

Valley expands cancer care options

Partnership gives patients access to Mount Sinai

By **LINDY WASHBURN**

STAFF WRITER

Cancer patients who seek care at The Valley Hospital in Ridgewood or its outpatient cancer center in Paramus will have access to more clinical trials for treatment, as well as the added expertise of specialists at New York's Mount Sinai Health System, the two systems' leaders announced on Monday.

Oncology is the first broad area of clinical collaboration for the two health systems following their announcement of a partnership for clinical care, research and education 19 months ago.

Mount Sinai is one of 69 cancer centers nationwide – including four in New York City and one at Rutgers in New Brunswick – designated by the National Cancer Institute.

The relationship with Mount Sinai “will benefit our community by offering access to an expanded roster of clinical trials, programs and services for patients diagnosed with cancer,” said Audrey Meyers, Valley's president and chief executive.

In an era of large-scale mergers between hospitals, Valley remains a stand-alone facility, but has created partnerships with big-name institutions such as Mount Sinai for cancer and other care and the Cleveland Clinic for cardiology.

With Bergen County's aging population, the need for cancer care is increasing. At the same time, hospitals are competing for patients. Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center plans to open a satellite facility in Montvale next year, and area hospitals have invested heavily in their outpatient cancer care fa-

ilities.

Clinical trials to be made available to patients through the new partnership include new treatments for melanoma and other skin cancers, prostate and kidney cancers, and such blood disorders as leukemia, lymphoma, multiple myeloma and myelodysplastic syndromes, said Dr. Robert Korst, the head of Valley's Blumenthal Cancer Center in Paramus. Some treatment protocols will involve bone marrow transplants and immunotherapy vaccines, he said.

In addition, an important aspect of the new partnership will be multidisciplinary videoconferences – including doctors, researchers, nurses, social workers and other members of the cancer care teams at both facilities – to discuss patient cases. The aim will be to decide upon optimal treatment and follow-up care for individual patients.

“Our relationship with Mount Sinai also enables our physicians and other members of the cancer care team to reach Mount Sinai providers easily for consultations on specific patient cases and for combined educational opportunities, which will allow them to learn from each other,” Dr. Thomas Rakowski, Valley's director of medical oncology, said in a prepared statement.

The Mount Sinai System is composed of seven hospitals, along with the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai. Valley includes Valley Home Care and the Valley Medical Group of physicians, in addition to the hospital.

Email: washburn@northjersey.com

