

# BUILT WITH PATIENTS IN MIND

## New chemotherapy clinic opens at Markham Stouffville Hospital

**T**homas Wong, a 65-year-old cancer patient, loves the new chemotherapy clinic at Markham Stouffville Hospital.

"It's quiet, clean and well-staffed," he says. "It's also very well-organized with a map that I can follow to get to where I'm going." He especially likes all the natural light that comes streaming in. "As a patient, the sunshine makes me more hopeful."

About a year ago, at midnight, Wong was rushed to the emergency department at Markham Stouffville Hospital unable to walk and complaining of nausea. He underwent urgent MRI and CT scans, followed by a biopsy, which had confirmed that he had lung cancer that had spread to his brain.

Wong was immediately put under the care of oncologist Dr. Mateya Trinkaus, who co-ordinated radiation treatments for his brain metastases, in addition to radiation to his primary lung tumour. During this time he was found to have a type of lung cancer that grows as a result of a mutation called EGFR. Fortunately, for patients like Wong, there are new oral medications that can directly target this mutation with fewer side-effects than chemotherapy. He was started on a special medication called Iressa more than one year ago to help control his disease in the lungs and in the brain. The result? His tumours continue to shrink and he continues to have excellent control of his disease and his quality of life. "Mr. Wong has had an incredible response to the targeted therapy," Dr. Trinkaus says. "His disease is now in remission and is stable." He returns to see his doctor every four to six weeks and undergoes CT and MRI scans every three months.

The new chemotherapy clinic was built with the patient in mind, Dr. Trinkaus says. "It's a warm place to be seen and be treated by our doctors, nursing team, volunteers, and allied health-care staff" she adds. "We know our patients by their first name and we know their story, which is really important during a time when our patients are physically and mentally vulnerable."

The clinic not only offers a welcoming environment with warm colours and artwork on the walls and floor-to-ceiling windows, it also boasts the latest in treatment options. The \$400-million expansion project includes negative pressure isolation rooms to control the spread of contagious infections and a vacuum-tube system designed to transport medications from the pharmacy and blood samples to the laboratory for timely testing. The chemotherapy unit also has "smart pumps" that mix chemo dosages automatically based on a patient's weight and blood work, a system designed to increase patient safety.

Cancer patients can now avail themselves of 13 private bays equipped with comfortable, heated chairs to soothe them during chemotherapy treatment, which can sometimes last as long

as six hours. The heated chairs provide relief from the side-effects of chemotherapy such as chills and the pain of neuropathy that patients often experience. The bays also include TVs, DVDs and BluRay players, and are inviting for family members to stay and visit during treatment sessions.

Health-care staff are also impressed with the new facility. "The new chemotherapy clinic is a dream place for me to work," Dr. Trinkaus says, "because it allows me to use advanced equipment, perform procedures easily, and counsel our patients in privacy."

While patients receive chemotherapy, they can also look out onto a large, flowering garden full of trees. "It was designed with the intent to provide holistic, patient-centred healing and a sense of hope," Dr. Trinkaus says. Patients can also gather around the fireplace in the lobby, which helps them feel more at home. The clinic was built with an exclusive entrance so that cancer patients, who have compromised immune systems, aren't exposed to other sick patients by having to walk through the other parts of the hospital.

