

M.D. Anderson to open new facility in Arizona

By TODD ACKERMAN HOUSTON CHRONICLE

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The University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center today will announce plans to create a center in Arizona, the latest development in a stepped-up effort to extend its brand around the globe.

The state cancer hospital is teaming up with Banner Health to build an outpatient facility on the nonprofit system's medical center in Phoenix and convert half its hospital beds there into a cancer unit. The number of beds is expected to grow.

"Although our focus is Houston and Texas, we want to extend M.D. Anderson's mission to other areas," said Mitch Latinkic, the hospital's vice president of global business development. "This is our single largest extension opportunity so far."

Latinkic said "regions of interest" that M.D. Anderson is currently exploring as locations for satellite centers are Eastern Europe, the Middle East, Latin America and the Far East. It already has centers in Orlando, Fla. and Madrid, Spain.

Those centers, opened in 1989 and 1999, respectively, started the new direction, but the push to expand is now taking on a higher priority. Two years ago, M.D. Anderson formed the Center for Global Oncology to investigate the opportunities.

The Phoenix center plan calls for M.D. Anderson to assume responsibility for the center's clinical operations and Banner to provide the administration and business expertise.

A chief medical officer has not been named, but Banner President Peter Fine said he hopes the doctor will come from M.D. Anderson.

No M.D. Anderson funding is going toward the \$90 million project, Latinkic said.

The center is expected to break ground in late 2009 or early 2010 and open late in 2011.

To be modeled after M.D. Anderson's outpatient clinics that feature individual areas for specific cancers, the 120,000-square-foot outpatient will include medical oncology, radiation, surgery, pathology, laboratory and diagnostic imaging.

The partnership was initiated by Banner, which held talks with a number of cancer institutions before deciding its "highest degree of compatibility" was with M.D. Anderson.

Fine is a survivor of head and neck cancer who was treated at M.D. Anderson, though he emphasized that came after plans were well-advanced and didn't play a role in the decision. But he described his experience as "like a shopper kicking the tires."

Banner is one of the nation's largest nonprofit hospital systems, with 22 hospitals in seven states.

M.D. Anderson's facilities in Spain and Florida together see more than 7,000 patients a year.

todd.ackerman@chron.com