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Aurora Health Care launches Karen Yontz Center for Cardio-Oncology to support ongoing research on impact of cancer treatment on heart disease

Milwaukee, Wis. – Aurora Health Care, a national leader in cardiovascular and cancer care, today announced a new multi-disciplinary effort to help cancer patients live healthier lives through preventative care and ongoing screenings for known heart conditions linked to cancer treatment.

The Karen Yontz Center for Cardio-Oncology at Aurora Health Care, working in partnership with the Karen Yontz Center, will be a resource for both men and women on the impact of cancer treatments on heart health.

Using state-of-the-art cardiovascular imaging including 4D echocardiography and myocardial speckle imaging, the multi-disciplinary team will work to better enable early detection of heart muscle abnormality in past and current cancer patients. With early detection, treatment and preventative strategies can better be implemented.

As cancer survival rates have improved over the past few decades, researchers and clinicians have noted that many of these patients are developing cardiovascular ailments, including myocardial ischemia, myocardial infarction, stroke, and congestive heart failure.

The new cardio-oncology center will focus on developing individual, customized treatment plans for patients at all stages of cancer care. Staff will work closely to cross-reference patient medical records with known toxic chemotherapy drug profiles to determine the best treatment options to minimize any negative impact on the cardiovascular health of patients.

The Aurora team will also develop an analytical-driven database on the impact of certain treatment options to cardiovascular conditions to ultimately demonstrate data trends to drive treatment strategies.

“Some cancer treatment options are known to have possible negative impact on a person’s cardiovascular health,” said Bijoy Khandheria, M.D., cardiologist with Aurora Health Care. “With the support of the new Karen Yontz Center for Cardio-Oncology, we hope to better identify more specific details about what treatments may impact a certain type of patient based on age, ethnicity and other factors. Imaging technology will be critical to help in enabling early detection of heart muscle abnormalities, and this coupled with our comprehensive team approach, will provide the best options for patients.”

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The Karen Yontz Center for Cardio-Oncology at Aurora Health Care will be a community resource based at Aurora St. Luke's Medical Center in Milwaukee. It will offer educational information to patients and the general public, and will feature a dedicated staff member to lead the pilot program.

Former, current and future cancer patients in the Aurora system will also receive ongoing heart disease assessments as a part of regular check-ups. Physicians will review past and current treatment plans to gauge the types of treatments that have shown prevalence for heart conditions based on individual patient profiles and genetic markers.

"It's important that our past, current and future patients understand that there can be heart-health implications from certain types of cancer treatments, and this initiative will educate people and collect data that will one day save lives," said James Weese, M.D., a surgical oncologist and vice president of Aurora Cancer Services. "It's about raising awareness and the cancer and cardiovascular communities coming together to put patients' health first."

Both the Karen Yontz Women's Cardiac Awareness and Karen Yontz Cardio-Oncology Centers are named in honor of Karen Yontz, a woman who was diagnosed with Hodgkin's Lymphoma in her early 20s. She received both chemotherapy and radiation therapy for the cancer, and at the age of 40 was diagnosed with heart disease, which claimed her life eight years later. Her heart disease is believed to be directly related to her cancer treatment.

Special Event June 2

To commemorate the launch of the Karen Yontz Cardio-Oncology Center, Aurora Health Care will host a special event on Thursday, June 2 at the Milwaukee Art Museum for current and former cancer patients. Several cancer survivors will share their personal stories at the event, and Ken Yontz, Karen's husband, will also share why he remains so committed to this cause.

Leading physicians from Aurora's Heart and Vascular and Cancer Care teams will host a panel discussion about the development of the program and what patients and their families need to know. Health and wellness informational booths will also be available for patients. Patients and their families interested in attending the event can call the Karen Yontz Center at 414- 649-5767, or visit aurora.org/events to reserve their spot. Space is limited.

About Aurora Health Care

Aurora Health Care is a not-for-profit Wisconsin-area health care provider and a national leader in efforts to improve health care quality. Aurora offers services at sites in more than 90 communities throughout eastern Wisconsin and northern Illinois. Aurora is Wisconsin's most comprehensive health care provider and the state's largest private employer. Aurora serves more than 1.2 million patients every year via a comprehensive network of facilities, services and providers, including 15 hospitals, 150+ clinics, 70 pharmacies and more than 32,000 amazing Caregivers. As evidenced by more than 400 active [clinical trials](#), Aurora is dedicated to delivering innovations to provide the best possible care today, and to define the best care for tomorrow. Get helpful health and wellness information via the [Aurora MyHealth blog](#), our [Facebook](#) page, our [Twitter](#) account and our [Pinterest](#) account. # # #