



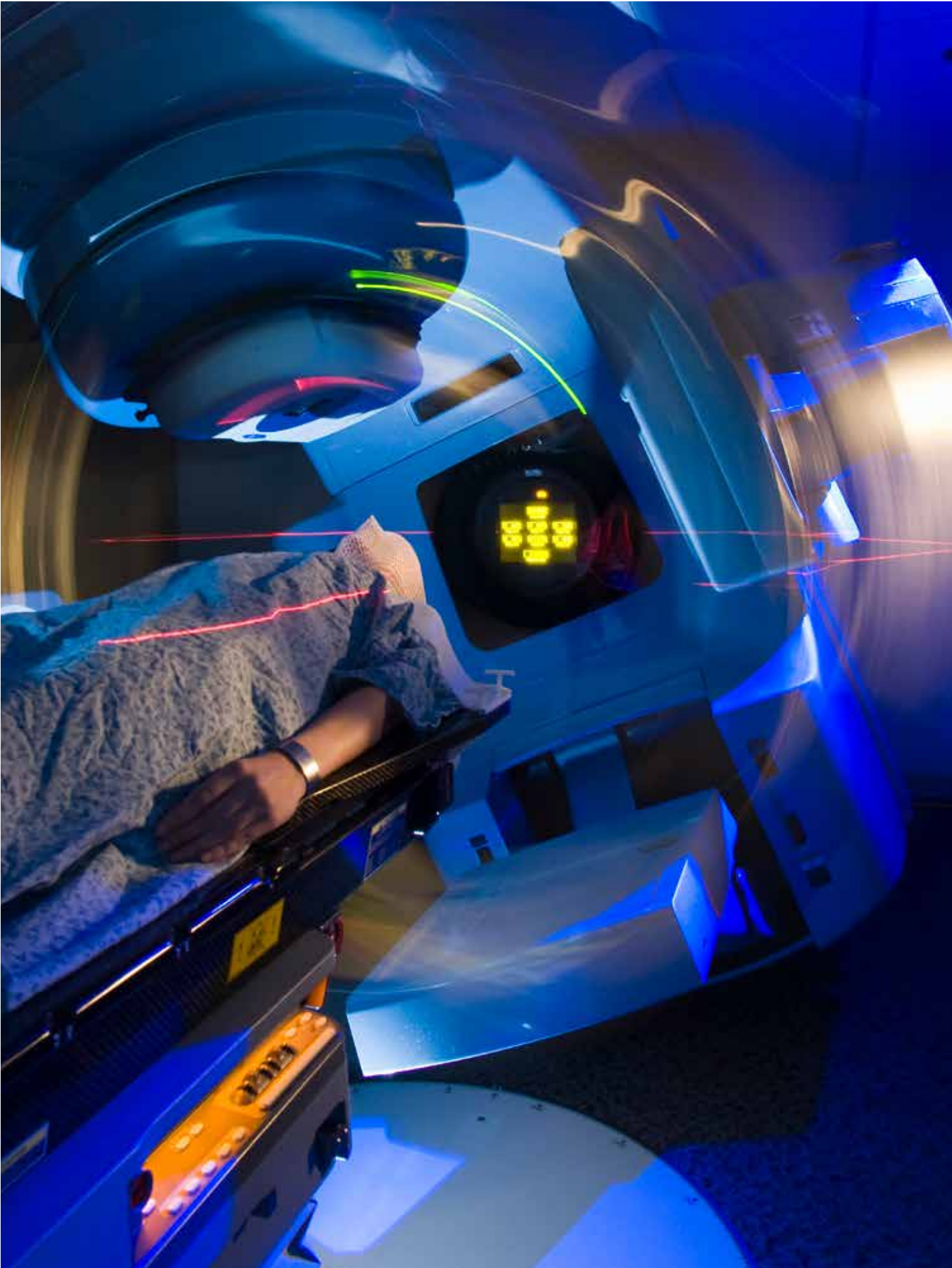
# PREPARING FOR RADIATION

**Stephenson**  
**CANCER CENTER**  
*The UNIVERSITY of OKLAHOMA*

A NATIONAL CANCER INSTITUTE DESIGNATED CANCER CENTER



a department of OU Medical Center



# DEAR VALUED PATIENT,

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*Thank you for choosing Stephenson Cancer Center to be part of your cancer treatment experience.*

As a Radiation Therapist with more than 12 years of experience in an outpatient oncology setting, I understand that you may have mixed emotions and many questions about radiation therapy. I want to assure you that our experienced staff is here to help meet your needs and provide the best care possible during your cancer journey.

