

Words from Diane Heaton MD Medical Director Northeastern Oklahoma Cancer Institute

In this time of crisis, I see such great strength and courage in my patients and colleagues I am in awe of the patients who say, "don't worry, we got this." We are fortunate as a small center; we have been very proactive in developing procedures and protocols that minimize the risk of exposure to patients and staff to Covid19. I believe the center has many features that aid in reducing spread. The doors open automatically into the center all surfaces in the center can be wiped down, the Halcyon machine is a very rapid treatment machine minimizing time, and our staff is small only 3-4 people interact with patients. We have all been in a self-quarantine home or work only for the past three weeks. The CT scanner for treatment planning is also in a small private center that does screening studies, not sick patients. It is not busy allowing avoidance of large gatherings of other patients and hospitals.

We are fortunately well stocked with masks, gowns, hand sanitizer, and oddly bathrooms so we can rotate and clean throughout the day. I feel the best isolation is in your vehicle; we may ask that you wait in your car; the goal is not to overlap patients in the center. Dr. Styles and I are becoming more adept at Telehealth and will use this technology extensively to minimize exposure risk.

An odd factoid about my background, I grew up in rural Southern Illinois and, during Medical School, worked in the swine research labs of the University of Illinois and became very familiar with bio protection protocols. I am trying to adapt those protocols to this situation and ask our patients also to follow. Please come to the center straight from your home, wearing fresh clothes and shoes that only come to the center or home. Keep a second pair of shoes if you wish to shop after being in the center.

Please do not hesitate to offer suggestions of how we can improve; we appreciate your patience as we work through and develop protocols that are safe and effective. My sincere goal and promise are we will do everything above and beyond to make North Eastern Oklahoma Cancer Institute a safe environment, so our only concern is beating your cancer.

Diane Heaton MD