

RMH FOUNDATION RAISES FUNDS TO IMPROVE CANCER TREATMENTS

Orden Harman was grateful to receive lifesaving radiation after he was diagnosed with squamous cell cancer in 2011, but he could have done without the uncomfortable mask he was required to wear. The mask was clamped onto the treatment table with Orden underneath it for each radiation session at Sentara RMH Hahn Cancer Center.



“I could hardly stand wearing the mask,” says Orden, who received radiation five days a week for a month, “and I think it’s probably even more difficult for patients who are claustrophobic.”

Thankfully, a new generation of linear accelerators, the machines that deliver radiation, greatly improve patients’ comfort. The newest machines dramatically reduce treatment times, and a movable table rotates, so the radiation beam can be better targeted to reach tumors. Thanks to generous donors such as Orden, Sentara RMH Hahn Cancer Center now has the most up-to-date linear accelerator.

“Orden and his wife, Reba, have long been considered leaders in this community, and their support for the hospital certainly demonstrates that,” says Cory Davies, executive director, RMH Foundation. “The gift they made to the new linear accelerator — along with the support of many others — is making a higher level of cancer care in our community possible.”

Sentara RMH Hahn Cancer Center’s new generation linear accelerator was made possible thanks to RMH Foundation’s fundraising campaign.

Image courtesy of Varian

In spring 2018, the RMH Foundation set a goal to raise \$2 million toward the \$3.7 million cost of a new linear accelerator within a year. They raised \$2.2 million and did so months before their self-imposed deadline.

With the hospital providing more than 7,000 radiation treatments per year, sometimes delivering 45 per day, the accelerator will be put to good use.

“The new linear accelerators are so efficient, we’ll be able to treat three patients in the amount of time it currently takes us to treat one patient,” Cory shares. “What would require 45 minutes of treatment in the past will take only 15 minutes with the new machine.”

The new linear accelerator also accounts for unwanted patient movement, automatically pausing when movement is detected. This adjustment reduces the risk that radiation beams will affect healthy tissue, and now the binding mesh masks can be replaced with open-faced masks.

Orden still plans to hold onto his mask as a reminder of what he once endured, a journey he is glad no one else will ever experience in the same movement-limiting way – thanks to RMH Foundation’s foresight and fundraising.



Orden Harman is happy to help others avoid the uncomfortable mask once necessary for radiation treatments.