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# SOUTHERN *family* Magazine

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**FREE**

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**SERVING THE TENNESSEE VALLEY AND SURROUNDING AREAS**



# Center for Cancer Care: Compassionate, comprehensive care



Dr. Noel C. Estopinal didn't realize he would one day work as a radiation oncologist with Cancer Care Center (CCC) when he developed cancer as a medical school student.

He faced the diagnosis 28 years ago for lymphatic cancer or Hodgkin's disease. It was the second semester, second week of his junior year in Louisiana State University medical school.

Estopinal received seven weeks of radiation therapy. However, he did not withdraw from medical school but arrived at 5:30 a.m. for treatment and then went on to classes for the day.

"The thought of feeling sorry for myself was not an option," Estopinal said. "It's one of those situations where you're given a lemon – and you make lemonade."

At one point, his weight dropped

from 180 to 140 pounds. "That would not likely happen today with better medications, nutritional counseling and the extensive support staff that care for our patients at CCC," he said.

A love of science and academics was a good fit for Estopinal to study medicine. He observed "physicians become members of their community and put down roots where they live. They are frequently supporters of the academic, cultural and civic life of the cities in which they reside. That multi-dimensional lifestyle was very appealing to me."

Estopinal spent most of his youth in Louisiana. He completed undergraduate study in molecular biology and psychology at Vanderbilt University. He graduated from LSU Medical School and completed his internship at LSU Charity Hospital and residency at the University of Texas.

Estopinal is a Fellow in the American College of Radiation Oncology and has practiced medicine in Huntsville since 1988. He joined CCC in 2005.

Along with Estopinal, CCC radiation oncologists are Drs. Hoyt A. 'Tres' Childs III, Elizabeth Falkenberg and Harry James McCarty III. Also on staff, Dr. Robert Rice applies his doctorate in nuclear physics and a sub-specialty in the biological aspect of radiation.

"CCC has very talented doctors with significantly different backgrounds that give the patient access to a plethora of

care," Estopinal said. Before defining a treatment plan, all physicians hear a patient's history and critique each other.

CCC oncologists access guidelines from the National Cancer Center Network to develop best practices for patients. A highly qualified staff and 21st-century technology combine at the Center for Cancer Care to give a full spectrum of radiation and oncology care.

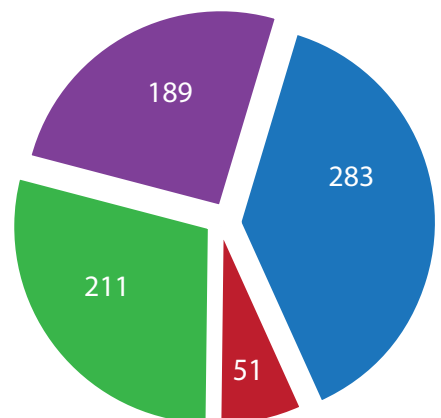
"We have state-of-the-art radiation oncology, comparable to major cancer centers in the Southeastern United States," Estopinal said.

To access comparable care, patients must travel to Vanderbilt University or the University of Alabama at Birmingham. "CCC delivers more radiation therapy than anywhere else in Alabama," Estopinal said.

CCC's four locations offer optimal convenience to patients across the Tennessee Valley – at the Clearview Cancer Institute (CCI) campus in Huntsville; Huntsville Hospital; Crestwood Medical Center; and in Athens.

At the CCI campus, CCC provides the most comprehensive slate of patient services, giving one-stop capability for all oncology needs. Other campuses have direct access to hospital care.

During 2009, CCC completed 30,141 radiation beam treatments. More than 1,000 new patients and consultations per year included many types of cancers, such as: breast, 283; colon/rectal, 51; lung, 211; and prostate, 189.



In radiation therapy, high-energy rays damage cancer cells to stop growth and division.

Patients receive CCC's comprehensive suite of services. Social workers offer counseling to patients and families. A dietitian offers advice for improving nutrition and increasing calories during therapy. Experienced oncology nurses oversee patient care, while skilled radiation technologists provide radiation treatments.

To assist those with financial need, funds are available through the Jeanne Shepherd Foundation and the American Cancer Society's Transportation Grant. CCC's services and equipment are unmatched in the region:

- 3-D and 4-D treatment planning leading to computer-directed radiation therapy.
- Intensity Modulated Radiation Therapy (IMRT) – Shapes radiation precisely to fit the tumor, thus possibly avoiding radiation of nearby healthy tissue. The radiation beam comprises many beamlets, each individually adjusted in intensity.
- Image-Guided Radiation Therapy (IGRT) -- Delivers radiation that conforms to the cancer by using CT, ultrasound or X-ray imaging. The scan is transmitted to a treatment room computer for doctors to adjust and better target the cancer. Both IMRT and IGRT use the linear accelerator.
- Brachy therapy, high dose rate (HDR) and mammosite, a less invasive breast cancer therapy.
- Sterotactic Radiosurgery -- Allows the oncologist to focus radiation beams to destroy certain types \ of tumors.

"Ask any patient how they feel they're treated," Estopinal said. "We provide them with competent and compassionate care."

Estopinal's professional affiliations include the American Medical Association, American College of Radiology, Louisiana Medical Society, American Society of Therapeutic Radiology & Oncology, American Society of Clinical Oncology and Medical Association State of Alabama.

He is past president of Alabama Chapter of The American College of Radiation Oncology, as well as medical representative on the Board of Directors for the Huntsville Hospital Foundation.

Estopinal has also served on the board of directors for the Huntsville-Madison County Public Library and Huntsville Botanical Garden and the local chapter of the American Cancer Society. He and his wife Betsy have four daughters.

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