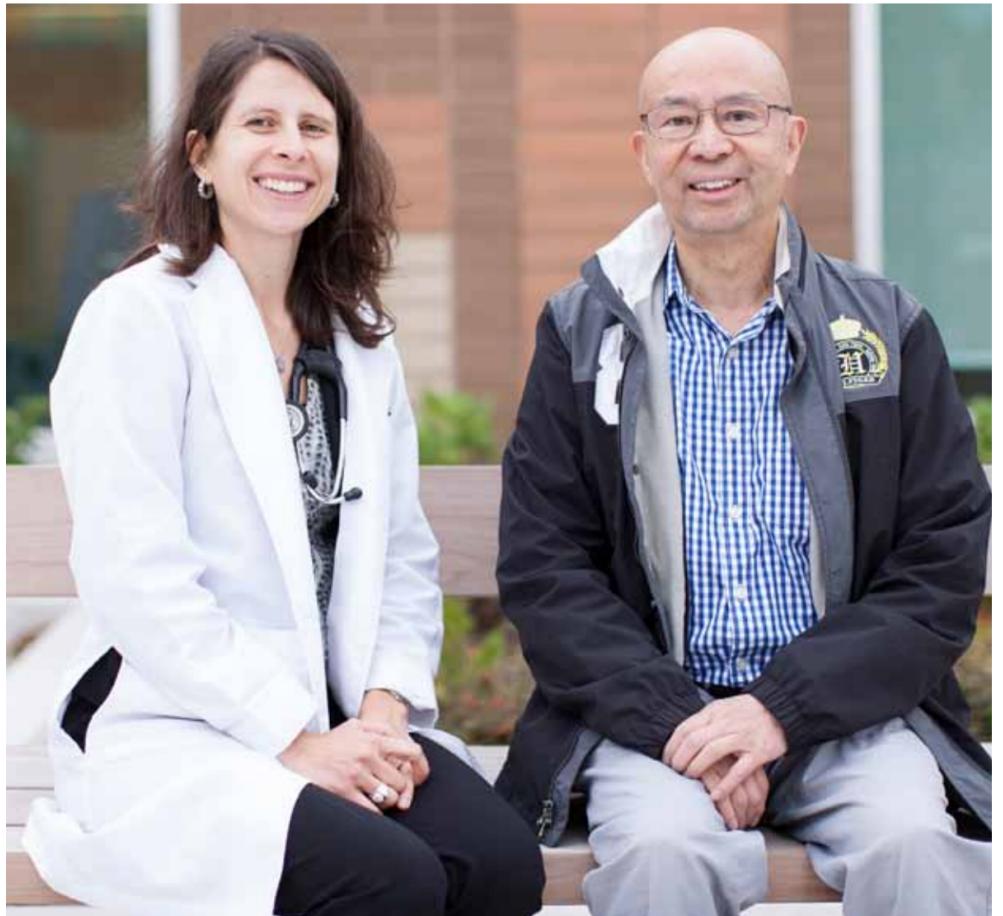
Each patient's treatment is now more individualized, Dr. Trinkaus explains, with a comprehensive, multidisciplinary approach to fighting cancer, employing pharmacists, nurses, a drug navigator, social workers and dietitians.

Advancements in chemotherapy and in the development of medications that can target key mutations or signals for tumour growth, have led to increased long term survival, cure rates, and quality of life. In addition, improvement with managing side-effects such as nausea have resulted in patients being more comfortable and more willing to complete their full treatment, thus increasing their chances of survival.

The hospital has opened the new chemotherapy clinic just in time to accommodate the increase in aging baby boomers and the recent influx of new, diverse populations who have larger, multi-generational families. When the hospital was first built in 1990, it was only meant to serve 110,000 residents in the Markham, Stouffville and Uxbridge area. Now, it must accommodate a still growing population of almost 400,000.

Wong is grateful for all that the staff at Markham Stouffville Hospital has done for him and his family. "Dr. Trinkaus and the team here is so caring and helpful — I know I am in good hands with receiving treatment at this hospital," he says. "I'm also very impressed with the service provided by the hospital, including follow-up occupational therapy at home."

Dr. Trinkaus is pleased with his progress. "Here's a man who couldn't even walk into the emergency, and one year later, he's been able to go on an Alaskan cruise and witness the birth of a grandchild. That's what life is all about."



Dr. Mateya Trinkaus and patient Thomas Wong sit in the healing garden next to the new chemotherapy clinic at Markham Stouffville Hospital. Nick Kozak photo

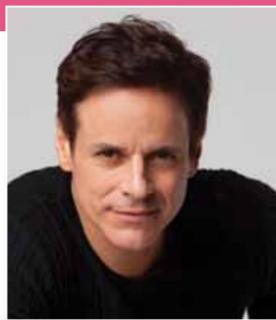


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