The future of cancer care and research at Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine

A state-of-the-art clinical and research facility anticipated to open in summer 2020, the veterinary college’s Animal Cancer Care and Research Center (ACCRC) represents hope for a brighter future in cancer care.

Illustrative of the college’s commitment to working across disciplines to achieve optimal health for people, animals, and the environment, ACCRC will be a vital part of the Virginia Tech Carilion (VTC) Health Sciences Campus, adjacent to the VTC School of Medicine, in Roanoke, Virginia.

The new center—which will accommodate the relocation and expansion of the oncology service from the college’s Veterinary Teaching Hospital in Blacksburg—will capitalize on a strikingly rare opportunity to integrate researchers investigating human and veterinary biomedical interests that seek to advance cancer treatment in pets and people alike.

Key benefits

- ACCRC will serve as a center of excellence for comprehensive animal cancer care, research, and learning.

- Patients will be able to visit one location for a range of services, including surgery, radiation, chemotherapy, and advanced diagnostic imaging.

- The center will treat all types of veterinary cancer; in addition, opportunities for dogs and cats to be enrolled in clinical research trials will be offered to pet owners.

- A $3.28 million linear accelerator positions the clinic as the region’s only radiation oncology service for pets.

- The center’s imaging capabilities will provide valuable insights to a team of veterinarians, biomedical engineers, and human medical researchers in the fight against cancerous tumors that are common to both dogs and people.

- Clinical services will be integrated with translational research and health sciences degree programs involving the college and the VTC School of Medicine and Fralin Biomedical Research Institute, immersing students in a best-in-class, multidisciplinary learning environment.

Above: The Animal Cancer Care and Research Center is housed in the 139,000-gross-square-foot Virginia Tech Carilion Biomedical Research Addition in Roanoke, Virginia. Rendering by AECOM.
Patient care

Creating an experience similar to top-flight comprehensive cancer centers for humans will require the integration of pet comfort and well-being into the fabric of the facility.

“I’ve never been through cancer with an animal before. Fortunately, we’re in a situation where we can travel and get the treatment Albert needs. He’s like one of my children, and I’m going to do whatever I can to prolong his quality of life. The idea that this cancer care and research center will soon be available in our area is wonderful,” said C. Todd Johnson, whose 10-year-old black Labrador retriever, Albert, was diagnosed with oral cancer at the college’s Veterinary Teaching Hospital in Blacksburg, Virginia.

“The vision of ACCRC is to be a regional and national driver of research excellence and cancer care. But at the end of the day, our goal as veterinarians is to give our patients the chance to live their lives to the fullest.”

- Dr. Nick Dervisis, associate professor of oncology
Department of Small Animal Clinical Sciences

About VA-MD College of Veterinary Medicine

The Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine is a leading biomedical teaching and research center and the in-state veterinary college for residents of Virginia and Maryland. The college is focused on the development and delivery of a One Health education, integrating multidisciplinary research and educational opportunities that provide health care solutions for animals, people, and communities. Locations include the main campus in Blacksburg, Virginia; the Marion duPont Scott Equine Medical Center in Leesburg, Virginia; the Gudelsky Veterinary Center in College Park, Maryland; and the Animal Cancer Care and Research Center in Roanoke, Virginia. The college offers a four-year, full-time, professional Doctor of Veterinary Medicine program, a graduate degree program in Biomedical and Veterinary Sciences, a master of public health, and a bachelor of science in public health. The college’s two clinical teaching hospitals and large animal field services treat 74,000 animals annually.

Oncologic surgeon
Joanne Tuohy joins veterinary college

Dr. Joanne Tuohy, a Diplomate of the American College of Veterinary Surgeons, joined the college in March 2019 as an assistant professor of surgical oncology in the Department of Small Animal Clinical Services. Currently based at the Blacksburg campus, where she practices in the Veterinary Teaching Hospital, Tuohy was recruited to Virginia Tech to develop a surgery service that will be housed at the ACCRC.

With a background in integrative cancer care and translational research focused on extending survival time in dogs with osteosarcoma, Tuohy has close collaborative working relationships with sarcoma researchers at Duke University and plans to engage research groups across Virginia Tech.

After completing a bachelor’s degree in Greek and Latin, magna cum laude, from Mount Holyoke College, Tuohy earned a doctor of veterinary medicine degree, magna cum laude, from Colorado State University and a Ph.D. in comparative biomedical sciences (immunology) from North Carolina State University.