



Contact: Amy Riley
775-336-4557
Amy.Riley@rrpartners.com

Saint Mary's and Sierra Neurosurgery Group partner to speed up time between brain cancer diagnosis and treatment

RENO, Nev. April 7, 2010 – Saint Mary's and Sierra Neurosurgery Group have partnered to create the region's first Brain Tumor Center in an effort to speed up the time between diagnosis and treatment.

Modeled after some of the premier referral cancer centers in the country, Saint Mary's Brain Tumor Center enables newly diagnosed patients the rare opportunity to meet with two specialists at the same time to develop an effective treatment plan. Through the Saint Mary's Brain Tumor Center, patients with newly diagnosed malignant and benign brain tumors meet simultaneously with neurosurgeon Hilari Fleming, MD, Ph.D., as well as a radiation oncologist, either Jonathan Tay, MD, or Katie Legarza, MD.

With a brain tumor, starting treatment as soon as possible can mean the difference between life and death. Previously the time between diagnosis and treatment might be six to eight weeks. This collaboration significantly expedites the process, and patients can often begin treatment as soon as two weeks after diagnosis.

“When you are diagnosed with a brain tumor, you want to formulate your treatment plan with your physician as quickly as possible,” said Fleming. “Saint Mary's and Sierra Neurosurgery Group have recognized the need, and this collaboration will significantly expedite the treatment process for patients.”

Located at the Saint Mary's Center for Cancer, Saint Mary's Brain Tumor Center gives patients the opportunity to explore all treatment options with their physicians, including the region's only CyberKnife. A combination of robotics and computer-aided technology, CyberKnife has the ability to deliver a high-powered dose of radiation to the tumor.

“Saint Mary's is the only facility in Nevada that has the CyberKnife, the most technologically advanced radiation delivery system available in the world,” said Tay, Medical Director of Saint Mary's Center for Cancer. “CyberKnife is the only radiation delivery system that constantly tracks the location of the tumor. With its sub-millimeter accuracy, CyberKnife is able to spare surrounding healthy tissue from radiation damage.”

Dr. Fleming has been with Sierra Neurosurgery Group for nearly 20 years. She specializes in the treatment of tumors that impact the brain, particularly pituitary tumors. Dr. Fleming is one of just two neurosurgeons in Northern Nevada trained to treat brain tumors with the Cyberknife radiosurgery system.

Dr. Tay is the medical director of Saint Mary's Radiation Oncology Department and for Reno CyberKnife. His specialties include prostate seed implantation, brachytherapy, intensity modulated radiotherapy and stereotactic radiosurgery.

Dr. Legarza is an active member of the Cancer Committee at St. Mary's Regional Medical Center and a core team member in the development of the Cyberknife Stereotactic Cranial and Body Radiosurgery Program. She is skilled in intensity modulated radiation therapy techniques and high dose rate brachytherapy.

For more information on the Saint Mary's Brain Tumor Center, contact 775-770-7410 or visit www.saintmarystumorcenter.org.

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About Sierra Neurosurgery Group

For 30 years, Sierra Neurosurgery Group has provided exceptional neurosurgical care to the residents of Northern Nevada and Northeastern California. Sierra Neurosurgery Group is the region's oldest continuously operating group of neurosurgeons and is one of the largest groups in Nevada specializing in the treatment of brain and spinal disorders. Founded on the principle of patient-focused care tailored to the individual, Sierra Neurosurgery Group continually evolves as the region's premiere resource for spine and brain care, providing each patient with individualized treatment that ensures them the best quality of life possible. For more information, please visit www.sierraneurosurgery.com.

About Saint Mary's Regional Medical Center

In 2010 Saint Mary's celebrates 102 years of delivering compassionate, high-quality, affordable health services to northern Nevada. Founded in 1908 by the Dominican Sisters of San Rafael, Saint Mary's is a member of the Catholic Healthcare West family of hospitals and medical centers in Arizona, California, and Nevada. As a fully integrated, faith-based healthcare system with 380 licensed beds, approximately 2,300 employees, 850 affiliated physicians, and 300 volunteers, Saint Mary's provides a wide variety of inpatient, outpatient, and community services to go Well Beyond for the community we serve. For more information, please visit www.saintmarysreno.org.

About Catholic Healthcare West

Catholic Healthcare West (CHW) is the eighth largest hospital system in the nation and the largest not-for-profit hospital provider in California. Founded in 1986, the CHW network of more than 10,000 physicians and approximately 53,000 employees serves a population spanning 22 million people at 41 hospitals across California, Arizona, and Nevada. CHW is committed to delivering compassionate, high-quality, affordable health care services with special attention to the poor and underserved. In 2008, CHW provided \$967 million in charity care, community benefits, and unreimbursed patient care. For more information, please visit our website at www.chwHEALTH.org.