



CENTRAL HEALTH

LIVESTRONG

FOUNDATION

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White Paper by Leading Health Care Organizations Cites Opportunity for Cancer Care in Austin

Cancer is the leading cause of death in the Austin Metropolitan Area & a top health concern for residents

AUSTIN, Texas – March 22, 2013 – Today, the [LIVESTRONG Foundation](#), [Central Health](#), the [Shivers Cancer Foundation](#) and [Senator Kirk Watson](#) announced the results of a white paper on the availability of quality clinical adult cancer care and support services in the greater Austin region, which includes Bastrop, Caldwell, Hays, Travis and Williamson counties. Cancer is the leading cause of death in the region and residents cite it as a top health concern.

“Central Texans share a fierce community pride,” said Sen. Watson. “Quality of life is a point of pride and an article of faith in our community, so our friends, neighbors and family members rightly expect high-quality health care. Cancer has become the No. 1 cause of death in our region, so it’s important – especially in this community – that we work to reduce this trend. This paper illustrates the many assets we have and challenges we face to provide more comprehensive cancer care. Now we can start defining a path forward.”

Central Health, the LIVESTRONG Foundation and the Shivers Cancer Foundation collaboratively commissioned public health consulting firm Health Resources in Action (HRiA) to develop the [Greater Austin Region Cancer Care White Paper: Cancer Care in Bastrop, Caldwell, Hays, Travis and Williamson Counties](#). An advisory group of Austin-area cancer-care experts consulted on the project, which resulted in 14 consensus statements (*see page 4*) representing the class and accessibility of clinical care and support services. From those statements, the advisory group agreed that Central Texas has good quality cancer care and immense opportunity to innovate its cancer care services, as well as access.

The project set forth to describe the prevailing perceptions of cancer care and understand patients’ perspectives, while identifying goals for the future to cover gaps in coverage that were identified in the research.

In the Austin area, cancer incidence and mortality rates were found to be lower than the average both in Texas and nationally, but the city has the highest rate of uninsured adults under 65 in the state. However, of those uninsured, a relatively low number (5-15 percent) are seeking cancer care.

Although Travis and Williamson County retain the most primary care providers in the area, there are not enough to meet the growing need, especially in Bastrop, Hays and Caldwell Counties – the three fastest

growing counties in the region. In the future, lack of supply may lead to more people in need of care leaving their home city to receive treatments in other cities. To address this concern, the advisory group believes the incoming medical school needs to attract, train and retain its physicians, while ensuring collaboration among all aspects of cancer care.

“We believe commitment to ongoing collaboration among cancer care leaders in our community is a vital first step toward expanding and further elevating the quality cancer care that the flourishing Austin region deserves,” said Clarke Heidrick, Shivers Cancer Foundation Chairman.

An opportunity for growth resides in prevention and screening in the area, especially among minority populations. Austin is shown to have a good screening and prevention rate, but identifying outreach to sub-populations can, and should, be pursued, according to the project.

“One of the greatest challenges is providing a seamless continuity of care, especially for the traditionally underserved minority population,” said Trish Young, Central Health President and CEO. “We have to work harder to ensure people don’t fall through the cracks between screening and detection, treatment and ongoing care, and that they are always able to access all of these essential, lifesaving services to ensure their cancer incidence rates remain in line with the rest of the country.”

Another facet of cancer care that needs to be addressed is post-treatment options for cancer survivors. Results indicate that cancer survivors in the area generally have less access to services that meet their needs after completing their treatment. There is also a general lack of awareness of services available and where to access them. The need for medical and social service cancer navigation is currently far outweighing the demand.

“Cancer may leave your body, but it never leaves your life,” said [Doug Ulman](#), LIVESTRONG Foundation President and CEO, and a 16-year survivor. “The LIVESTRONG Foundation is committed to meeting the physical, emotional and practical needs of cancer patients and survivors both during and post-treatment. The good news is that more and more people are surviving cancer. This increases the demand for post-treatment services. In order to meet that demand, we need to strengthen our health care infrastructure so those people can thrive long term.”