The staff in our Radiation Therapy Department will assist you by scheduling appointments, answering questions, and connecting you to valuable resources. Throughout the cancer center, we are dedicated to providing you with safe, timely, and compassionate care. We recognize that your time is important, and we will do everything in our power to accommodate your needs and requests.

Our team in the Radiation Therapy Department offers an informative education session, Radiation 101. If you are interested in attending, please call (405) 271-5641 to RSVP.

I consider it a privilege to serve as a resource for you. If I may answer your questions, alleviate concerns, or better prepare you for treatment, please do not hesitate to contact me directly at (405) 271-4270.

Warmest regards,

Yolanda Duffey, RT(T)  
Department Director  
(405) 271-4270

If you have questions about the type of radiation therapy you will receive, please contact us at (405) 271-5641.



## TREATMENT TECHNOLOGY

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The Radiation Therapy Center at Stephenson Center treats more patients than any other facility in the state of Oklahoma. We understand that your support system is important during your treatment, so we strive to offer a complete range of therapies close to home.

Our comprehensive treatment and imaging options, include:

- External beam radiation therapy (EBRT)
- Intensity modulated radiation therapy (IMRT)
- Stereotactic body radiation therapy (SBRT)
- Stereotactic radiosurgery (SRS)
- Accelerated partial breast irradiation (APBI)
- Low dose rate brachytherapy (LDR)
- High dose rate brachytherapy (HDR)
- Total body irradiation (TBI)
- Gamma Knife radiosurgery for cranial lesions

- Proton beam therapy – first machine in Oklahoma with pencil beam scanning technology
- Therapy simulation with CT, PET/CT, and MRI imaging options



# BEFORE YOUR FIRST TREATMENT

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## MEETING YOUR RADIATION ONCOLOGY TEAM

If radiation therapy becomes a part of your treatment plan, you will meet with a team of highly-trained specialists. Your care team will include radiation oncologists, medical residents, physician assistants, medical dosimetrists, medical physicists, radiation therapists, and nurses. Each member of your radiation oncology team plays a specific role in your treatment. They will work together to customize a plan for you.

After meeting your radiation oncology team, you will see your physician or their representative (resident physician or physician assistant) once per week during radiation treatments.

## SIMULATION APPOINTMENT

Radiation therapy typically involves receiving doses of radiation over a period of time. These doses (fractions) will be given one after the other during a series of appointments.

It is very important that each fraction of radiation is given in the exact same location of your body during each treatment.

Before your first treatment, you will be scheduled for a planning appointment called a simulation.

Our radiation team makes treatment devices customized to each patient and will complete scans to plan your treatment.

During your simulation appointment, your team will determine:

- The area of your body that will be treated.
- The amount (dose) of radiation you are to receive at each appointment.

- The best position for the machine to be in during treatment.
- The best position for you to lie in while receiving treatment.

Your team may make temporary marks on your body so they can see where the radiation therapy treatment will be given during each appointment. These marks will be very small and will look like an X. These temporary marks will help your team confirm that the machines are aligned correctly for your treatment.

To help you stay in the same position throughout each treatment, your team may provide you with cushions, temporary body molds, or a mask. The type of device you are provided depends on our treatment location. These will be helpful to you and make it easier for you to stay in the same position during treatment.

## AFTER YOUR SIMULATION APPOINTMENT

Please review all special instructions provided by your radiation oncology team about your treatment.

If you have any questions about your treatment plan, please call (405) 271-5641.

