

Quicker and Safer Cancer Radiation Treatment

From chemotherapy to radiation therapy, cancer care is complex, and technology and science are constantly trying to keep up to make things easier for the patient.

At the [OSF Bobette Steely Hegeler Cancer Care Center](#) in Danville, Illinois, [top-of-the line radiation technology](#) is the newest tool in the center's arsenal to achieve that goal. And it's getting positive feedback from patients.

"We're thrilled to have it," says [Crystal Reed](#), MD, radiation oncologist at the cancer center.

The TrueBeam® radiotherapy system, a medical linear accelerator developed by Varian Medical Systems, targets tumors quicker and more precisely than the cancer center's previous linear accelerator, also a Varian device. What was a 10 to 30 minute lay-down on a hard table is now just a couple minutes, Dr. Reed says.

Another cutting-edge feature: respiratory gating.

"It can monitor your breathing so that it can stop the actual treatments if the linear accelerator notes that the lesion being treated moves out of the field," Dr. Reed says. "You want precision, most of all, all the time in radiation. You want to treat the area that needs to be treated and treat the least amount of normal tissue possible. Because you don't want people having side effects because of normal tissue being treated when it doesn't need to be."

It was a months-long process to swap out the machines in the "vault" surrounded by thick concrete so radiation does not escape. Mission Partners (OSF HealthCare employees) at the cancer center also attended a week-long training at Varian Headquarters in Nevada, and Varian representatives were in Danville for the first few treatments to make sure things went well.

"This is the top of the line linear accelerator from Varian, which is the premier radiation linear accelerator manufacturer," Dr. Reed says. "So the fact that [patients] can have it here in a smaller town makes it such that they don't have to drive to Champaign-Urbana or Chicago or Louisville or wherever it might be."

The linear accelerator was made possible in-part thanks to an earlier-announced \$3 million contribution from the estate of Julius W. Hegeler II, a well-known Danville philanthropist. The cancer center is named in honor of Hegeler's wife Bobette, who herself battled cancer.

Phil Muehl is chairperson of Hegeler Foundation and of the OSF HealthCare Sacred Heart Medical Center [Community Council](#), the hospital's fundraising body. Muehl says Hegeler always had a soft spot for the Danville hospital, so to make this part of his legacy is important.

"It's critical for the community that we have the latest and greatest technology for cancer. Cancer affects way too many people. And to have the latest technology here locally is important," Muehl says. "And I'm certain Julius is extremely happy knowing that this money is going to make these improvements to the cancer center."

Patients and their loved ones can learn more about cancer care at OSF HealthCare [online](#), and patients who think they may be a candidate for linear accelerator treatment can contact the [cancer center in Danville](#).