

TO MEDIA:

CONTACT: Tom Chakurda
Chief Marketing and Communications Officer
Excela Health
tchakurda@excelahealth.org
412-508-6816 CELL

Robin Jennings
Marketing and Communications
Excela Health
rjennings@excelahealth.org
724-516-4483 CELL

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**EXCELA HEALTH ANNOUNCES CREATION OF
SURGICAL INSTITUTE, KEYING ON CANCER CARE**

LATROBE, PA, October 27, 2021 ... Excela Health continues to raise the bar for quality patient care, with the creation of the Excela Health Surgical Institute, based at Excela Latrobe Hospital, with a focus on cancer care.

“This announcement represents yet another major commitment by the System to continue its evolution from a capable, community-based confederation of hospitals to a true System of care,” said John Sphon, Excela Health Chief Executive Officer, “one that can provide tertiary and quaternary care in virtually all specialties of medicine and whose quality and outcomes are on par or exceed those of the finest like programs in the nation.”

Excela Health previously established the Heart, Lung and Vascular Institute, with Westmoreland Hospital serving as the hub of cardiovascular surgical care.

The entire Surgical Institute project represents a \$10 million investment by the health system in both technology and facility upgrades. To support the build-out of the program, the Latrobe Area Hospital Charitable Foundation (LAHCF) has committed \$2 million.

Housed on the second floor of Excela Latrobe Hospital, the Surgical Institute

features a state-of-the-art Operating Room. The centerpiece of that OR is the daVinci Xi, the latest iteration of the surgical robot which was acquired in 2019. Other instrumentation including a navigational bronchoscopy system and operating room equipment also were included in the upgrade. Additionally, patient rooms and staff work areas have been remodeled in keeping with the continuing modernization of the entire hospital, which already includes a complete overhaul of the hospital pharmacy and refurbishment of other patient care floors, also underwritten in part by significant financial support from LAHCF.

Excelsa Health thoracic surgeon Michael Szwerc, MD, who focuses his practice on the care of the lung cancer patient, is taking a leading role in the development of the Surgical Institute.

“As a surgeon, I am always looking for ways to improve quality of life, and key to helping patients navigate a cancer diagnosis is seamless coordinated care from the first inkling of a problem to the last follow-up after treatment,” said Dr. Szwerc, program champion. “We are so fortunate in Westmoreland County to have such resources right here. The creation of the Surgical Institute allows us to bring greater focus to these resources and the entire patient experience within a center of excellence,” added Dr. Szwerc, who is also medical director of Robotic Surgery and Director for the Center for Lung and Thoracic Disease at Excelsa Health.

“Here we will bring various surgical disciplines together, and provide them the latest robotic surgical instrumentation. This collective expertise both in talent and technology means the best possible outcomes for those in our care. The Institute will continue to grow in depth and scope over time, and I am proud to be on the forefront of its creation and centering my surgical practice here.”

In the coming months, other physician specialists who treat breast, colorectal, urological and gynecological cancers among others will come together under one Operating Room at Latrobe Hospital, where the synergy of collaboration will continue to flourish.

Beyond the operating room, Excelsa Health has a well-established and long-standing partnership with UPMC Hillman Cancer Center that assures patients superior oncology care, including the latest in immunotherapy and endocrine therapy. Medical and radiation oncologists at the Arnold Palmer Pavilion, Excelsa’s joint venture at

Mountain View Medical Park, have been serving Westmoreland County for more than two decades, and utilizing Latrobe Hospital where they also have the latest tools for delivering stereotactic body radiation therapy and high dose rate brachytherapy. Patients also may participate in a number of clinical trials locally that improve overall outcomes and lead to future innovation. This partnership provides the best of all possible worlds: convenience, quality, technology, and care so that patients do not need to travel to Pittsburgh.

Carol Fox, MD, Excelsa Health Chief Medical Officer, emphasized the significance of this announcement to system recruitment efforts. “A health system that has an expansive slate of physician specialists is attractive to yet other medical professionals. This allows the talent cycle to continue. It allows our community continuous access to the best providers. Our commitment to service enhancements such as the Surgical Institute make it easier to recruit other experts, and demonstrate our commitment to our community to bring the very best here.”