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Southern Nevada BUSINESS OF MEDICINE

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PHOTOS BY DAVID BECKER/SOUTHERN NEVADA BUSINESS OF MEDICINE
 Radiation oncologist Dr. Matthew Schwartz, left, checks patient Ron Melvin as radiation therapist Kim Morgan stands by after Melvin received treatment at the Comprehensive Cancer Center of Nevada in Henderson in early September. The medical group has 11 facilities in Southern Nevada and is involved in clinical research through its national affiliations.

SPECIALTY CARE AVAILABLE IN VEGAS

By BUCK WARGO
 SOUTHERN NEVADA BUSINESS OF MEDICINE

Southern Nevada hospitals and medical practices are using out-of-state partnerships and affiliations to help expand the level of care provided in the state.

From heart procedures to cancer treatment, more Nevadans can stay home and get their medical treatment

Partnerships, center expand medical treatment in Southern Nevada

here rather than travel out of state for specialized care.

St. Rose Dominican Hospitals has partnered with Stanford Hospital & Clinics to form St. Rose-Stanford Clinics, a neurosurgeon and

cardiovascular clinic. It features doctors on the faculty of Stanford University who live in Las Vegas and provide surgical and clinical services in Southern Nevada. It marks the first time Stanford has ventured outside

California for a clinical corroboration, said Laura Hennem, chief strategy officer at St. Rose Dominican Hospitals.

"It helps bring the science of what they're doing at Stanford through their specialized cardiovascular program and brings that leading edge technology to the Las Vegas Valley for heart surgery — including new types of hybrid cardiac-cardiovascular procedures," Hennem said. "It enables local patients who have had to travel to Stanford for

COVER STORY

treatment of complicated cases to no longer have to leave home."

When it comes to neurosurgery, complex procedures such as removing benign tumors that are threatening the brain or spinal cord, for example, can be tackled in Southern Nevada, Hennem said. Cardiovascular surgeons are able to deal with complex cases involving multiple bypasses, issues with arterial fibrillation and cardiovascular malformation, she said.

"If someone had to do a heart transplant, that's something that probably would go to an academic medical center, but there's so much care leading up to that and post-transplant care," Hennem said. "That's the other piece that Stanford offers that bridges before and after transplants.."

The Comprehensive Cancer Centers of Nevada is a group comprising medical oncology, hematology, radiation oncology, breast surgery and clinical research. It has 11 treatment centers and offices throughout Southern Nevada and is involved in clinical research through national affiliations with the UCLA Jonsson Comprehensive Cancer Center and US Oncology Network.

In the past two years, the center has had 850 patients in Las Vegas on research trials as part of 170 trials it participates in through its affiliations. It has been involved in developing 51 Food and Drug Administration-approved cancer therapies.

It has opened one study for treating melanoma, lung and ovarian cancer and has seen significant benefits to patients, said James Kilber, executive director.

"The new therapies out there are making a difference in people's lives," Kilber said. "Ten years ago, there would have been no hope for some of these patients, and it's amazing what we're seeing out there."

The center sees 34,000 patients a year, and 3,000 come from out of state, including some from out of the country, Kilber said.

The Children's Heart Center Las Vegas, which handles congenital heart conditions of children and those adults who developed their conditions in childhood, is eliminating the need for parents to take their children out of state unless they need a heart transplant.

The doctors do about 1,000 procedures a year at Sunrise Children's Hospital, including diagnostic and operations. Doctors close holes, open narrow valves, replace valves, adding parts of the heart that are missing and do other procedures. Children come not only from Nevada, but also from Arizona, California and Utah.

"If we didn't have this, every one of



Schwartz reviews patient Ellen Serapio's progress after she received treatment at the Comprehensive Cancer Center.

those kids would have been sent out (of state)," said Bill Evans, the center's co-director.

"We do an ultrasound and we diagnose a complex congenital cardiac problem. We transfer the child to the Heart Center at Sunrise, and we go through a series of diagnostic steps."

The center has a 70 percent detection rate for complex heart conditions for prenatal care, which is more than twice the national average, Evans said.

Heart disease is the most common birth defect, and one of every 100 babies has a problem with his heart. Most parents aren't aware of it because 99 percent of babies don't have the problem, Evans said.

"Maybe arteries are switched and the surgeons cut them off and switch them to the right location," Evans said. "It's a delicate and complex surgery and only a few people in the world can do it, but we're fortunate to have that kind of surgical expertise here."

Although UMC gets considerable attention for its trauma center and burn unit, the facility is the only place in the state people can get transplants. It's only kidney transplants at this time, but the 60 cases a year means that many people don't have leave Nevada for their medical care, said Bejon Maneckshana, one of two transplant surgeons at the hospital.

"It's a big deal because patients would have to leave and go to Arizona or Los Angeles to get transplants," Maneckshana said. "They would not only get their organ transplant, but they would have to stay there for a few months to make sure the transplant was working properly, which was quite a big ordeal for any family, as well as a lot of expenses."



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