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When the Medicor Cancer Centre opened its doors in North York Wednesday, critics feared it was opening the door to something else – two-tier health care.

The private clinic charges patients a fee for its services.

"We want to be the advocates for the cancer patients," confirms Dr. Humaira Khan. "We want to hold their hand and show them how to navigate the system."

The centre boasts a medical team including dieticians, counsellors, naturopathic doctors, physiotherapists and massage therapists. And despite the obvious controversy its presence represents, the clinic says what it's doing is completely legal.

"There are always going to be critics," counters Khan. "If you look at the money, it's an investment in your health and I would like to ask the critics, if there's cancer patients would they like to tell them they can't invest in their own health?"

"They can't go to a clinic where they will be able to customize their care and provide optimization. And I think that's a question that a cancer patient needs to answer."

Khan says that patients won't be paying for OHIP-covered services like chemotherapy, radiation or surgery.

There's an initial charge of \$2,500. That gets you a meeting with a physician, some treatment planning and even the option to create a living will.

If the clinic is for you, you'll have to fork over \$1,200 a month to retain your status as a patient. That gives you access to a qualified doctor 24 hours a day.

The Ontario government has said it plans to keep a close eye on the facility to make sure it follows the rules and doesn't tread into the dreaded two-tier health care mode.

"We've got serious concerns about it," admits Health Minister George Smitherman. "We've passed a bill in this province that says we don't think two-tier health care is appropriate."

Khan believes the minister is being unfair to the clinic – and its future users.

But there's no question that in this case, health and wealth are intertwined. A full year's service at Medicor will set patients back at least \$15,000.

**So how do you decide what's right for you when it comes to cancer care? Here's a breakdown of what Medicor offers compared to public cancer patient services:**

**Services Medicor offers:**

- Initial consultation with a personal Medicor Cancer Centres' physician includes: medical review; holistic review; electronic health record; education/discussion; and other supportive and assistance services.
- Second portion of the consultation takes place about a week after the first session and includes a consultation with two experts from the MCC team and a follow-up with your personal MCC physician.
- Comprehensive review of your cancer care by a team of health professionals under a physician's supervision. The patient:physician ratio is limited to 50:1.
- Portable Electronic Health Record (PEHR) technology – providing patients with a handheld computer and custom software. Medical records are installed on the system to create a personal PEHR.
- Those subscribing to the 'Ongoing Care Package' receive ongoing personal physician services like office visits, 24 hour/day telephone access, education, research into new and experimental treatments and regular health information updates using the PEHR system.
- Access to non-OHIP tests with little or no waiting lists.
- Coordination of CCAC (homecare) services.
- Regular updating of your health information using the PEHR system.
- Other services include: pain and symptom management, physical rehabilitation, prescribing and adjustment of medications, dietary advice, counseling, massage, and arranging homecare services.

*Information courtesy Medicor Cancer Centres. For more information visit the [website here](#).*

**Here's an example of what's available publicly:**

The Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation's site contains links to a host of resources and public support centres across the country. The Ontario chapter includes information on resources available in locally.

One such centre is Willow Breast Cancer Support and Resource Services. Among the services it offers:

- Willow helps patients find the information they need about breast cancer when they need it.
- Hundreds of books and thousands of articles about breast cancer diagnosis, treatments, side-effects and social issues.
- Current and relevant information.
- Information specialists do online searches to update what's on site.
- Employees find and select articles that are relevant to a patient's situation.
- Provides survivor-to-survivor breast cancer support and information in Canada via a national toll-free line. (Telephone in Toronto: 416-778-5000; Telephone toll-free: 1-888-778-3100)
- Empathetic and supportive listening for the 'bad days.'
- Referrals to various services from prosthesis vendors to yoga classes to lymphatic drainage therapists in most of the major cities across Canada.
- Guidance in getting second medical opinions.
- Assistance in understanding medical terminology, factors that can influence recommendations, and implication of choices.
- Support and assistance with decision-making – facilitation, not advice.