

Cancer treatment center to be built in Hammond

A new 8,000-square-foot cancer treatment center is being built on the campus of Seventh Ward General Hospital in Hammond by the non-profit foundation that owns and operates the Mary Bird Perkins Cancer Center in Baton Rouge.

The new oncology center will cost about \$2 million and is expected to provide cancer treatment to patients in five southeastern Louisiana parishes and the southwestern portion of Mississippi, according to Michael H. Martin, executive director of the Perkins center.

"Our decision to build a satellite treatment facility in Hammond was made in response to a critical need for a radiation oncology provider in this area of the state," Martin said.

Cancer patients from Hammond and surrounding areas currently have to

travel to Baton Rouge, New Orleans or farther for radiation therapy, Martin said. The Perkins satellite unit will serve patients in Tangipahoa, eastern Livingston, western St. Tammany, Washington and St. Helena parishes.

"The average patient receiving radiation therapy is treated on a daily basis for a four-to-six week period," said Dr. Sheldon A. Johnson, Perkins medical director.

Having a nearby treatment center will reduce the cost and inconvenience of having to travel or live away from home during treatment, he said.

When construction by general contractor Ragusa Brothers of Hammond is completed in late 1987, the center will offer all three traditional forms of cancer treatment — radiation therapy, chemotherapy and surgical oncology.