# YOUR FIRST RADIATION TREATMENT

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## BEFORE YOU ARRIVE

Before checking in for your appointment, follow all special instructions provided by your radiation oncology team. If you have any questions about what you should do before your appointment, please call (405) 271-5641.

## CHECK-IN

Please arrive at least 15 minutes prior to your scheduled appointment. This will allow plenty of time to park and check in on the lower level of the cancer center. Our staff will verify your information and provide you with a pager and a badge.

## PAGING

When your pager buzzes, you will join your radiation therapist in the treatment area.

## POSITIONING

Your radiation therapist will position you correctly on the treatment table. When everything has been prepared, your radiation therapist will leave the room so your treatment can begin. Your therapist will continue to carefully monitor you and your treatment from an exterior room called a “console.”

## TREATMENT

Your treatment will be painless, so try your best to relax during the appointment. You may hear some clicking and whirring sounds as the machine starts to move, but this is completely normal. Radiation treatment usually takes about 20 minutes to complete.



## SCHEDULE

After your first radiation appointment, your radiation therapists will give you a schedule for the first week of your treatments.

For future treatments, please tell us what time you prefer for your daily treatments. We will do everything possible to accommodate your schedule. As we treat many patients, it may take several days or weeks for us to reach your ideal treatment time.

*Please be aware that your appointment time is subject to change. We will give you as much advance notice as possible if your schedule is going to change.*

If you have any scheduling concerns, please contact your radiation therapists at (405) 271-5641.

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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## **WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I HAVE QUESTIONS OUTSIDE OF OPERATING HOURS?**

For assistance after hours, call the page operator at (405) 271-5656.

*In case of emergency, please call 911 or go to your nearest emergency room.*

## **WILL THE RADIATION THERAPY CENTER BE OPEN ON HOLIDAYS?**

The Radiation Therapy Center may be closed on certain holidays. If the center will be closed, your treatment team will notify you. Your appointment will be rescheduled before or after the holiday.

## **WILL THE RADIATION THERAPY CENTER BE OPEN IF THERE IS INCLEMENT WEATHER?**

In times of inclement weather, please call (405) 271-5641 before traveling to your appointment to verify we are open.

## **WHAT SHOULD I WEAR TO TREATMENT?**

Please dress in comfortable layers that are easy to remove. It may be best to leave jewelry at home as you will be asked to remove it during treatment.

## **WHAT HAPPENS IF I MISS A RADIATION THERAPY APPOINTMENT?**

We understand that you have many priorities to juggle, but please make every effort to attend each appointment. If you expect to miss an appointment due to unforeseen circumstances, please call us at (405) 271-5641 to reschedule your appointment time.

## **WILL I SEE THE RADIATION WHEN I GET TREATMENT? WILL I FEEL IT?**

Similar to X-rays, radiation treatment is quite painless. You will not see or feel radiation.

## **HOW LONG WILL MY APPOINTMENT TAKE?**

Your consultation and simulation appointment may require up to 4 hours. Most radiation therapy appointments take around 20 minutes to complete. Including the check-in process, please set aside at least 45 minutes for each treatment.

## **HOW WILL YOU DECIDE HOW MUCH RADIATION TREATMENT I WILL RECEIVE?**

After your simulation appointment, your radiation oncology team will perform some measurements and calculations. Your team is clinically trained to decide the appropriate amount of radiation for you to receive. Their goal will be to find a balance that will target cancer cells, while sparing healthy cells.

## **HOW OFTEN WILL I RECEIVE TREATMENTS?**

You will receive small doses of radiation over a period of time. Treatments usually happen on a recurring schedule for a set number of weeks. If you have questions about your specific treatment plan, please ask your radiation oncology team for more information.



### **WHY DOES MY RADIATION THERAPIST LEAVE THE ROOM WHILE I RECEIVE TREATMENT? HOW WILL I BE ABLE TO COMMUNICATE WITH THEM IF I NEED SOMETHING?**

As a patient, you are likely receiving one series of treatment to a specific area of your body. Radiation therapists see up to 40 people a day. To avoid long-term radiation exposure, they stand outside of the treatment room to monitor care. Radiation staff will monitor your care from the console, an exterior room. They will be able to see you through cameras and communicate with you through an intercom system.

