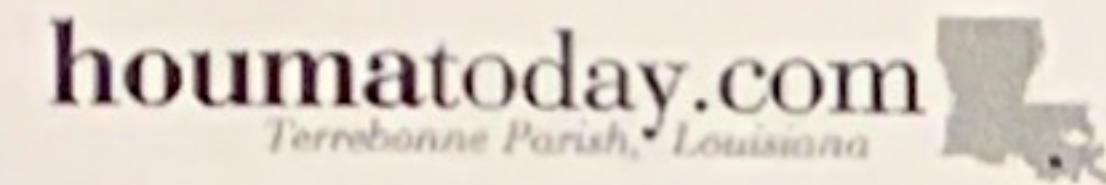


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Hospital to expand cancer care

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HOUMA – Terrebonne General Medical Center has cemented a medical partnership that will bring expanded cancer treatment and care to the region.

Terrebonne General is partnering with the **Mary Bird Perkins Cancer Center**, a multi-site cancer-care program that has been operating in Louisiana for 35 years, as well as Cancer Care Specialists, a collective of physicians focused on cancer care.

Starting this week, Mary Bird Perkins will begin working out of Terrebonne General Medical Center and helping the hospital provide prevention and early detection, as well as diagnosis, treatment and recovery help.

"Much of this care is currently available at Terrebonne General, but we want to establish a one stop shop center for any care people may need," said hospital CEO Phyllis Peoples.

The new program will be called the Mary Bird Perkins Cancer Center at TGMC, and all cancer-care services currently spread throughout the hospital will eventually be centralized under that program, Peoples said.

That includes services like surgery, chemotherapy and radiation therapy, diagnostic imaging, pathology, clinical research nutrition and social services.

"Many of our families and friends are affected by cancer, and we are proud to provide the individualized care that they need right here in Terrebonne Parish," said Jerri Smitko, chairwoman of the TGMC Board of Commissioners.

Louisiana ranks 23rd in the nation for cancer cases, but 2nd in the nation for cancer deaths, Peoples said, indicating a significant lack of access to care in many parts of the state.

The new program, hospital officials said, could mean more local patients becoming involved in research trials.

The hospital may also get a fixed radiation unit instead of the mobile one it uses now, said Raul Doria, medical director of the TGMC cancer care program.

"We don't screen enough people and provide enough education, we want to prioritize both of those areas," Doria said, adding that finding cancer at an earlier stage improves survival.

"Today we have more weapons and tools for cancer care than ever before," said Todd Stevens, president and CEO of Mary Bird Perkins.

Last year, he added, Mary Bird Perkins committed \$2.2 million to education, prevention, early detection services and research and screened 23,000 people for cancer without charging a dime. "It changed the attitude of people who didn't think they had access to care," Stevens said.