

Emory explores new proton therapy facility to offer advanced care to cancer patients

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Proton therapy facilities are typically 100,000 square feet in size. Credit: Photos courtesy Varian Medical Systems, Inc., and Rinecker Proton Therapy Center, Munich, Germany

Emory Healthcare is a key player in plans to bring the world's most advanced radiation treatment for cancer patients to Georgia. In furtherance of that role, Emory Healthcare has signed a letter of intent with Advanced Particle Therapy, LLC, of Minden, Nevada, opening the door to a final exploratory phase for development of The Georgia Proton Treatment Center - Georgia's first proton therapy facility.

For certain cancers, proton therapy offers a more precise and aggressive

approach to destroying cancerous and non-cancerous tumors, as compared to conventional X-ray radiation. Proton therapy involves the use of a controlled beam of protons to target tumors with precision unavailable in other radiation therapies. According to The National Association for Proton Therapy, the precise delivery of proton energy may limit damage to healthy surrounding tissue, potentially resulting in lower side effects to the patient. This precision also allows for a more effective dose of radiation to be used.

Proton therapy is frequently used in the care of children diagnosed with [cancer](#), as well as in adults who have small, well-defined tumors in organs such as the prostate, brain, head, neck, bladder, lungs, or the spine. According to the National Cancer Institute, research continues into its efficacy in additional cancers.

The closest proton therapy facility to Georgia is the University of Florida Proton Therapy Institute in Jacksonville. Since the facility opened in 2006, approximately 1,500 patients have been treated there. Currently there are only nine proton therapy centers in the United States, including centers at Massachusetts General Hospital, MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston and the University of Pennsylvania.

"Emory will play a leading role in bringing this highly advanced cancer therapy to Georgia," says Walter J. Curran, Jr., MD, executive director of the Winship Cancer Institute and chair of Emory's Department of [Radiation Oncology](#). "This is an exciting development in our ability to offer patients the widest possible array of treatment options. In addition, we will work to expand its utility and access for patients through collaborative research projects with Georgia Tech and other institutions. Winship physicians will also provide direction to their international colleagues in how best to study and implement this technology in the care of cancer patients."

"Proton therapy is helping to revolutionize cancer treatment," says John Fox, president and CEO of Emory Healthcare. "Emory's leadership in this groundbreaking therapy brings new treatment options to our patients and to patients throughout Georgia and the southeast."

"This is an exciting development in Georgia's comprehensive array of cancer services and research," says Bill Todd, president and CEO of the Georgia Cancer Coalition. "Winship Cancer Institute's National Cancer Institute designation brought Georgia into the ranks of national leaders in cancer treatment and research. This facility will position our state into an international leadership role in our ability to offer patients the widest possible array of treatment options."

The proton therapy center will have five treatment rooms and dedicated research capabilities. The FDA-approved proton system will be provided by Varian Medical Systems, a world-wide provider of [proton therapy](#) and radiation oncology equipment.

Under the letter of intent, Emory Healthcare faculty and staff will provide physician services, medical direction, and other administrative services to the center. Advanced Particle Therapy, through a Special Purpose Company, Georgia Proton Treatment Center, LLC, (GPTC) will design, build, equip and own the center. The facility, which will be funded by GPTC, will be approximately 100,000 square feet and is expected to cost approximately \$200 million. Site selection for the facility is underway

Once operational, the center will be staffed by approximately 110 proton therapy-trained professionals including radiation oncologists, medical physicists, radiation therapists, medical support and administrative staff. The center will treat approximately 1,900 patients annually.

"With only nine proton treatment centers operating in the United States,

we are honored to partner with Emory Healthcare to provide a state-of-the-art facility that will treat patients from the Atlanta metropolitan region and beyond," said Jeff Bordok, president and CEO of Advanced Particle Therapy, LLC.

Advanced Particle Therapy, LLC, has taken on the same role in development of a similar center in San Diego, teaming with Scripps Health and Scripps Clinic Medical Group and in Baltimore with the University of Maryland School of Medicine.

Provided by Emory University

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