

Sept. 6, 2006

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Jessica Corcoran, The Ulum Group, 434-7025

New High-Tech Equipment to Treat Brain Conditions is Available at Sacred Heart Medical Center

A team of physicians and scientists can now perform non-invasive brain surgery

Gamma Knife. The name sounds like something from the movie “*Star Wars.*” Actually, Gamma Knife is not a knife at all; no incisions are made. It’s a very precise and effective instrument using radiation that a team of oncologists, neurosurgeons and medical physicists use to treat a variety of brain conditions.

Sacred Heart Medical Center takes delivery of the first Gamma Knife in the area at its current campus on Wednesday, Sept. 6. It will be housed in the Gamma Knife Center, which is a primary component of the new Oregon Neurosciences Institute on the current campus.

Gamma Knife delivers a single, high dose of radiation to a precise target in the brain defined by imaging techniques and typically guided by a radiation oncologist, a neurosurgeon and a physicist. Gamma Knife surgery is used for treating benign and malignant brain tumors, functional disorders and malformations of the brain’s vascular system.

“We feel that our region’s health care needs are growing at such a pace that we need to offer this service locally,” says Dr. Andrew Kokkino, co-medical director of the Gamma Knife Center. “Previously, our patients, many with complex medical problems and who are in great pain, had to travel to Portland for this treatment.” Kokkino added. “Now, patients can stay closer to home and have access to a clinically proven treatment option.” Kokkino explained that Gamma Knife can cure, extend life or eliminate pain.

Gamma Knife surgery is an alternative to open surgery for selected disorders, during which an incision is made and the brain is exposed. Complication rates are lower, side effects are few, and the patient can usually go home the day of surgery. This is compared to a hospital length of stay for up to several weeks for traditional brain surgery.

Sacred Heart applied what they call an ethical discernment process — a cost/benefit analysis that is applied to all new technology — and determined that the benefits to patients and their families outweighed the significant resources required to purchase and support the use of the Gamma Knife. Sacred Heart estimates that approximately 310 patients a year throughout the region will benefit from this new technology.

(more)

Gamma Knife

9/6/06

2-2-2

Also of note, the development and operation of the Gamma Knife Center represents a collaboration and alignment of two key specialty areas, neurosurgery and radiation oncology. This collaboration will strengthen the relationship for further work to improve cancer care in our community and is an exciting trend among physicians that signals an enhanced patient experience and increased opportunity for improved clinical outcomes.

“I’d like to express my appreciation to PeaceHealth for working closely with physicians and bringing this technology to Eugene for the benefit of our patients,” says Dr. David Fryefield, co-medical director of the Gamma Knife Center. “This is an excellent tool in our treatment of various brain cancers and it has a worldwide track record of delivering successful results.”

The Oregon Neurosciences Institute at Sacred Heart Medical Center also includes the Oregon Rehabilitation Center, the Stroke Center, and the Sleep Disorders Center. The Gamma Knife Center will be permanently housed at the current campus; it will not move to Springfield when the RiverBend campus of Sacred Heart opens.

###

[Reporters are invited to interview one of the physician leaders in the Gamma Knife Center. Call Jessica Corcoran at 434-7027 to arrange. Photograph images and videos are available for download at www.peacehealth.org/shmc/gamma.]