In the future, Central Texas has the opportunity to innovate cancer care as it reconfigures community health programs and builds academic medicine with collaboration between physicians and other health professionals. To accomplish this goal, a defined vision for oncology care is needed, as well as a process for sharing de-identified proprietary information to gain deeper insight in the oncology care market; and a public communication strategy to raise awareness of the high-quality cancer care available in the Austin area.

As a next step, the funding entities will also be considering the engagement of a national expert to help define a path forward, leveraging our current assets, the changing healthcare landscape nationally and locally, as well as the creation of a school of medicine at University of Texas.

About the LIVESTRONG Foundation

The LIVESTRONG Foundation provides free cancer support services to help people cope with the financial, emotional and practical challenges that accompany the disease. Created in 1997 by cancer survivor and philanthropist Lance Armstrong, the Foundation is known for its powerful brand – LIVESTRONG – and for its advocacy on behalf of survivors and their families. With its iconic yellow LIVESTRONG wristband, the Foundation has become a symbol of hope and inspiration around the world. Since its inception, the Foundation has served 2.5 million people affected by the disease and raised more than \$500 million to support cancer survivors. One of America's top cancer non-profit organizations, the Foundation enjoys a four-star rating from Charity Navigator and has been recognized by the National Health Council and the Better Business Bureau for its excellent governance, high standards and transparency. For more information, visit LIVESTRONG.org.

About Central Health

Central Health was created in May 2004 by a vote of Travis County residents. The vote followed a concerted, two-year effort by a coalition of business people, health care providers, community leaders and elected officials dedicated to improving access to and delivery of quality health care to eligible residents of Travis County. Visit www.centralhealth.net for more information.

About the Shivers Cancer Foundation

The Shivers Cancer Foundation provides a variety of outpatient services for adult cancer patients in Central Texas. In 2007, the Seton Healthcare Family was selected by the National Cancer Institute (NCI) as a pilot site for NCI's Community Cancer Centers Program. The goals of the pilot program are to bring the latest scientific advances and the highest level of innovative and integrated, multi-specialty care to a much larger population of cancer patients, especially those who are underserved. The Center provides chemotherapy, rehabilitative services and biotherapy for patients who are able to use the team at the breast clinic, surgical oncology, pain and symptom management, gynecological oncology, hematology, chemotherapy/biotherapy.

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Greater Austin Region Cancer Care White Paper:
Cancer Care in Bastrop, Caldwell, Hays, Travis and Williamson Counties

CONSENSUS STATEMENTS

1. We agree that our region deserves the best in oncology care. We strive to ensure that the greater Austin area demonstrates the excellence in comprehensive cancer care its residents expect and deserve.
2. We agree that *all* residents of the greater Austin area should have access to *timely* high quality comprehensive cancer care and support services, *regardless of insurance* status.
3. We agree that *all* residents of the greater Austin area should have equal *access* to quality comprehensive cancer care and support services, regardless of whether they reside in rural, suburban or urban areas.
4. We agree that *recruitment efforts are needed* to increase the supply of general and sub-specialized oncology providers and that recruitment could be facilitated through a continuum of undergraduate to graduate medical education.
5. We agree we need to address the perception that patients must be *referred out* of the greater Austin area to receive high quality cancer care.
6. We agree that we must maintain and improve access to *prevention and screening* services for all patients in order to decrease the prevalence and late stage diagnosis of cancers in our region.
7. We agree that *quality cancer care resources* exist in our community.
8. We agree that working *collaboratively* among regional cancer care providers and patients could lead to better care outcomes and a better *patient experience*.
9. We agree that we need to commit to *continual improvement* of our health care system, and establish, track, and share common *metrics for quality*, prevention, care coordination and supports for the most prevalent cancers in our community, in order to demonstrably improve quality.
10. We agree that patients benefit from better access to *clinical research* across the continuum of care. We need to leverage existing, build new, and integrate all assets into cutting-edge, technology-supported research to innovate care, and ultimately increase patient knowledge of, and access to, clinical trials.
11. We agree that there are resources for palliative care and *advanced care planning*, but we have more work to do.
12. We agree that more work needs to be done to increase awareness and expand the breadth of *support services* in our community across the cancer continuum.
13. We agree that clinical *coordination and patient navigation* are critical services that would benefit from expansion and enhancement.
14. We agree that there is still a lot of work to be done to improve cancer care in the Greater Austin region.