The Best Prescription For Outpatient Cancer Treatment Center

With cancer rates in Mississippi higher than the national average, and cancer patients comprising the single largest group of patients served by the North Mississippi Medical Center in Tupelo, the hospital’s need for a new Cancer Center had become evident.

“The number of cancer treatments at our hospital rose by 5 percent and 12 percent in the last two years and we expected that trend to continue,” said John Hicks, president of NMMC, the largest hospital in the state and the largest non-metropolitan hospital in America.

With those figures in hand, hospital officials decided to better serve their patients by building a new, more comfortable and more convenient facility with state-of-the-art services and equipment. The design-build team was selected soon after, and the $6.9 million Outpatient Cancer Treatment began to evolve.

Designed for the Patent

The owners wanted an exterior that would create a serene environment while complementing the surrounding landscape and medical community. Richard McCarty of McCarty Architects PA, Tupelo, Miss., specified an exterior insulation and finish system to be used for the center’s exterior cladding because he knew the technology would provide the flexibility in shape and form to allow the design to respond to the owner’s desires.
“Both the hospital and I had worked with EIFS in the past with very good results,” McCarty said. “I knew it could help me transfer the many design elements already in use on the existing campus buildings to the new Cancer Center while keeping the exterior finish consistent with the cut limestone exterior used on the main hospital building.”

The Outsulation® System, manufactured by Dryvit Systems, Inc., West Warwick, R.I., was field applied to 1,000 square feet of wall area. The system’s flexibility allowed McCarty to add a richness of detail to the facility’s exterior that would not have been possible using other materials, which would have exceeded the project’s budget and time constraints.

The 1½ inch thick expanded polystyrene insulation board component of the system was adhesively attached to gypsum sheathing. Where architectural details and shapes were specified, such as the columns, wide caps and large bands, the insulation was cut to various thicknesses and shaped accordingly. Some of the larger shapes were fabricated by Apache Products, Inc. in Union, Miss., and trucked to the job site.

Mike Heering, senior vice president of the contracting firm F. L. Crane & Sons, Inc., Fulton, Miss., said, “The use of the EIFS System was extensive, from the walls and soffits to the parapet caps at the top of the building. The massive look of spandrel panels we created, along with the design elements at the base, helped to give the building its strong, supportive character, and the massive columns located around the exterior of the building further contributed to that image.” At the building’s main entrance is a drive-through canopy that opens to a high soffit with windows around the top to allow natural light to shine through.

For extra impact resistance, Dryvit Panzer® reinforcing mesh was embedded into the basecoat on the

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first floor and high traffic areas. A textured Quarzputz® finish in both Dover Sky and Slate colors added a final design accent to the building. The exterior design of the building was no striking that it won first place in the Construction Merit Awards competition, sponsored by the Mississippi Associated Builders and Contractors, Inc.

“When we designed this facility, we recognized the fears and anxieties that are experienced by cancer patients,” Hicks said. “We wanted a building that offered warmth, reassurance and hope.” The exterior, as well as other structural elements such as the atrium and the homelike interior, provides patients with a comfortable, appealing, supportive environment.

The unique design of the Cancer Center presenting the construction crews and Jesco, Inc., of Fulton, Miss., the project’s general contractor, with numerous challenges demanding precise coordination. “While some crews were applying the sprayed fireproofing, other crews were framing to allow the roofer to get the building ‘in the dry’ so we could proceed with the EIFS on a timely basis,” Herring said. “Due to the diversity and variety of shapes and thicknesses of foam, the sequence and layout for this project was both critical and complex.”

SIDE-BY-SIDE SAFETY

For many of these same reasons, the issue of safety on this job was closely monitored. For example, 7-foot thick concrete walls and ceilings were being poured in one area with a crane while the EIF system was being applied close by. The system application required tubular scaffolding to be erected for the entire area, with some areas being more difficult than others. Some second floor areas were set back from the bottom floor to create the large soffit areas that required scaffolds to be built on the interior as well as the exterior and, then, anchored together.

Today, the Outpatient Cancer Treatment Center is one of the most advanced of its kind in the country, and a national reference sit for leading edge cancer technologies. “Looking back, the whole project was very successful,” said Bruce Ridgway, vice president of facility maintenance and construction for NMMC. “Even under a tight construction schedule, everything happened like clockwork Dryvit and F. L. Crane proved to be a good combination, helping to make this facility a landmark on our entire 110-acre campus.”

—Photos by L. P. McCarty, Jr.
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