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Tampa General Hospital, Florida Cancer Specialists, Proton Therapy Partners and Florida Urology Partners Come Together with Plans to Open the Region's First Proton Therapy Center

The first of its kind on the West Coast of Florida, this free-standing proton therapy center – backed by the region's top academic medical center and leading community partners – aims to provide cancer patients with advanced and alternative life-saving treatment.

Tampa, FL (Oct. 24, 2021) – Tampa General Hospital (TGH), the Florida Cancer Specialists & Research Institute (FCS), Proton Therapy Partners and Florida Urology Partners today announced a new collaborative partnership with plans to build a proton therapy center in Tampa Bay that would offer patients across the West Coast of Florida access to an advanced alternative to conventional radiation treatment for cancer and within the convenience of their own backyard. Under the support of a proposed LLC, the free-standing proton therapy center is expected to break ground in Tampa Bay in the second quarter of 2022.

“Tampa General Hospital’s vision is to be the safest, most innovative academic health system in America and that demands providing our community with the most advanced leading-edge treatment available,” said John Couris, president and CEO of Tampa General Hospital. “This partnership would allow us to do just that with expertise from best-in-class community partners and with the resources and support that only the region’s leading academic medical center can provide. We are excited to offer this as part of the medical district in Tampa and expansion across the state.”

Unlike traditional photon radiation, proton therapy delivers beams of high-energy protons to precisely targeted tumors. It has been proven to be an effective and recommended protocol in treating a wide range of adult cancers, from breast to head and neck to prostate cancer and pediatric brain and spinal tumors. Proton therapy is often the preferred treatment delivery modality when a cancerous tumor is close to a vital structure such as the heart, brain stem and the spinal cord.

“Proton therapy is the most cutting edge and advanced form of radiation treatment we have to offer our cancer patients. The precise nature of these targeted beams allows us to very effectively destroy cancerous tumors while reducing the likelihood and severity of side effects,” explained Dr. Richard Tuli, Chief of Radiation Oncology in the USF Health Morsani College of Medicine at the University of South Florida and Tampa General Hospital. “Its specificity of delivery allows us to treat hard to reach tumors, those wrapped around critical organs, and tumors that have come back after radiation. It’s also the safest form of radiation we have to offer our pediatric and young adult patients suffering from cancer.”

Up until now, the Tampa Bay region has been the only major market in Florida without a proton therapy center, forcing patients to travel to receive this cutting-edge treatment. This is especially challenging as the number of treatment doses can average between 30 and 40 over a set period of time, making it critical for those seeking treatment to be located near a therapy facility.

The new proton therapy center will operate under the auspices of the [Cancer Institute at Tampa General](#), which provides comprehensive, innovative care through groundbreaking therapies and advanced diagnostic imaging tools to diagnose, evaluate and treat all forms of cancer.

The new proton therapy center born out of this collaboration harnesses the innovation and expertise of the region’s leading community providers with the region’s leading academic institution and medical center to provide personalized and enhanced care, all under one access point and in a free-standing location as opposed to in a single provider facility.

“This critically important collaboration is novel in its shared commitment to advancing best-in-class care, fostering innovation and bringing the latest clinical advancements into the community,” said FCS Chief Executive Officer Nathan H. Walcker. “Proton therapy extends our ability to realize the FCS mission of providing precision-based, personalized care centered around our patients.”

“Florida Urology Partners has always made providing cancer patients the highest level of quality care with the best technology available a core priority,” explained Dr. Raviender Bukkapatnam, President of Florida Urology Partners, “Partnering with TGH, FCS and Proton Therapy Partners to provide access to proton therapy is an extension of that, and we are excited to be able to provide yet another access point to our patients with this modality.”

“It is a distinct honor to be partnering with Tampa General Hospital, Florida Cancer Specialists and Florida Urology Partners to bring life-saving proton therapy technology to citizens of the Tampa and Southwest Florida regions,” said Christopher Dadlez, president and CEO of Proton Therapy Partners.

“Our combined effort will ensure that cancer patients have access to the most advanced treatment possible to improve outcomes and change lives.”

Additional Benefits of Proton Therapy

In addition to the overarching benefits of proton therapy, there are many potential positive outcomes of proton therapy being explored with the growth of clinical evidence. These include:

- Overall reduced complications and risk of secondary cancers
- Overall reduction in both short and long-term toxicities
- 31% increase in disease control for aggressive tumors at the base of the skull (chordomas) at five years¹
- 27% reduction in overall risk of needing a feeding tube for oropharyngeal cancer²
- Dramatic reduction of negative impact on taste, nausea, and painful changes to the mouth in salivary gland treatment
- 88% less radiation dose to the heart for left-sided breast cancer³
- 42% reduction in relative risk of developing a secondary malignancy in the treatment of prostate cancer⁴
- 35% relative increase in overall survival for Stage II & III lung cancer⁵

