



NEWS RELEASE

Media Contact:

Theresa Makrush

Mobile: (904) 505-6157

tmakrush@shepherdagency.com

UF Health Proton Therapy Institute Upgrades Technology in its Pediatric Playroom

New interactive touchscreen wall promotes therapeutic engagement and play therapy

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (March 21, 2024) – In March, the UF Health Proton Therapy Institute enhanced its playroom, a respite for its pediatric patients, significantly with innovative technology that promotes therapeutic engagement. An 86” interactive gaming wall features educational and sensory software and is the first of its kind in any proton therapy treatment facility in the United States.

The playroom upgrade is integral in the Institute’s child life program led by Jasmine Miller, MA, CCLS, MT-BC, GC-C, a certified child life specialist dedicated to supporting children undergoing cancer treatment. Through developmentally appropriate communication, she helps children comprehend the complexities of their therapy, fostering a sense of understanding and comfort. The new technology is a part of the play therapy component of the program.

“Not only does this interactive gaming wall offer developmental and sensory play for our youngest cancer warriors, but it is also geared towards offering developmentally appropriate education. While we are still in the development phase and are creating resources specific to proton therapy as a whole and our individual center, this system is already loaded with other games – including one where you “zap” cancer cells with a radiation beam,” explained Miller.

March is Child Life Appreciation Month. As a child life specialist at the Institute, Miller is responsible for helping young patients understand their diagnosis, what to expect throughout the treatment process and help them acclimate to this new, unfamiliar environment. Play therapy recognizes the vital role of normal childhood experiences, ensuring that children have time to play and simply be kids, a crucial aspect of supporting them during this challenging period. These methods also help alleviate stress and anxiety during cancer treatment. Research shows that with the support of a child life program, children need less anesthesia to complete treatments.

“I have no doubt that this will be an invaluable teaching tool for our pediatric patients. I am hopeful that through development of our own educational resources, we will not only decrease the need for anesthesia in our youngest patients but that these resources can be shared with,

and utilized by, other proton centers across the globe that are actively treating pediatric patients,” said Miller.

The only other proton therapy treatment center using this technology is the child life team at University College Hospital – London. The Amazing Interactives team – the developers of the technology, the London facility and the UF Health Proton Therapy Institute plans to collaborate to develop tailored educational content for patients undergoing proton therapy treatment.

A grant from the Climb for Cancer Foundation and donations received through the Children’s Fund and Shirley Tomlinson Proton Pediatric Patient Enhancement Endowment Fund made the technology upgrade possible.

In the past year, the UF Health Proton Therapy Institute has strived to create an environment of healing for all its patients. In 2023, the Institute opened the Walter and Yvonne Wood Resting Room - comprised of three patient bays, each providing a semi-private space with soft low lighting to create a calm, serene environment. They are outfitted with a recliner for patients and a visitor’s chair. Separated by opaque resin panels, each bay faces a large, shared video wall, displaying a series of nature scenes specifically chosen to evoke senses of relaxation and calm for patients.

About the UF Health Proton Therapy Institute

The UF Health Proton Therapy Institute is a nonprofit 501(c)3 organization affiliated with the UF College of Medicine and the UF Health Cancer Center, a Florida Cancer Center of Excellence and NCI-Designated Cancer Center, dedicated to delivering state-of-the-art cancer treatment and setting new standards for treating and curing cancer. It is an accredited radiation oncology facility by the American College of Radiology. The cancer treatment facility houses both conventional radiation and proton therapy and delivers proton therapy to 100 patients a day. For more information about the UF Health Proton Therapy Institute, please visit www.floridaproton.org or call 904.588.1800.

###