

Moore's UCSD Cancer Center Seeks To Develop Proton/Particle Treatment and Research Center

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The University of California, San Diego is planning to establish a center for proton and particle therapy, the most powerful forms of radiation therapy available to treat cancer patients today.



Moore's UCSD Cancer Center

Protons and other particles allow for aggressive but highly targeted treatment of tumors, delivering high doses of radiation to malignant cells with minimal harm to nearby healthy tissues. Available at only a handful of centers in the United States and in the world, proton therapy not only reduces the risk of side effects but allows the delivery of higher, more effective radiation doses, improving patient outcome.

Faculty at the UC San Diego Rebecca and John Moore's Cancer Center, the region's only National Cancer Institute-designated Comprehensive Cancer Center, are developing models for building a

proton/particle center for therapy and research on the University campus.

“I am thrilled that we have taken the first steps toward building a proton treatment center here at UC San Diego,” said Arno J. Mundt, M.D., professor and chair of the UCSD Department of Radiation Oncology. “Protons and other particles are important tools in the treatment of cancer, and the development of such a center would place UCSD alongside other major cancer centers that have built proton centers, including M.D. Anderson Cancer Center and Massachusetts General Hospital.”

Proton therapy is especially useful in treating cancers of the eye and brain, head and neck, lung and other sites. Prostate cancer, in particular, is ideally suited for proton therapy with excellent clinical results resulting from this therapy, he said.

He added that the center will be both a treatment and research facility, focusing not only on state-of-the-art treatment but also the development of novel approaches to improve the efficacy of this leading edge therapy. The center will be a major resource for scientists and engineers within UCSD and for the biomedical research community at large. In addition, plans for the research program will include the study and therapeutic application of other particles with similar properties, according to Mundt, which would make it unique.

Planning for a UCSD Proton/Particle Treatment and Research Center will include a focus on pediatrics.

“Many childhood cancers benefit from proton therapy,” said Kevin T. Murphy, M.D., chief of the UCSD Pediatric Radiation Oncology Service. “Such treatment offers the ability to practically eliminate radiation dosage to adjacent healthy tissues in children, reducing adverse effects on their growth and development.”

“It will be exciting to offer our patients access to state-of-the-art radiation treatments, potentially improving cure rates and the quality of their lives,” said William Roberts, M.D., director of Hematology/Oncology for the UCSD Department of Pediatrics and Rady Children’s Hospital.

The cost of these facilities, including technology, typically exceeds \$125 million. The model being developed by UC San Diego is for a collaborative venture with private parties who would finance and build the center, which would be staffed by UCSD physicians and medical physicists. As envisioned, the center will include additional floors of laboratory space for research. A potential site for the center is the UCSD Science Research Park, on University property adjacent to the UC San Diego Medical Center-La Jolla and Moores UCSD Cancer Center. Initial projections are for the center to treat more than 1,500 patients per year.

UC San Diego is currently soliciting and reviewing information from potential partners in order to develop a formal request for proposals. Over the next several months, officials hope to develop

and submit the project for discussion and approval by University of California officials and the UC Regents.

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