

Huntsman Cancer Institute at the University of Utah
Media Release

For Immediate Release
December 11, 2018

Contacts:
Debby Rogers
Huntsman Cancer Institute
801-587-7639
debby.rogers@hci.utah.edu

Karen Martsolf
Community Hospital/Grand Valley Oncology
970-644-3490
karen.martsolf@gihosp.org

Huntsman Cancer Institute and Grand Valley Oncology Begin Telemedicine Clinic for Blood and Bone Marrow Transplant Patients

SALT LAKE CITY, Utah and GRAND JUNCTION, Colorado – [Huntsman Cancer Institute](#) (HCI) at the [University of Utah](#) (U of U), in partnership with [Grand Valley Oncology](#) (GVO), recently opened a telemedicine clinic to serve blood and marrow transplant (BMT) patients in Mesa County, Colorado and the surrounding areas.

“We have changed the model of care in BMT,” said [Daniel Couriel](#), MD, director of HCI’s [blood and marrow transplant](#) service and professor of internal medicine at the U of U. “We are, for the first time, pioneering the idea of bringing cutting-edge care to remote communities without the usual expectation of the patient coming back to Salt Lake City multiple times for follow-up appointments. This is particularly relevant in a geographic area like ours.”

The third Wednesday of each month, Couriel enters an exam room at HCI and, through a computer link-up, conducts follow-up visits with patients from the Grand Junction area who recently received a bone marrow transplant at HCI. The exam room at GVO is equipped with special lights and cameras. A nurse practitioner, trained for the telemedicine visit, is with the patient in Grand Junction.

Joanne Virgilio, DO, is a medical oncologist at Grand Valley Oncology and is collaborating with Couriel in the creation of the clinic. "The telemedicine BMT clinic is a fantastic asset for our patients to be able to access the expertise of HCI close to home. This clinic also facilitates improved communication and teamwork between our cancer center and HCI," she said.

A patient referred to HCI for a bone marrow transplant will stay at the HCI Cancer Hospital for up to three months. After the transplant, they are expected to return to Salt Lake City for monthly follow-up visits.

"In transplant, complications are very time-dependent so if you miss a treatment window of opportunity it may be very difficult to reverse. One of the most common scenarios happens in winter when a BMT patient from our surrounding areas can't get to us for their follow-up visit because of snow storms. That means we may not see them for two or three months. When they do get here, we see complications we could have dealt with much better, earlier. We believe this telemedicine clinic will improve patient outcomes," said Couriel.

[Ben Tanner](#), MHA, executive director of the cancer hospital at HCI, part of University of Utah Health, worked to make the telemedicine clinic a reality. "We saw a need to extend HCI's clinical care to Grand Junction. This model will allow patients to receive excellent treatment from HCI experts, while being able to stay close to home. That is our ultimate goal," Tanner says.

HCI's long term-goal is to create these BMT telemedicine clinics at its affiliate hospitals located in Rexburg, Idaho; Jackson, Wyoming; Rock Springs, Wyoming; and Carson City, Nevada.

(For videotaped interview with Daniel Couriel, MD click here:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1I3CULOHI2bM3o6d4DVNIvY2a9LG_jkj8?usp=sharing)

###

About [Huntsman Cancer Institute](#) at the [University of Utah](#)

[Huntsman Cancer Institute](#) (HCI) at the [University of Utah](#) is the official cancer center of Utah. The cancer campus includes a state-of-the-art cancer specialty hospital as well as two buildings dedicated to cancer research. HCI treats patients with all forms of cancer and is recognized among the best cancer hospitals in the country by U.S. News and World Report. As the only [National Cancer Institute \(NCI\)-Designated Comprehensive Cancer Center](#) in the Mountain West, HCI serves the largest geographic region in the country, drawing patients from Utah, Nevada, Idaho, Wyoming, and Montana. More genes for inherited cancers have been discovered at HCI than at any other cancer center in the world, including genes responsible for hereditary breast, ovarian, colon, head, and neck cancers, along with melanoma. HCI manages the [Utah Population Database](#), the largest genetic database in the world, with information on

more than 11 million people linked to genealogies, health records, and vital statistics. HCI was founded by [Jon M. and Karen Huntsman](#).