



**ST GEORGE'S
HOSPITAL**

A Tradition of Excellence

MEDIA RELEASE

30th June 2008

New \$16m Cancer Care Centre in Christchurch gets go ahead

Christchurch's St George's Hospital has been given the green light to proceed with the development of its \$16m comprehensive cancer care service.

“With resource consents now approved, St George's welcomed the chance to begin construction work as soon as possible on the purpose-built facility,” said Tony Hunter, Chief Executive Officer for St George's Hospital.

“This is a hugely exciting project for St George's Hospital, but even more so for the people of Canterbury and the South Island who can now look forward to a more comprehensive service cancer care service provided from the St George's Hospital site.

“It is very exciting to be making a concrete start.”

Work on the new centre is well advanced with the underground bunkers 70% complete. The building costs total \$8m and the specialised equipment \$7m. The facility expected to open in late 2009.

Dr Chris Atkinson and Dr Chris Wynne, two leading oncologists involved in the project, say after years of discussions and planning, the new high tech building is about to become a reality and by this time next year will be functional.

“Dr Chris Atkinson said “the facility consisting of two linear accelerator bunkers and CT scanner is going to make a big difference for cancer patients in Canterbury and the South Island. It means all services will be available on the same site.”

Dr Wynne said “the new centre was about choice, with patients being able to be looked after by the same consultant oncologist during the treatment period. They could access a wide variety of supportive care and a complete range of chemotherapy drugs and palliative treatments.”

“We are looking forward to being able to introduce high tech radiotherapy treatments not currently available in New Zealand and know the new clinic will attract consultant oncologists and radiation therapists from overseas” said Dr Wynne.

“We expect to be able to treat between 500 and 900 patients in the first year, of which 45 % are likely to receive radiotherapy.”

The Oncology Centre will add to the national cancer services resource at no cost to the Government or the taxpayer and will complement services already available through the Canterbury and Otago District Health Boards.

It will be the first private radiation therapy clinic in the South Island and will provide immediate treatment for patients, by the specialist of their choice, operating state of the art equipment equal to anything available internationally.

A new charitable trust, “St George’s Cancer Institute” has been established to raise funds to buy the equipment, which will be leased to the Centre. In the first instance funds will be used to buy the linear accelerators, which are fundamental to the provision of radiotherapy and are operated by highly skilled Medical radiation technologists through extensive computer software packages to control dosage rates.

Revenue from the linear accelerator lease and from public donations will provide an ongoing funding stream for the trust to fund a wide range of services to both patients and their families.

“These services will include cancer-related activities such as cancer research at the centre, education programs and psycho-social support for cancer patients and their families” said Tony Hunter. “The trust will also provide funds for future acquisitions of the latest cancer-related equipment.”

He said legislative changes effective from April this year improved the taxation benefits available to donors.

“This means that individuals and companies can make substantial gifts with resulting generous tax deductions. We are hoping that this new legislation will be beneficial for those who wish to support the Cancer Institute in its endeavours to, in turn, support cancer patients and their families.”

Further information:

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