### **IS IT SAFE FOR ME TO BE AROUND OTHER PEOPLE AFTER I RECEIVE MY RADIATION THERAPY TREATMENT?**

If your treatment involves external radiation, exposure will end as soon as the machine is turned off at the end of your treatment. It is safe to be around people after receiving external radiation treatment.

Some forms of internal radiation treatment may involve implants inside your body. These implants may give off small doses of radiation for a short amount of time.

If your healthcare team feels that these may impact your family or your loved ones, they will provide you with special instructions to follow. This could include limiting who can visit you after a procedure is done as well as the distance away from you that your loved ones should stand. These precautions will only last for a few days and are meant to help protect those around you.

All special instructions will be discussed with you by your care team. Please consult your radiation therapist or oncologist if you have questions regarding your specific treatment.





### **CAN I BRING A FRIEND OR LOVED ONE WITH ME DURING RADIATION THERAPY TREATMENT?**

You are welcome to bring a friend or loved one to wait with you prior to treatment beginning. If a friend or family member is interested to see the treatment area, they may come back with you during your first appointment. For safety purposes, they will be escorted back into the waiting area before your treatment begins. They are not allowed to be in the room during the radiation treatment.

### **WILL I LOSE MY HAIR?**

Most patients only lose hair on the area of their body where they receive treatment. Depending on the amount of radiation given, the hair may or may not grow back over time. Your plan will be customized to fit you. Please contact your radiation oncologist to discuss the potential side effects of your specific treatment plan.

### **WHAT SIDE EFFECTS WILL I EXPERIENCE?**

The possible side effects you may experience will vary depending on the site treated and the dose of radiation you receive. Please keep your radiation oncology team informed of any issues you experience during treatment. They can help connect you to resources such as our Supportive Care Program that can help manage any side effects you experience.

# CAREGIVING FOR A LOVED ONE

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*If someone you love is preparing for radiation therapy treatment, there are many things you can do to provide help and support.*

**1 /** Review the information that has been provided to the patient by their care team. Knowing what to expect can help reduce anxiety so that you both feel more prepared for treatment.

*For more information about cancer treatment and radiation therapy, visit [stephensoncancercenter.org/radiation](http://stephensoncancercenter.org/radiation) and [cancer.org](http://cancer.org).*

**2 /** Create a schedule of appointments. Write down a list of clinic appointments, lab work, scans, and other cancer-related treatments. Create an easy-to-read calendar and provide copies to people who may be assisting with transportation or other needs.

**3 /** Ask your loved one about their Release of Health Information form and make sure it is up-to-date. This form provides their health care team with a list of close friends and family members who can receive information about their medical treatment and health care. If you have questions about this form, please contact their cancer care clinic.

**4 /** Help arrange transportation and meals during your loved one's care. Look into resources like [www.mealtrain.com](http://www.mealtrain.com) that allow friends and community members to sign up and bring meals on specific days. If you need information about transportation assistance, please contact our oncology social work team for help.

**5 /** Review programs and services available for patients and caregivers during treatment like our Supportive Care Program, Radiation 101 Workshop, and various support groups.

*For a list of current support groups, visit [stephensoncancercenter.org](http://stephensoncancercenter.org).*

**6 /** Remember that small gestures can make a big difference during cancer treatment. Offer to join your loved one at appointments, write them encouraging notes, or bring activities to help occupy their time while they are waiting for appointments.

**7 /** Don't forget to take care of yourself! As a caregiver, it can be easy to overlook your own needs because you are busy taking care of your family.

You may experience many different emotions during this time. Remember that your feelings are valid, and it's important to try to find a meaningful way to cope with them. For example, set aside time each day to talk to a friend who will listen to you and support you.

Ask for help when you need it. You may be juggling many priorities at one time, so be honest with yourself about what you can manage. Try to think of small errands or tasks that trusted friends or family members could help you with during this time.

