

## **Hampton University Proton Therapy Institute History**

The first suggestion that energetic protons could provide an effective cancer treatment was made by renown scientist Robert R. Wilson in a paper published in 1946. The first treatments were performed at particle accelerators built for nuclear physics research, culminating finally in the first hospital based proton treatment center in the United States being built in 1990 at Loma Linda University Medical Center in Loma Linda, California. This was followed by the Northeast Proton Therapy Center at the Massachusetts General Hospital and the Midwest Proton Radiotherapy Institute at Indiana University.

Today, cancer treatment with proton therapy is on the rise. There are five currently-operating centers in the United States, and at least eight more in the planning and design phase. Of these, the Hampton University Proton Therapy Institute (HUPTI) will be the largest and most advanced.

HUPTI began in 1995 as a vision of Dr. William R. Harvey after hearing of this exciting cancer treatment modality from alumnus. Several months after President Harvey initiated the process for establishing the proton center, he selected Dr. Keppel as the first member of the team appointed to investigate and evaluate Hampton's ability and interest in establishing a proton center in Virginia. The committee recognized quickly that the unique combination of expertise needed for such a project existed at Hampton - an outstanding physics department with both a graduate medical physics program and strong ties to the nearby Thomas Jefferson National Accelerator Facility, a longstanding relationship with the local cancer treatment community in Hampton Roads, a history of successful scientific and other large project management, and the combination of vision and know-how to make it all happen. Today, it is happening. Groundbreaking was in July 2007 and the HUPTI doors are expected to open to patients in 2010.