outside for a bit? And I love to pick the vegetables and eat them. We can all do that."

### M. D. Anderson

The University of Texas M. D. Anderson Cancer Center also has been a leader in the use of natural elements to promote healing. One example is the Alkek Hospital, which opened in 1999, with a lobby designed to help patients feel invited, rather than admitted.

The lobby features floor-to-ceiling windows; a blue and white geometric stained glass rotunda ceiling; a silent waterfall in the lobby's center; and a piano—often with someone playing it.

"Hospitals have long been associated with sickness, death, and dying. Now we're associating patients with healing, optimism, encouragement, and social support—and patients really, really like that," said Walter Baile, MD, Chief of Psychiatry and a founder and Medical Director of the Place of Wellness, M. D. Anderson's center for complementary therapies.

"Patients no longer get the 'white coat syndrome'—the anxiety of being in a sterile environment that is gloomy and demoralizing."

In March 2005, M. D. Anderson opened its new Ambulatory Clinical Building and Cancer Prevention Building, structures that cover more than one million square feet and cost nearly \$370 million to complete.

Of the two new facilities, the Ambulatory Clinical Building is the one most used by patients, who enter by a winding outdoor staircase that starts in surrounding gardens, then overlooks the gardens at the entry to the building.

The main lobby features a copper "water wall" that rises through two floors of the building. And in the lobby's center is a 25-foot-tall Tree of Life, a colorful steel sculpture by New York artist Albert Paley.

Patients are again connected to nature through landscaped terraces outside the cafeteria and main reception area on the second floor, and the chemotherapy unit on the eighth floor.

M. D. Anderson built the new buildings "around nature and the expectations of patients, families, and employees who work in these environments for eight to 12 hours a day," said Gerard Coleman, MHA, Vice President and Chief of Clinical Operations. "The patients' response has been overwhelming. Both the patients and staff are thrilled."

### NIH Mark Hatfield Clinical Research Center

Portland, OR, architect Bob Frasca of Zimmer Gunsul Frasca Partnership designed the National Institutes of Health's new Mark O. Hatfield Clinical Research Center in Bethesda, MD, as "a health care facility that embodies hope." The \$605 million center does that in part through landscaped outdoor spaces that include winding, graded walkways and seating areas where patients can socialize or be by themselves.

But the 870,000-square-foot hospi-

tal also is built around a seven-story glass-ceilinged atrium called the Science Court, flanked by two 16,000-square-foot rectangular gardens. The refreshing setting includes "The Oasis," a waterfall that flows into a bronze-sculpted stream, designed by Susan and Gene Flores of Plainsfield, MA, who are both cancer survivors.

"You have to have spaces that by their very nature are optimistic," Mr. Frasca said. "You have to have natural light, and access visually and actually to the outdoors. When a patient goes to that hospital, they are frightened, and their family members are frightened. You need to create an environment that promotes a psychological well-being, so the patients feel like they're not just in a test tube, but human beings who have a chance to get better."

### Moore's UCSD Center

His company also designed the new Rebecca and John Moore's University of California San Diego Cancer Center in La Jolla, a \$72.4 million facility that opened to patients last fall.

The exterior walls of the 270,000-square-foot center are covered with anodized stainless steel shingles that change color from purple to green depending on the angle of the sun. That non-static element is another way to convey change and optimism, said Design Partner Dusty Rhoads.

The west side of the center opens onto a large field called The Meadow that includes a garden area for staff and a separate healing garden off the center's infusion clinic.

*Health care facilities are being built around the healing effects of nature.*

"You can actually take your IV pole and go outside and sit in the sun if you feel up to it," Mr. Rhoads said, "or if you're a caregiver waiting several hours while a patient goes through treatment, it's a place to go outside and relax."

Patients waiting to see their doctors also can borrow beepers so they can wait outdoors instead of in the waiting room; the beeper will let them know when the doctor is ready to see them.

### Arizona Cancer Center Takes Advantage of Sonoran Desert Plants

Although the Arizona Cancer Center outpatient complex is a smaller facility than those in Houston, Bethesda, and La Jolla, it will take advantage of something not available to any other cancer center in the country: the Sonoran Desert and its incredible array of drought-resistant trees, cacti, and flowering plants.

The \$25 million center will expand the outpatient treatment space from about 30,000 square feet to 100,000. The original Arizona Cancer Center building—part of which is named after founder Sydney E. Salmon, MD—will be turned over entirely to research.



**David S. Alberts, MD, PhD:** "The healing gardens will be an integral part of our new center and will provide an atmosphere that's conducive to an outstanding quality of life—a setting in which cancer patients can feel they have a great chance of being cured."

Like M. D. Anderson's new clinical building, Arizona's two-story center was designed with input from patients and staff. It will enclose three open-air courtyards where patients and family members can relax in solitude or visit with one another. An outdoor healing garden landscaped entirely with native plants will separate the clinic building from parking areas and provide multiple opportunities for solitude and socialization.

All treatment rooms will be located on the second floor, each with large windows looking out on the courtyards, the mountains to the north, or the healing garden that will extend across the east side of the facility.

Landscaped terraces on the center's second floor will offer additional opportunities for fresh air and relaxation.

Features inside the new center will include natural stone floors and natural woods. Fabrics will feature colors that pick up those of the plants and trees outside.

Architect James Simeo of CO Architects in Los Angeles explained that the goal has been to create a spa-like environment that evokes optimism.

"Increasingly and importantly, the field of oncology is focusing on quality of life as well as quantity of life," said Arizona Cancer Center Director David S. Alberts, MD, PhD. "The healing gardens will be an integral part of our new center and will provide an atmosphere that's conducive to an outstanding quality of life—a setting in which cancer patients can feel they have a great chance of being cured."