# NOTES

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## **YOUR PRESCRIBED TREATMENT REGIMEN WILL INCLUDE:**

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## **SPECIAL TREATMENT INSTRUCTIONS:**

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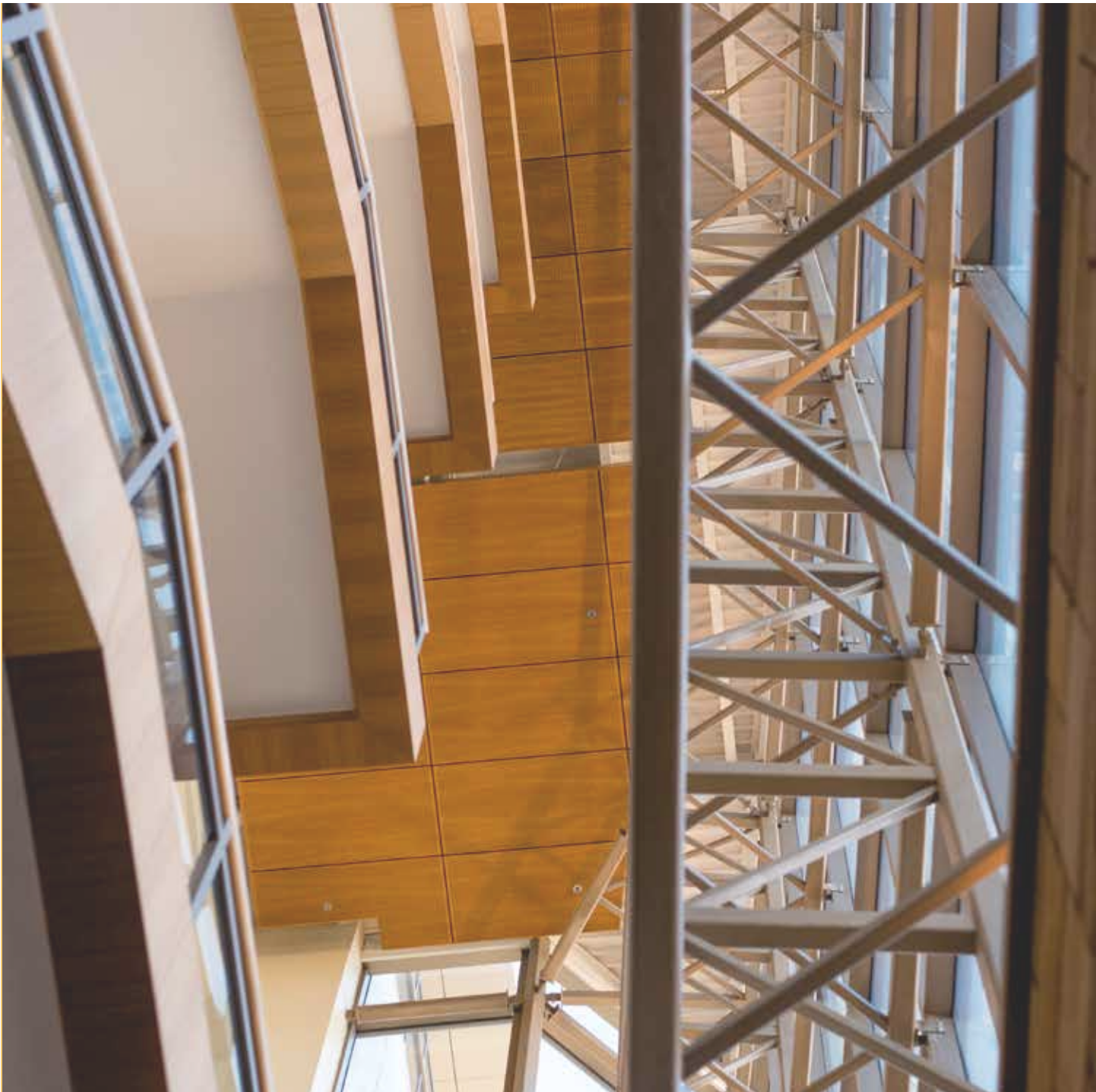
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**RADIATION THERAPY CENTER**

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**Medicine**

a department of OU Medical Center