

Passion Profile: Dr. James Orr and the Regional Cancer Center

Dr. James Orr is focused. That's nothing new: After all, he has dedicated his entire life to cancer care, to providing services to people who need them most, to planting a flag in Southwest Florida and building an exceptional patient experience from the ground up.

But his focus lately is even sharper than usual. That's because he and his colleagues in the local cancer community are gearing up for the opening of the Regional Cancer Center at Gulf Coast Medical Center.

The 7th floor on the top of Lee Health's newly renovated hospital fulfills many needs. It will provide inpatient cancer care under one roof. It will consolidate resources. It will provide new technology and ease of access.

But most importantly for Dr. Orr—a gynecologic oncologist with 21st Century Oncology—the new floor focuses providers' energies into the education and care of this community's valued patients.

"We now have come of age. The cancer program has come of age," Dr. Orr says. "Medical information, medical science is doubling every two to two and half years. We're on a fast pace. No one person can keep up with everything. But we have bright minds, dedicated people, and the cancer team has become whole."

Dr. Orr felt his life's calling early. He's a true giant and advocate: With years of surgical training, teaching, research, review of scientific literature, honors, awards, and much more, his mission has been to improve care for women with cancer.

"I wouldn't change anything in my professional career," he says. "This (RCC cancer program) is the pinnacle—not just coordinated outpatient care but coordinated inpatient, coordinated multi-disciplinary care overall."

The Regional Cancer Center at Gulf Coast Medical Center – a partnership between Lee Health, 21st Century Oncology and Florida Cancer Specialists—is designed so patients don't have to go anywhere else – either to other programs around the country or to other clinics in town for tests and treatments.

He says it best: "This is not a place, not a floor. This is a destination. A place for care."

The new program also provides:

- New operating rooms for cancer surgery
- Inpatient chemotherapy
- Examination rooms
- Onsite testing
- ER doctors with special cancer training
- Supportive care for toxicity and other complications from treatment
- Intensive Care Units strictly for cancer patients
- Surgical robots for less invasive procedures
- Access to the latest research and clinical trials

- Nurse navigators who help guide patients through their journey by answering questions, scheduling treatment, and providing resources.

Dr. Orr's Own Words

Learn more about the Regional Cancer Center at Gulf Coast Medical Center as well as the program as a whole from Dr. Orr himself:

On the Regional Cancer Center's goals:

"The goal was to create a program for cancer patients and develop that program—not just on the floor in the operating room, but create protocols for best care so that when cancer patients come in we can handle their different needs."

On How Cancer Care Works Best

"The most important concept of this: The knowledge, the science, the outcomes of patients with cancer are best when physicians are doing it every day at high-volume places, every day. Patient outcomes are going to be improved. We are creating an environment that says we care. We offer the care and get the outcomes. That is a win, win, win.

"Much of cancer diagnosis happens in a hospital. We've now been given the tools and the space. There is no doubt that this will be a superb place to receive care as we forward."

On Care for Everyone

"My goal is to find a way to help those individuals who may be financially troubled. We care for everyone. Nobody gets turned away. That's not true of Mayo, Miami, Moffitt, Orlando—nobody is turned away here. Every man and woman deserves the best cancer treatment available."

On Convenience

"There is no reason for anyone to travel. Period. End of discussion. We have the providers, nursing staff, nutrition experts, social services, case management, admissions – all of them specially trained. We create a scheme of care so smooth that nothing is lost, nothing is overlooked, and outcomes in terms of risks and survival will be lessened."

On Teamwork:

"This is a consolidation of a team of excellent physicians. The quality of providers in this community is superb in the oncology arena. We consolidate research into very specific areas so we're not going from hospital to hospital to collect data or information. That's a big boost for our research."

"Through work with other providers and our community, we remain very humble. We can hear, we can learn from each other. Humility is key."

On the New Location

“This is not a move (from previous inpatient cancer services at Lee Memorial Hospital.) I see this as a consolidation and an attempt to consolidate all patients with cancer into one specific area. We are planting our flag in the ground. This is the fourth largest cancer program in the state.”

On His Colleagues

“We have a huge number of bright minds, a lot of smart people. What this does is congregate those individuals: pathology, radiology, clinicians into the same space. There is kindness, caring, comfort in facilities. An uplifting feeling—airy and light. That helps the staff.”

On Patient Education

“Sometimes the community just doesn’t know, through no fault of their own. ‘Why didn’t I know this—why didn’t I come here?’ We hope to increase the familiarity of what’s available in the region.”

On Communication

“We’re here and patients don’t have to go anywhere else. For those very rare instances, a new protocol or something that’s unavailable because it’s rare, we have the ability to contact people and providers across the country at a moment’s notice.”

On How It All Comes Back to Focus

“We have a remarkable opportunity. The inpatient hospital at Gulf Coast is merely 13 minutes from the outpatient center at the sanctuary. That’s one space. You can’t do this in multiple hospitals and expect the same outcome. We are now allowed to focus. We can focus our energies into the care, into the education of the care of patients. Bright minds, dedicated people, caring people to provide best care.”

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