

Elekta asked, you answered.
What makes your center unique?

Increasing cancer care access in “The Last Frontier”

*By Denise Gerlach, VP of Marketing,
 RBS Evolution*

Alaska residents are proud of the state's nickname, “The Last Frontier.” While the great outdoors and wide open spaces appeal to many, there are still areas of the state so remote that cancer patients must drive or fly several hours to receive treatment.

“Alaskans are used to flying long distances for medical services, but for patients needing radiation therapy, traveling hours away from home for several weeks of treatment can be an overwhelming burden,” says Greg Merrill, President of RBS Evolution (RBSE), a joint venture company that partners with physicians to build cancer centers in rural, underserved areas. “Sadly, many patients are forced to choose not to be treated at all. Our physician partners wanted to bring cancer care to the region, to help more patients get the care they need while staying closer to home.”

The RBSE team chose to build their first center in the town of Soldotna, Alaska, as it was 160 miles, or a three-hour drive, from the nearest radiation facility; the drive is nearly impossible in winter.

“Building in Alaska brought some unique challenges,” Merrill says. “Everything needed to be shipped in by barge, and the vault itself had to be reinforced to meet stringent earthquake standards. Of course, we also had to schedule our build-out to coincide with the weather, which can be

unpredictable at best.”

To meet the challenges of bringing cancer care to this isolated region, RBSE chose to partner with Elekta.

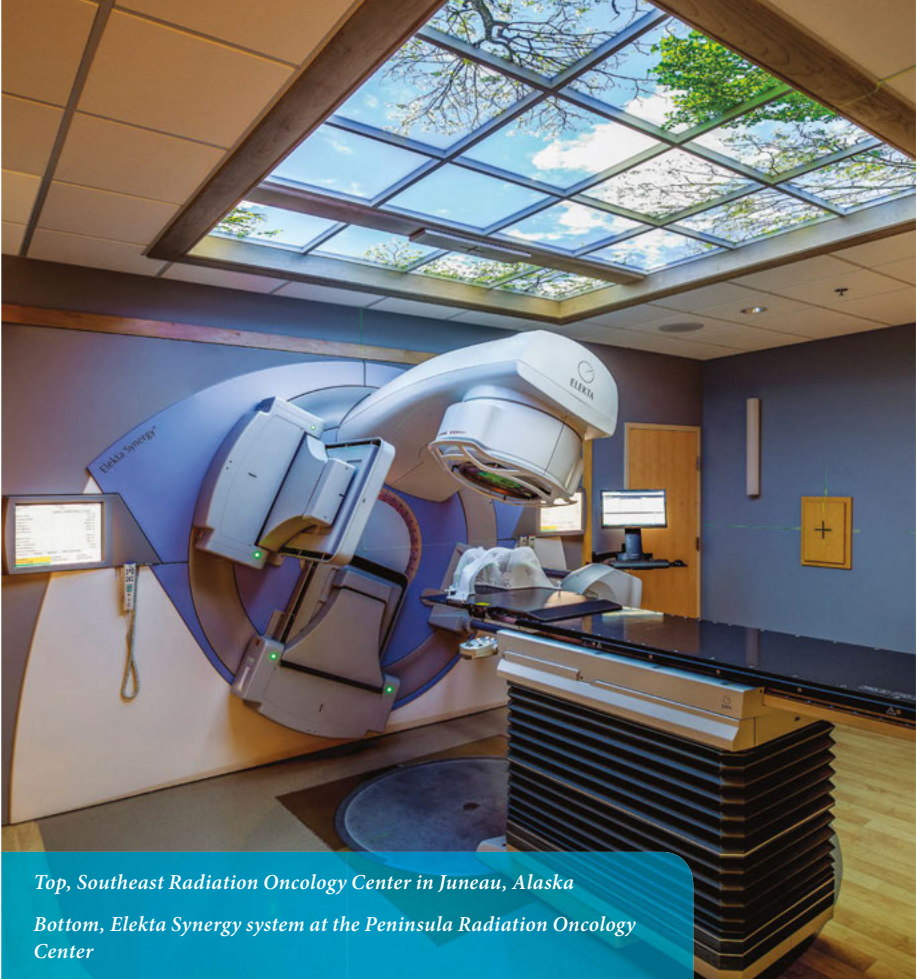
RBSE chose Elekta Synergy® with the 160-leaf Agility™ MLC, paired with Monaco® treatment planning system and MOSAIQ® oncology information system, to bring state-of-the-art radiation treatment to the region.

“The Elekta team was instrumental in getting our center off the ground,” says Dr. John Halligan, Medical Director of Peninsula Radiation Oncology Center in Soldotna. “The well-organized Elekta project management and installation teams worked seamlessly with our construction team, and the project stayed on schedule.”

That schedule included a one-day full stop to invite the community in for an event called “Written in Stone.” Attendees were asked to sign the unfinished walls of the vault with messages of hope.

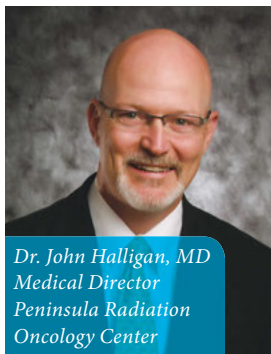
“So many people have a personal connection to cancer – whether they are a patient, a survivor, or a loved one. This gave the community a chance to share their stories, and to really feel connected to the new center,” Dr. Halligan says.

The wall signings were photographed and transcribed into a commemorative booklet that is now given to every new patient. The



Top, Southeast Radiation Oncology Center in Juneau, Alaska

Bottom, Elekta Synergy system at the Peninsula Radiation Oncology Center



*Dr. John Halligan, MD
Medical Director
Peninsula Radiation
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*Greg Merrill, President
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Message of hope on the wall at the "Written in Stone" event

event was such a success that it is now included in the building process of every new RBSE facility.

Peninsula Radiation Oncology Center opened in July, 2013. Almost immediately, the process was repeated in Juneau, Alaska, as RBSE identified another underserved area: the southeast region of the state, where patients had even more limited treatment options. RBSE chose an exact replica of the technology platform installed in Soldotna. A successful and timely build, machine installation, and commissioning performed by Northwest Medical Physics allowed RBSE and their physician partners to initiate treatment at Southeast Radiation Oncology Center within a record-breaking six months.

"This would be astounding in almost any market, but in Alaska, it was really an impressive feat. We couldn't have done it without our Elekta partners," Merrill observes. "Not only did Elekta support us every step of the way in building our centers, but to top it all off, Elekta hired an in-state biomedical engineer. This gives us the added confidence of knowing that our centers will be able to receive local service if needed."

RBSE has contracted to purchase three more Elekta linear accelerators, and plans to expand services to other rural areas soon.

"Elekta has proven to be an invaluable resource for us," says Merrill. "As we continue to bring hope to cancer patients in underserved areas, we know we can count on Elekta to provide us with the innovative products, solutions, and relationships we need to fulfill our mission."

To learn more about RBSE, or the Written in Stone events, visit www.RBSEvolution.com. •