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3. ClinicalTrials.gov Identifier: NCT02603341 Compare the effectiveness of proton vs. photon therapy in reducing major cardiovascular events (MCE), defined as atherosclerotic coronary heart disease or other heart disease death, myocardial infarction, coronary revascularization, or hospitalization for major cardiovascular event (heart failure, valvular disease, arrhythmia, or unstable angina). Cuaron JJ, Chon B, Tsai H, et al. Early Toxicity in Patients Treated With Postoperative Proton Therapy for Locally Advanced Breast Cancer. *International Journal of Radiation Oncology • Biology • Physics*. 2015;Volume 92;Issue 2;284 – 291
4. Hartsell W, Bentefour H, Dooling D, Mendenhall N. Proton Therapy Is Associated with Superior Survival and Decreased Risk of Complications Compared to IMRT for Intermediate Risk Prostate Cancer: A Medicare/SEER Database Study. [abstract] Presented at PTCOG-NA October 25, 2017 at National Conference in Chicago. <http://ptcog-na.org>
5. Chang JY, Verma V, Li M, et al. Proton Beam Radiotherapy and Concurrent Chemotherapy for Unresectable Stage III Non– Small Cell Lung Cancer: Final Results of a Phase 2 Study. *JAMA Oncol*. 2017;3(8):e172032. doi:10.1001/jamaoncol.2017.2032

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ABOUT TAMPA GENERAL HOSPITAL

Tampa General Hospital, a 1,041-bed non-profit academic medical center, is one of the largest hospitals in America and delivers world-class care as the region’s only center for Level I trauma and comprehensive burn care. Tampa General Hospital is the highest-ranked hospital in the market in U.S. News & World Report’s 2021-22 Best Hospitals, and one of the top 4 hospitals in Florida, with five specialties ranking among the best programs in the United States. The academic medical center’s commitment to growing and developing its team members is recognized by two prestigious 2021 Forbes magazine rankings – America’s Best Employers by State, third out of 100 Florida companies and first among health care and social organizations and 13th nationally in America’s Best Employers for Women. Tampa General is the safety net hospital for the region, caring for everyone regardless of their ability to pay, and in fiscal 2020 provided a net community benefit worth more than \$182.5 million in the form of health care for underinsured patients, community education and financial support to community health organizations in Tampa Bay. It is one of the nation’s busiest adult solid organ transplant centers and is the primary teaching hospital for the USF Health Morsani College of Medicine. With five medical helicopters, Tampa General Hospital transports critically injured or ill patients from 23 surrounding counties to receive the advanced care they need. Tampa General houses a nationally accredited comprehensive stroke center and its 32-bed Neuroscience Intensive Care Unit is the largest on the West Coast of Florida. It also is home to the Jennifer Leigh Muma 82-bed Level IV neonatal intensive care unit, and a nationally accredited rehabilitation center. Tampa General Hospital’s footprint includes 17 Tampa General Medical Group Primary Care offices, TGH Family Care Center Kennedy, TGH Brandon Healthplex, TGH Virtual Health and 19 outpatient Radiology Centers. Tampa Bay residents also receive world-class care from the TGH Urgent Care powered by Fast Track network of clinics, and they can even receive home visits in select areas

through TGH Urgent Care at Home, powered by Fast Track. As one of the largest hospitals in the country, Tampa General Hospital is first in Florida to partner with GE Healthcare and open a clinical command center that uses artificial intelligence and predictive analytics to improve and better coordinate patient care at a lower cost. For more information, go to www.tgh.org.

ABOUT FLORIDA CANCER SPECIALISTS & RESEARCH INSTITUTE, LLC: (FLCCANCER.COM)

Recognized by the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) with a national Clinical Trials Participation Award, Florida Cancer Specialists & Research Institute (FCS) offers patients access to more clinical trials than any private oncology practice in Florida. In the past four years, the majority of new cancer drugs approved for use in the U.S. were studied in clinical trials with Florida Cancer Specialists participation. Trained in prestigious medical schools and research institutes, our physicians are consistently ranked nationally as Top Doctors by *U.S. News & World Report*.

Founded in 1984, Florida Cancer Specialists has built a national reputation for excellence that is reflected in exceptional and compassionate patient care, driven by innovative clinical research, cutting-edge technologies and advanced treatments, including targeted therapies, genomic-based treatment, and immunotherapy. Our highest values are embodied by our outstanding team of highly trained and dedicated physicians, clinicians and staff.

ABOUT FLORIDA UROLOGY PARTNERS

Florida Urology Partners, LLP is a comprehensive urology group comprised of exceptionally trained, highly specialized and nationally recognized physicians. Utilizing the latest technological advancements available in medicine, we provide superior patient care at our urology and radiation oncology offices in the Tampa Bay area. Our mission is to provide our community with access to an excellent group of physicians and staff who provide state-of-the-art, integrated urological radiation oncology and pathology services and care with respect and compassion. For more information, visit www.floridaurologypartners.com.

ABOUT PROTON THERAPY PARTNERS

Proton Therapy Partners, www.protontherapypartners.com is an innovative healthcare services company that establishes partnerships with health systems to design, develop, construct and operate proton therapy centers. The PTP model significantly lowers costs for its partners with a footprint optimized for the healthcare provider's specific requirements. PTP's internationally recognized executive team understands the multiple complexities that come with building and operating a proton therapy center and leverages its deep experience to provide a turn-key solution that includes overall project management, training and education, and operational expertise. PTP's proven track record of success encompasses a variety of settings, including health systems, academic medical centers, comprehensive cancer centers, and community-based providers.