

Health Care at Home

Written by Elizabeth Barrett
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Chemo patient undergoes procedures at GMH.

When going through difficult times, the adage “there’s no place like home” takes on a different meaning.

Just ask 68-year-old Duane Oliver.

After surgeons removed his bladder, and a tumor on it, more than a year ago, Oliver underwent a series of chemotherapy treatments—from May to August of 2010.

Chemo kills fast-growing cancer cells.

“The doctors told me there was probably no more cancer but it was a precautionary step to make sure it didn’t come back,” he said.

Oliver started once-a-week treatments in Kearney before changing to the Callahan Cancer Center in North Platte.

JOHNSON ON HOMETOWN HEALTH
Treating patients in Gothenburg and surrounding area to minimize problems, costs and instill more peace of mind is what outpatient therapy at GMH is all about.
Administrator John Johnson said many hospital patients see visiting specialists who work at GMH or travel distances to other medical facilities for treatment. “A lot of treatments can be provided here so they don’t have to make these trips,” he said. “That helps us become better and stronger and works well for both parties.
Another advantage, he said, is that patients going through difficult testing or treatments have family and friends close by to support them.
For example, a patient may have surgery in Omaha, return to Gothenburg and later develop an infection.
At GMH, staff can administer daily intravenous antibiotic therapy that may last for weeks, Johnson said.
Over the last 1½ months, outpatients have had intravenous therapy in their own room at GMH as part of a remodel project of the hospital’s east wing.
Since then, Johnson estimates that 20 to 30 patients have used it.
In addition, he said staff is planning to address its ability to provide chemotherapy treatments. “It’s all about what we can do in the best interests of our patients,” Johnson said.

There he tried a different kind of chemotherapy since his blood had difficulty adjusting to the first type.

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His oncologist there, Dr. Irfan Vaziri, also prescribed a shot after each treatment that would re-build white blood cells killed by chemo.

The retired banker also began receiving units of blood as boosters so he could continue treatments.

While at the Callahan center one day, Oliver asked if he could have non-chemo treatments—shots, blood draws and transfusions, and scans—at Gothenburg Memorial Hospital.

“They said I could,” he said.

Arrangements were made with GMH. On the day of a scheduled shot, Oliver would call local hospital staff.

“They’d ask me what time I wanted to come up,” he said, “and I’d go to the nurses’ station and be out of there 10 minutes later.”

Blood transfusions took longer—up to eight hours—which Oliver received in a GMH hospital room.

Despite the lengthy treatment, he said it was better than having to make a trip to North Platte.

Before a scan last May, Oliver received a hydration treatment in the hospital’s new intravenous

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therapy room.

“It’s so much nicer than a regular hospital room because it’s set up for out-patient IV therapy,” he said.

Over the three-month span of chemo treatments, Oliver figures he saved 40 trips and 2,800 miles by having certain procedures done at GMH.

“It saved time and expense.”

After he finished chemo treatments, Oliver also had scans done at GMH. Reports from the scan were sent to his oncologist in North Platte.

“At both places, everyone on the staff was very friendly and professional,” he said.

More importantly though, Oliver said the difficulty of going through chemo treatments was diminished by not having to travel out of town.

Oliver describes chemo as an eye opener.

“I have a new-found respect for others who have endured treatments. I didn’t suffer nearly as bad as many people have,” Oliver said.

For Oliver, the most important factor in dealing with cancer has been his attitude.

“From day one, I said I was going to get through this,” he said, adding that surrounding himself

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with positive family and friends has also been a big part of beating the disease.

So far, so good.

Blood work and scans in November and May show the cancer hasn't returned.

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