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## **St. Luke's Mountain States Tumor Institute Selected for National Cancer Institute Community Cancer Centers Program**

*MSTI to receive \$5 million in federal funding to improve cancer care for Idaho's underserved populations*

St. Luke's Mountain States Tumor Institute (MSTI) is among 14 new cancer centers chosen by the National Cancer Institute (NCI) to join a national network of community cancer centers nationwide with a shared mission to expand research and care opportunities at hospitals serving largely rural, suburban, small town and underserved populations.

The NCI Community Cancer Centers Program (NCCCP) is using \$40 million from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to expand its number of community hospital-based sites from 16 to 30.

As one of the new cancer centers joining the effort, St. Luke's MSTI will receive \$5 million over the next two years to address ways to reduce health care disparities, improve access to clinical trials, improve overall quality of care, promote an infrastructure to collect high-quality bio-specimens such as blood and tissue samples for research, and link with national computer networks that support research. The centers also work to improve survivorship, palliative care services, and patient advocacy.

Founded in 1969, St. Luke's MSTI is the largest community cancer center in Idaho serving nearly 3,200 newly referred cancer patients annually. MSTI has improved access to many rural patients through the use of satellite and mobile facilities.

"Becoming an NCI Community Cancer Center allows St. Luke's MSTI to better reduce the disparities in care by putting a greater focus on minority and underserved populations throughout our region," said Dr. Thomas Beck, St. Luke's MSTI medical director. "We will now have the ability to provide cancer patients within those populations much improved access to care and the opportunity to participate in research previously only available at academic centers."

St. Luke's MSTI will use the funding to better focus its cancer care efforts on the following areas:

- Address those in Idaho who are in a low socioeconomic status, are non-English-speaking, and are in a rural area where care is not available or easily accessed.
- Increase the number of clinical research trials offered to patients including Phase 1 clinical trials that are usually done only at academic centers.
- Focus on integrating care between physicians and MSTI sites and other sites across Idaho, while collaborating and sharing data with other NCCP participants.
- Improve availability of survivorship and supportive care by adding new staff including chaplains, physical therapists, nurse practitioners and patient navigators to assist patients in dealing with the symptoms of the disease and treatment and continued support after they have completed treatment.
- Develop collaboration between MSTI pathology department and the VA research department to create a frozen cancer tissue bank that will provide samples for ongoing and future cancer research.

A condition of the federal funding is that St. Luke's must match the \$5 million MSTI receives. Leadership at St. Luke's has also committed to continue funding these efforts once the NCI funding is depleted.

St. Luke's MSTI already has a strong public support for its research funding through donations from individuals and organizations including the Danny Thompson Memorial Golf Tournament, Albertson Foundation, Randall Wallis Estate and the John Wallace Estate.

Acceptance in the NCI program is the culmination of efforts that began last fall with the initial application.

"Our entire staff deserves enormous credit," Dr. Beck said. "In just five weeks, St. Luke's MSTI staff pulled together a comprehensive and compelling application."

St. Luke's proposal had the support of Idaho's entire Congressional delegation. In a group letter of support to the Director of the National Cancer Institute, the delegation members said they applauded the goals set in the program to address rural disparity in cancer care.

"Given the rural nature of our state and the large, sparsely populated areas served by MSTI, we believe that MSTI is an excellent candidate for participation into this program," the delegation wrote.

***About St. Luke's Mountain States Tumor Institute***

*Founded in 1969, St. Luke's Mountain States Tumor Institute (MSTI) has treated nearly 60,000 patients and has become one of the Northwest's most respected cancer care centers providing the region's most advanced cancer care therapies with the added benefit of allowing most patients to remain in their communities for treatment. To find out about St. Luke's MSTI visit [www.stlukesonline.org](http://www.stlukesonline.org)*

